FINAL REPORT

Learning to monitor think tanks impact:
Three experiences from Africa, Asia and Latin America[1]

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The impact of think tanks has received increasing attention in the literature, especially amongst those working in the international development community[2]. Accordingly, stakeholders, such as donors, policy makers, academia representatives, think tanks themselves, among others, are increasingly aware of the importance of monitoring and evaluating think tanks' impact and many think tanks worldwide are working on identifying their impact areas and on developing mechanisms to estimate it.

In this context, the objective of this study is to provide elements for an analytical framework to monitor and assess the impact of think tanks working in less developed contexts. This includes reflections about the very possibility of measuring impact. This is done by integrating different impact definitions and indicators, variables, contexts and approaches based on a literature review. This literature review informed the development of an analytical framework that was applied to all three think tank case studies. The objective of the study is also to understand the difficulties of measuring the impact of thinks tanks in the different spheres of their work, i.e. policy influence, contribution to academic field of research, public agenda, etc., and to learn from the experiences of the selected cases. One of the main conclusions of the exercise, particularly after its discussion at the South Africa TTI Exchange, is that it is possible and relatively easier to estimate impact if output (visibility) indicators are considered. More difficult and subjective is to monitor and estimate impact through the use of reputational and research use indicators such as surveys and citations. However, what seems more relevant but also more difficult is to estimate final impact (influence) because this can only be done through subjective, qualitative, contextual example based instruments, and it is hard to attribute a clear causality between ideas and actual changes.

Understanding Think Tanks Impact

In the literature review, we find that think tanks are generally explicitly concerned with the generation of impact and they are often seen as organizations which 'help transfer the intellectual matter that underpins policies' (Stone 2000, 47). This knowledge transfer role has led to characterisations of Think Tank (TT) activity in terms of 'research brokerage' or 'policy entrepreneurship', which captures the nature of TTs as organizations focused on producing and disseminating knowledge and their close

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[2] Think tanks working in developed countries which count with permanent and unconditional funding tend to be less concerned with impact monitoring.

relation with policy making. The specific role played by TTs in knowledge transfer and the generation of impact will largely depend on their overall orientation, that is, on how they conceive themselves and the work they do - whether they see themselves as organizations supporting specific political projects, as advocates for certain topics or policies, or as disinterested knowledge producers more akin to academia. Even in the latter case, however, it is generally accepted that TTs are intrinsically political institutions - whether they are so homogenously so or overtly so is a different matter. And in the last instance, it is important to consider that 'impact' will refer to changes, for instance in people's quality of life, and not only at the formal policy level (e.g. legislation, etc.), which tends to be the case in many developing contexts where the gap between formal policies and their application is significant.

Understandings of the causal relation between knowledge production and its use are at the basis of different conceptions of impact. An important caveat to stress with regards to this, however, is that the distinction between users and producers of knowledge is often fuzzy, and TT researchers, especially, tend to regularly move between these two spaces[3]. Weidenbaum (2010, 135) shows that the usual indicators through which the influence of think tanks is sought to be established, such as publication outputs, participation in seminars and conferences, etc. are more a estimate of visibility than of real impact. For him, the 'extended nature of the policy process typically takes a decade or more for an idea to be transformed into a specific public policy decision and thus, rather than trying 'to dominate the print media or the nightly news', or even 'to influence government decision making', the main mission of think tanks should be 'to elevate the level of the national discussion on the serious issues facing society.' (Weidenbaum 2009, 96)) This same point is recurrently made with regards to the nature of the policy process and the ways in which knowledge gets diffused by Stone (2000). For her, it is also clear that the prime importance of TTs is in the construction of legitimacy for certain policy and in agenda-setting. In this process, intermediate outputs, as well as of visibility, are means for, but not equal to impact. Thus, methodologies such as discourse analysis, policy trajectory studies, and in general more qualitatively rich analyses are needed together to assess impact.

Factors influencing impact

The previous quote highlights a set of important factors, exogenous and endogenous, that influence the role played by think tanks and the impact they can generate.

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[3]   http://onthinktanks.org/2010/11/09/on-the-definition-of-think-tanks-towards-a-more-useful-discussion/

Endogenous factors are basically the resources that different TTs count towards the generation of impact such as their organizational characteristics, their mission definitions, their governance structures, sources of funding, research management and the types of research they produce; their human resources and ability to recruit and retain leading scholars and analysts; as well as the quality and reliability of the organization's networks (McGann, (2011).

Another major factor affecting the work of think tanks is the sources of funding on which they operate. As shown by Correa (2009) with reference to Latin American think tanks - but this probably applies to TTs working in developing countries in general - TTs research agendas tend to be defined by the priorities set up by donors and funders, rather than by the organizations themselves, as the research portfolios of their members will be prone to variation and will be focused on specific projects, rather than on the development of a personally defined field of ideas.

Exogenous factors refer to the economic, political and institutional context in which TTs operate that can strongly influenced their impact. While in contexts such as the US and Europe, TTs have a highly institutionalised and thus very stable role in the policy process, in developing country contexts, the usual degree of institutional weakness, the nature of the political party system, the characteristics of the civil service and the bureaucracy, all contribute to a more volatile role of TTs in policy debates (Braun et al. 2010; Correa Aste 2009; Tanaka, Barrenechea, and Morel 2011; Young 2005).

Strategies for measuring impact
Following Davies et al. (2005) and other studies, we organized the different strategies into: forward tracking from research to consequences (outputs), research in user communities and a category that attempts to capture more evident impacts than those suggested by measures of output and use.

The most commonly used indicators of impact are in fact measures of output, which actually constitute measures of intermediate impact and, as noted by Weidenbaum, are indicators of visibility more than anything else - and as Abelson (2007) and Rich (2004) stress, visibility often does not lead to substantive influence. However, it is relevant to generate such measurements as they might contribute to generate a level of reflexivity within the organization that can enhance its ability to generate impact. Such indicators of intermediate output can include quantitative measurements of publications (important to distinguish between publication type, especially whether they are peer-

reviewed or not), internet activity, media appearances, advisory roles played my members of the organization, networking activity, conferences and seminar presentations. It is important to note that these output indicators may not biased in some cases as they are measured and presented out of context (for example, media appearances or advisory roles may just reflect a particular proximity to a non very important group while in other cases may reflect real impact)

Reputation is another important indicator of impact, as it reflects the credibility of the organizations' work. Although most former output indicators reflect credibility, McGann (McGann 2011) also includes other more indirect, reputational measures of impact, assessed through esteem shown by key stakeholders and research use in particular communities. Although this work has been criticised for putting too much emphasis on subjective appraisals of TTs work, we do consider that such reputational measures, especially when used alongside other variables, are important. This is so because reputation, other than a indicator of visibility, can also show the extent of research use in particular communities.   Research impact in user communities can also be monitored using a diversity of methods such as surveys of policy makers or other relevant stake holders, interviews and focus groups with selected stakeholders - here it is important to use the right selection criteria, to avoid bias towards particular institutions. Another point with regards to reputation is made by Abelson (2007), who stresses the fact that reputation is also contextual in that, an institution might enjoy greater reputation in particular political contexts and due to its perceived proximity to dominant ideas (or political parties).

Lastly, final Impact indicators should be included. Following McGann (McGann 2011), these indicators should reflect recommendations considered or adopted by policymakers and civil society organizations; advisory role, awards granted; publication in or citation of publications; public testimony and the media that influences the policy debate and decision-making, among others. It is relevant to note that these more complex assessments of impact that seek to go beyond mere quantifications of output, tend to include more qualitative analyses of how research has been diffused and of the process behind the impact.

Analytical Framework
The analytical framework presented here has been elaborated based on the literature review on how to assess the impact of think tanks. It is assumed that different understandings of these issues will lead to different weightings, or even selection, of

the proposed variables. It is important to consider that the framework presented next should be taken as a reference. As monitoring is mainly useful for each TT interest, in order to better, contribute more knowledge and be more accountable, TTs should develop their own framework, prioritizing and improving the indicators listed below.

Conception of Impact:

In order to reflect the heterogeneity of TTs as discussed in the literature review, we consider a broad understanding of impact that includes not only policy but also academic impact as well as impacts generated on particular populations. Other kinds of impact might include the psychological impact generated by TTs by debating ideas on important topics, thus raising their visibility.

Endogenous/organizational variables

a. Mission statements: independent, academically sound, research production; advocacy of particular policies or knowledge transfer towards the policy sector

b. Main functions performed by the organization: Information production, policy advocacy, networking, academic production and/or educational activities

c. Organizational characteristics and resources: Origins and evolution of the organization, governance structures: strategic management and administration, funding (types and stability of financial support), human resources (entry requirements, ability to recruit and retain leading scholars, incentive structures)

d. Research management: are topics defined on the basis of the availability of funds and/or in relation to the organization agenda?

e. Type of research produced: applied, academic, data/information, producing and analysing arguments (considering degree of domestic/international focus)

f. Primary audiences of the research produced: politicians, policy makers, civil society and academia

g. Communication and diffusion strategies used by the organization,

h. Networks: Proximity and access to decision-makers and other policy elites, academic communities and the media (by the institution and its individual members)

Exogenous variables

a. Political-institutional variables: degree of institutionalisation, characteristics of the bureaucracy and degree of government capacity, degree of political stability, extent of civil and political freedoms in the country, existence of political demand for research

b. Media: characteristics of the local media and relationships between research producers and the media

c. Policy linkages: general relation of TTs with the policy making community, policy environment and its openness to research

Output indicators

Self-promoted

a. Publications: reports, working-papers (non-peer reviewed), papers in academic journals, other peer-reviewed papers and editorial membership

b. Internet activity in owned website and other web sites

c. Networking participation (national or international)

d. Educational activities conducted within the TT (courses, workshops, other) and extension activities related to promotion of research

e. Conference and seminar presentations (internally and externally organized)

By request

a. Media appearances: written contributions, references to the TTs research (in general or from individual members) in the media, television, radio and internet

b. Advisory roles played by the organization's members to policy makers and other relevant institutions (civil society, etc)

c. Invited participations in conferences and seminars (key notes)

d. Other roles played by the organizations' members including teaching in higher education institutions, positions in government institutions, and others

Indicators of research use

a. Invitations to provide expert judgement to policy-makers, media and others

b. Invitations to participate in panel deliberations

c. Citation of published works by the organization and its members

d. Visits and use of the organizations' website

Reputational and final impact measures

a. Stakeholder engagement to assess their perception of the organization through the use of surveys, interviews or focus groups

b. Awards granted to the organization

c. Examples of research use and influence: in challenging the conventional wisdom, of recommendations adopted by policymakers or civil society organizations and of societal impacts of the TT research. Most important in terms

that is only here where qualitative impact, context and process (the nature of the policy and/or specific projects) can be considered.

The case studies

Three TTs cases were selected, one from Latin America, one from Asia and one from Africa. The cases were selected based on think tanks' recognition for good quality research and for their experience in the process of monitoring and measuring its impact. In addition, in an effort to provide less dispersed results, cases were selected considering only independent and non-university think tanks. The cases are: Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS), African Institute for Applied Economics (AIAE) of Nigeria and Group of Analysis for Development (GRADE) of Peru.

The previous framework provided the guidelines for researchers on how to address the case studies. The central aim of the case studies was to reflect upon the different aspects and elements of impact measurement, the difficulties surrounding them, the extent to which each organization is measuring these issues and whether they consider them important or susceptible of measurement.

Conclusions and lessons for monitoring think tanks impact

The objective of this study was to provide elements for an analytical framework to monitor and assess the impact of think tanks working in less developed contexts. This was done by integrating different impact definitions and indicators, contexts and approaches collected from the literature review and case studies in an analytical framework. Some lessons of this process follow.

TTs impact will largely depend on their overall orientation, that is, on how they conceive themselves and their mission and functions. The evidence revised in the study, complemented by the review of responses of Think Tanks in the electronic forum previous to the TTI South Africa Exchange and in the TTI South Africa Exchange itself, show that there is quite a consensus that although Think Tanks missions differ, they share some combination of: providing high quality research, serve as informed and independent voice in policy debates, putting issues in the agenda and influence policies and contributing towards the well being of society. Furthermore, for all those objectives, it is agreed upon that credibility is a key attribute. However, there is also a consensus that there is no common and systematic method for monitoring and measuring impact (and success). This is the case mainly because many of the impacts

are very difficult to objectively be measured, i.e. how do we monitor and assess "credibility"?

It can also be concluded that exogenous and endogenous factors are important to define and estimate TTs impact. Think tanks impact can differ considerably given local or regional context as well as the subject focus of the institutions research and potential opportunities for their outreach. Similarly, TTs will include dissemination activities and select mechanisms for dissemination and influence depending on the particular characteristics of its organization and context of the country and their networks. The case of IPS (Sri Lanka) illustrates this situation. The Institute manages its exposure to public comment strategically in view of sensitivities that can arise from its semi-government status.

Endogenous factors also clearly determine how to design and implement a monitoring system and how to estimate impact. Within these factors, the TT mission conception is the most important. This assertion is illustrated by looking at the case of AIAE. Its mission is to promote evidence-based decision making, accordingly, their mix of research, research communication and policy dialogue and training has been in the ratio of 60%, 30% and 10% respectively during the last years and this is reflected in their impact measurement, as monitoring tools are tailored to elicit achievements benchmarked according to the degrees of involvement in these respective areas.

Another important finding of the study is that the case studies have clearly shown an increasing interest and expertise of TTs in their monitoring systems, in particular after receiving the institutional support of Think tank Initiative (TTI), both because of the resources received for institutional strengthening and as a consequence of the TTI´s introduction and requirement of systematic ways to track progress indicators. Therefore, nowadays, in all cases, a system is in place; indicators are regularly estimated for main outputs and used inside the institution. All three organizations had accumulated significant learning experience in monitoring impact since their origins. Initially, monitoring was sporadic and primarily driven by the specific demands (making proposals/applications for funding support, institutional profiling and responding to enquiries by donors and funders). During the last years, with the TTI support, the process became more systematic and functional but still faces important challenges.

The case studies have also shown that some measures of impact, which really are output or intermediate impact indicators (showing mainly visibility) are more easily

estimated across the TTs. This is the case of publications, web activity, media appearances, conference, seminar and other events organized and educational activities within the institution, and some other outputs that have been registered in all cases by the three Think Tanks, almost from the beginning of their activities. Advisory roles of researchers and their participation in conferences or other types of events are being monitored in all cases, but these indicators seem to face important limitations because it is difficult to capture the type and importance (for TT impact considerations) of the participation or of the advisory roles.

All TTs consider that attracting and retaining highly qualified core researcher and attaining financial sustainability (being able to diversify their sources of income in a sustainable manner and reduce volatility and dependence) are key for success and should be monitored and considered intermediate outcomes.

On the other hand, more difficult and less usual to monitor seem to be outcome indicators, more related to the TT´s reputation, such as invitations to provide expert judgements and professional opinions, citations of published works (in other publications and even more difficult on public documents, norms or speeches) and user surveys. For example, AIAE continues to grapple with finding appropriate and valid mechanisms for measuring penultimate and final end-user impacts. What they already do as part of the monitoring practices is to include with every research or policy conference, workshop or seminar, a post-event feedback survey. The survey elicits how the conference, workshop or seminar has benefited the participants and for that they intend to use the benefits gained.

Even more problems are faced by the TTs in their process of monitoring citations, key variable for measuring impact. According to IPS, given that their core objective is attempting to influence policymaking at the national level, monitoring their direct contributions to government policy frameworks and its research citations in policy documents (of government and donor agencies in particular) is the most relevant measure of impact. However, current monitoring of the above is not perfect and there are shortcomings in the way these are measured. Also, in the case of GRADE, although important efforts have been made to monitor citations, as it is consider a key indicator of influence, they are still facing difficulties, particularly when looking for citations of its publications in government (policy documents) since very few libraries and public institutions have their documents in an accessible electronic system and public documents do not tend to include citations.

One of the more important conclusions of the study is related to the acknowledgment of the complexities of measuring impact when defined as policy influence. Although in some cases research impact is relatively easy to identify and show, in some other it is very difficult. Even in the cases where the impact is clear, case studies show that qualitative information is required, i.e. somewhat detailed examples. It is recognized that policy influence is very difficult to objectively estimate and requires qualitative evidence provided by examples (citations, testimonies, invitations to provide judgement, etc.).

We find also some consensus both in the literature and in the cases revised, that the final impact indicators are the most difficult to monitor and objectively measure. Depending on the specific missions and priorities of the TT, final impact will be along the lines of recommendations adopted by policymakers; awards granted; publication in or citation of publications in academic journals; public testimonies and/or success in challenging the conventional wisdom. However, we can conclude that measuring TT´s impact is a complex challenge yet to be solved.

Learning to monitor think tanks impact:

Three experiences from Africa, Asia and Latin America[4]

Introduction

The impact of think tanks has received increasing attention in the literature (Correa and Mendizabal 2011; Fischer 1993; James 1993; Lomas 2000; McNutt and Marchildon 2009; Rich 2001; Sherrington 2000; Start, Hovland, and Institute 2004; Stone 2000, 2001, 2001, 2002, 2005; Stone, Denham, and Garnett 1998; Stone, Maxwell, and Keating 2001; Weidenbaum 2010; Yee 1996; Young 2005), mostly influenced by the international donor community, including the importance of identifying and measuring what think tanks are accomplishing in terms of their influence in the policy, academia or public agenda, and also in areas where they are facing difficulties. Accordingly, stakeholders, such as donors, policy makers, academia representatives, think tanks themselves, among others, are increasingly aware of the importance of monitoring and evaluating think tanks' impact. Many think tanks worldwide are working on identifying their impact areas and on developing mechanisms to estimate it.

The literature on the impact of think tanks, mainly on policy, is extensive but tends to focus on think tanks operating in the more developed regions of the world (the US, Canada, EU) and there is a scarcity of research in the case think tanks working in less developed contexts. The research is particularly important because, as the existing literature shows, the political and institutional environment in which think tanks operate has a strong bearing both on their impact and on the mechanisms to achieve it.

In this context, the objective of the study is to provide elements for an analytical framework to monitor and assess the impact of think tanks working in less developed contexts. This is done by integrating different impact definitions and indicators, variables, contexts and approaches collected from the literature review and case studies in an analytical framework that is expected to help think tanks in their struggle to estiamte their impact. The objective of the study is also to understand the importance and difficulties of measuring the impact of thinks tanks in the different

spheres of their work, i.e. policy influence, contribution to academic field of research, public agenda, etc., and learn from the experiences of the selected cases.

I. Learning to monitor think tanks impact: An international literature review

In the following pages we will present some of the main arguments that emerge from the literature with regards to monitoring think tanks (TTs) impact. Starting from the more abstract epistemological debates that frame different understandings and measurements of impact, we then move to more specific considerations about the organizational and contextual factors that influence policy impact, giving special consideration to the TTs operating in developing contexts. A final section of the review discusses specific approaches to the measurement of impact.

Concerns about the impact of social science research and its relevance for policy making, have existed at least since the 1960s and it has now become a paramount concern for funders and researchers alike. On one hand, and in view of many researchers' alleged lack of adequate consideration for the impact of their work, funders are now regularly incorporating explicit questions about the potential impact of research in the applications they receive (ESRC 2012). In the UK, for instance, the Research Excellence Framework on the basis of which higher education institutions are assessed and awarded public research funds, has recently incorporated an 'impact' criterion among its weighing measures and anticipates that impact, which now accounts for 20 per cent of the overall assessment, will increase its weight in the future (HEFCE 2011)[5]. On the other hand, researchers have often complained about how little attention policy makers pay to their work and have sought for better ways to convey there messages and be heard (Demers 2011; Weiss 1977, 1979, 1992). The emphasis on research impact, however, needs also to be explained in the broader context of increasing competition in higher education and the economic crises, both of which have increased competition over research funds generating efficiency (impact-oriented) discourses.

If these have been the concerns of researchers and funders in academia, the push for generating impact has been even greater amongst applied social scientists working in

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[5] In the current economic downturn funding to universities has been under pressure for some time in the UK and they have been asked to justify their cost. This has coincided with a resurgence of efficiency discourses and critique to the more traditional (yet valuable) Oxbridge model that does not emphasise usefulness but rather intellectual curiosity.

the context of TTs, whose mission tends to be even more explicitly concerned with the generation of practical, usually policy-related, impact than in the case of academic researchers. The Global Go To Think Tanks (McGann 2011) report defines these organizations in the following terms:

> 'Think tanks or public policy research, analysis, and engagement institutions are organizations that generate policy-oriented research, analysis, and advice on domestic and international issues in an effort to enable policymakers and the public to make informed decisions about public policy issues. (...) These institutions often act as a bridge between the academic and policymaking communities, serving the public interest as an independent voice that translates applied and basic research into a language and form that is understandable, reliable, and accessible for policymakers and the public.' (p.17)

It is important to note that, while, as the quote above illustrates, in some cases, there is a distinction between academia and think tanks, there are many cases of TTs that conceive themselves as centres of academic production. This is particularly so in contexts where universities are somewhat less geared to the production of research and in which TTs have emerged partly as a response to this. 'While think tanks may perform many roles in their host societies, not all think tanks do the same things to the same extent.' (McGann 2011, 17). As is further discussed below, variations in the role played by TTs is highly contingent upon the particularities of the political and civil society environment in which they operate, and we could add, as well, upon the academic environment of their host countries.

The distinction between applied and more academic research is somewhat difficult to untangle, although it includes such criteria as the practical applicability of research, the theoretical sophistication of the research framing and interpretations, as well as a the degree of criticality of the research produced - with academic research ranking higher in the two latter criteria, and somewhat lower in the first (Nafstad 1982). Methodological rigour should be a common trait of both types of research (Miller and Salkind 2002). As Bengs notes (2004), however, a practical orientation need not come at the expense of theoretical sophistication, and many think tanks will strive to produce research that is methodologically rigorous, critical, and theoretically robust.

While explicit reflections about impact, policy and otherwise, are now common among both academic and applied researchers, the task of actually determining, measuring or assessing impact remains hard to fulfil. This difficulty can be partly attributed to the lack

of adequate tools for measuring impact, but, also, and especially so, to the different definitions of what impact is, which are influenced by questions about what constitutes knowledge, as well as by different understandings of the nature of the policy process.

The role of think-tanks in knowledge production and diffusion

Think tanks are often seen as organizations which 'help transfer the intellectual matter that underpins policies' (Stone 2000, 47). This knowledge transfer role has led to characterisations of TT activity in terms of 'research brokerage' or 'policy entrepreneurship', which captures the nature of TTs as organizations focused on producing and disseminating knowledge and their close relation with policy making. In some cases, TTs are portrayed as intermediaries between often more theoretical and less practically oriented academic knowledge and policy communities, where TTs help to 'aggregate and re-package trends in academic research for clients and other actors in the private sector, government, and civil society' (LSE Public Policy Group; LSE Impact of Social Science blog).

The specific role played by TTs in knowledge transfer and the generation of impact will largely depend on their overall orientation, that is, on how they conceive themselves and the work they do - whether they see themselves as partisan organizations supporting specific political projects, as advocates for certain topics or policies, or as disinterested knowledge producers more akin to academia. According to Stone (2000) TTs can 'potentially fulfil' a number of functions in their endeavours to generate impact and policy transfer. They can act as:

1) clearing-houses for information: where the organization's mission is conceived in terms of producing and diffusing information, or digesting relevant research for broader public diffusion

2) policy advocates: where they actively promote particular ideas and policies

3) networkers: participating and often actively creating networks that can include, at the domestic level 'political parties, bureacuracy, media and academia, as well as other civil society organizations; and at the international level 'with other think tanks, NGOs and international organizations'

4) agents of learning – where, through their 'intellectual and scholarly base' they provide 'expertise on specialized policy issues' and where they can also assume a more explicitly educational role, through diffusion activities, or through educational activities, courses and workshops conducted within the organizations

These categories mainly emphasise the policy influence function that TTs play, but it has been shown that TTs can also play other important roles as political players, or in creating spaces for different political players to interact, for instance, or even what Puryear has described as a psychological role in.

It is worth noting that TTs often perform a mixture of these functions, with some acquiring more prominence in the context of particular research projects or areas of the organizations. Configurations of these different functions will also stem from the organizations' general characteristics and mission statements.

While 'impact' tends to have policy as its main correlate, it is also possible that TTs might want to contribute to the generation of more academic knowledge and thus seek to have 'academic impact'. And in the last instance, it is important to consider that 'impact' will refer to changes, for instance in people's quality of life, and not only at the formal policy level (e.g. legislation, etc.), especially when, as tends to be the case in many developing contexts, the gap between formal policies and their application is significant.

TTs attempt to perform these different functions in various ways, deploying dissemination strategies that can range from publications, seminar and conference presentations, media relations, advising policy makers, etc. These strategies seek to raise the visibility of research and provide opportunities for networking.

One interesting point that emerges when comparing the literature of developed and developing country TTs is that in the former, institutional missions tend to be more clearly defined. This might be the product of TTs having more scope (i.e. funding) for defining their mission in more specific ways, - due to availability of funding but also because of the way in which TTs are conceived and set up, often in relation to specific political projects-, while developing country think tanks often follow research strategies and agendas that fit available funding.

> 'External financial dependency (even when it comes from a number of sources) imposes strong conditions and limits to the possibility of maintaining and deepening a specialised research agenda...' (Correa Aste 2009, 9)

Together with this, developing country TTs often operate in more unstable economic and political contexts, where the use of research evidence for policy making is less frequent, and there are fewer institutionalised channels to help the knowledge transfer

process. While informal relations (networks and participation in economic, social and political groups) are fundamental in the way that TTs generate impact, these relations tend be more strongly mediated by institutional ties in developed than in developing country TTs, which makes it even more difficult to measure the predominance of such relations as means for knowledge transfer.

All of these issues suggest further complications for developing country TTs which might account for some of the struggles they face in generating and measuring their impact.

Knowledge production and the generation of impact

In an overview of the more recent development of the Washington Think Tanks, Fischer (Fischer 1991, 1993) traces their origins to Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society", a project that sought the work of 'policy experts' to produce the technical knowledge that could solve identifiable social problems and help win the 'War on Poverty'[6]. In their origins, therefore, think tanks were characterised by a technocratic understanding of knowledge and expertise, where evidence was thought to be perfectly objective. However, as policy analysts and critics have shown, social problems and the evidence used to understand and solve them are open to interpretation and the same set of facts can '-at least arguably- be consistent with a variety of theories.' (p.32)

In Fischer's account, this sort of criticism of technocratic knowledge, has led to an inverse problem: the over politicisation of knowledge, which lies at the bottom of the current politicisation of many of the Washington Think Tanks, that operate more as party political ideologues, far from the scientifically minded and alleged neutrality of early think tanks. In Fischer's view, what is required to avoid the traps of overly technicist and politicised approaches to knowledge, is a post-positivistic understanding of knowledge production, in which both empirical evidence and normative arguments (but none of these exclusively), form the basis of knowledge production and use.

In a similar vein, Correa and Mendizábal (2011) propose that the kind of historical development of TTs discussed by Fischer, has given rise to three major narratives about the work of these organizations: a technocratic narrative, a democratic narrative,

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[6] It should be noted that Ricci and Smith go further back and establish the origins of TTs in the US in the civil war period, with the formation of civil associations in response to poverty levels, as well as in the presence of foreign policy TTs concerned with spreading democracy.

and a third narrative that, borrowing from Ricci (1994), they describe as that of a 'great conversation'. In the latter view, TTs are seen to 'employ knowledge as a tool for promoting arguments and public debates that enhance citizen participation.' (p. 20)

These sorts of perspectives with regards to knowledge production have a strong bearing on different understandings of impact and its measurement. In the technicist/empiricist perspective, impact is thought to emerge from 'evidence' in the narrowest sense, while the post-empiricist or comprehensive narrative, gives rise to an emphasis on argument as well as evidence; and on the policy process, rather than a narrow input-output system.

The debate on knowledge transfer and the complexities of the policy process
Understandings of the causal relation between knowledge production and its use are at the basis of different conceptions of impact. In a much cited paper, Yee (1996) presents a critique of behaviourist explanations of impact, akin to the empiricist model of knowledge production, in which some ideas or evidence are thought to be able to generate a direct impact on certain policies. The behaviourist model has given rise to impact measurement techniques that attempt to establish statistical correlations between ideas and policies often on the basis of quasi-experimental models. Within the behaviourist school, there have been criticisms of the simple model of causation, on the basis of arguments that point to the role of meaning in the appropriation of ideas. This has led to further specification of their impact model, which requires not only the establishment of correlations but also a 'causal story indicating the mechanisms through which observed correlations evolve.' (Yee 1996, 84)

This simple behaviourist model has been criticised on the basis of institutionalist arguments that show that ideas are 'embedded in institutions' that shape both their noticeability and, when noticed, the ways in which they are appropriated. This has led to the emergence of different conceptualizations of institutional causal mechanisms, a prominent example of which is found in the literature on 'epistemic communities' and 'networks', which are seen to play a central role in 'diffusing ideas and influencing the positions adopted by a wide range of actors.' (Yee 1996, 85). Rather than simple cause and effect models, institutional approaches attempt to assess impact through more complex models and descriptions of the process of diffusion.

However, as Yee points out, while behaviourists and institutionalists argue that 'ideas and beliefs "shape", "constrain", "orient", "guide", etc. the policy preferences of decision

makers', they don't really explain how they do so. In seeking to provide such explanations the focus tends to move towards the role of language and discourses that shape beliefs. This view leads to evaluations of impact that seek to understand and map the emergence and development of discourses that shape policy problems and the solutions sought to address them.

In a vein that echoes Yee's ideas, though expressed in somewhat more simple terms, Weidenbaum (2010, 135) shows that the usual indicators through which the influence of think tanks is sought to be established, such as publication outputs, participation in seminars and conferences, etc. are more a estimate of visibility than of real impact. For him, the 'extended nature of the policy process', which means that it 'typically takes a decade or more for an idea to be transformed into a specific public policy decision', while in the meantime 'a variety of individuals and organizations... are involved in the inevitable modification of the original idea...', means that straightforward measurements of output are generally inadequate to assess impact. In his view, rather than trying 'to dominate the print media or the nightly news', or even 'to influence government decision making', the main mission of think tanks should be 'to elevate the level of the national discussion on the serious issues facing society.' (Weidenbaum 2009, 96).

This same point is recurrently made by with regards to the nature of the policy process and the ways in which knowledge gets diffused Stone (Stone 1991, 1996, 2000, 2000, 2001, 2001, 2002, 2005, 2007; Stone, Denham, and Garnett 1998; Stone, Maxwell, and Keating 2001). For her, it is also clear that the prime importance of think tanks 'is in the construction of legitimacy for certain policy and in agenda-setting. They transfer ideas and ideologies, the rationalizations and legitimations for adopting a particular course of action...' (Stone 2000, 66). This point, however, seems to portray a one-direction process, while in reality, TTs are also subject to the influence of others' ideas, ideologies and arguments.

It is therefore, through their contributions to the 'great conversation', to the promotion and facilitation of 'informed debates' (Correa and Mendizabal 2011) that think tanks generate impact. In this process, the generation of data is fundamental, but it is not sufficient, as data needs to be both theoretically and normatively appraised. This means that in real terms, it is ideas, not data what really matter in the generation of impact. Similarly, the generation of intermediate and other outputs, as well as of visibility, are a means for, but not equal to the generation of impact. In this respect,

methodologies such as discourse analysis, policy trajectory studies, and in general more qualitatively rich analyses are needed together to assess impact.

One final distinction that can help clarify the latter points is Davies et al's (2005) one between instrumental and conceptual understandings of knowledge and impact:

> 'Non-academic research impact is about identifying the influences of research findings on policy, managerial and professional practices, social behaviour or public discourse. Such impact may be instrumental, influencing changes in policy, practices and behaviour, or *conceptual,* changing people´s knowledge, understanding and attitudes towards social issues.' (p. 11)

What the debates discussed here have shown, is that impact measurement needs to consider both of these dimensions of impact.

The nature of the policy process

In the previous discussion we have already noted that there are important links between conceptions of impact and its measurement and understandings of the policy process. In the policy literature there are at least three main understandings of the policy process, which somehow map onto the three 'narratives' of the work of think tanks discussed by Correa and Mendizábal (2011), and onto the historical development of the discipline of policy analysis.

- Linear, technicist-rational models of the policy process: which give rise to more or less complex portrayals of the policy process as a series of fairly discrete stages, where policy makers are seen as rational actors operating within a set of identifiable constraints, but making decisions in more or less transparent ways. In this model, impact can be disaggregated into fairly specific stages and processes. An example of this perspective on impact can be found in Knott and Wildavsky (1980), which identifies six different stages at which impact can occur: transmission of research; cognition of findings; reference made to significant studies; efforts made to operationalise findings; influence seen on decisions; and application of research to policy and/or practice.' (p.11). Critiques of such approaches have been made from perspectives that highlight the political and institutional nature of the policy process.
- Institutionalist/political models of the policy process: that emphasise the political nature of the policy process, the fact that policy makers operate within institutions with established patterns and assumptions, and the messy reality of policy making.

- Post-positivist models of the policy-process that build on the previous model but emphasise the role of theoretical and normative considerations in decision-making processes.

The important point to highlight here is one made by Stone (2000) about the need to place 'think tank agenda-setting strategies and their tactics for diffusing ideas... within a policy model' (p. 51).

There is a fairly general agreement in the literature that linear-technicist models of policy making offer a far from adequate depiction of the policy process, and that more complex models are needed. It is within these more complex models of the policy process that the role of think tanks needs to be placed. Rather than operating within a simple model of research-input/policy-output, the work of think tanks takes place in contexts that tend to be bound by inertias and not very open to change. A major part of the work of think tanks has therefore to do with educating policy fairly impermeable policy communities, helping to shape and re-shape policy agendas. This is were the idea of "research brokerage" comes in, as think tanks not only have to produce information but also convince policy makers, civil society or other actors that those ideas are worth considering. It is here, where the role of arguments and not only data becomes paramount.

> 'Think tanks are a potential agent of learning within policy networks of politicians, bureaucrats, the media and other nongovernmental actors. To varying degrees... think tanks aspire to affect social learning. They want to promote knowledge and understanding of new ideas programs and policies.' (Stone 2000, 60)

Following from this, the impact that think tanks generate, as well and the ways in which they estimate it, will be strongly influenced by how they understand the nature of the policy process and their role therein, especially their role as agents of learning.

> 'For those seeking to extend their political influence, both the decentralized character of power in the political system and the technical complexity of modern policy issues necessitate attention to policy arguments. Normative arguments and empirical evidence have become unavoidable components of modern policy struggles, and the social science community has emerged as principal supplier of the necessary intellectual ammunition.' (Fischer 1993)

Some conceptualisations of the policy process and of the role of TTs (such as those presented by Stone, or McGann) tend to overemphasise policy impact over political impact, in what can be seen as a depoliticised version of technocractic and depoliticised version of the process by which research and ideas are generated and promoted.

It is clear, from Fischer's discussion that all knowledge production is framed by an overall set of normative, i.e. political, concerns, but these need not taint the research production process itself, which needs to be driven by rigour in order to gain acceptance in the academic community. Those think tanks that aim to have an academic impact are those that more clearly follow these demands for rigour and methodological and theoretical sophistication.

Factors influencing impact

> 'There are no clear steps, strategies, tool-kits or guidelines that will guarantee successful use of research by decision-makers. Instead, the method and degree of 'knowledge utilisation' is shaped by a host of factors that are peculiar to leadership styles, institutional architecture and political culture of a country or policy domain.' (Stone 2001, 1)

The previous quote highlights a set of important factors that influence the role played by think tanks and the impact they can generate. Following from Stone's characterisation, but also taking from a study of think tanks in Latin America (Braun et al. 2010), the pages discuss the endogenous and exogenous factors that can influence impact and which should be taken into account when trying to estimate it.

Endogenous factors

These are, to use the term proposed by McGann (2011), the resources that different TTs count with for the generation of impact - although by labelling them as endogenous we should not forget that many of the decisions taken at this level reflect exogenous factors such as availability of funding, legislation, etc. Most prominent amongst these are: their organizational characteristics, their mission definitions, their governance structures, sources of funding, research management and the types of research they produce; their human resources and ability to recruit and retain leading scholars and analysts; as well as the quality and reliability of the organization's networks.

The inclusion of these factors largely follows the discussion presented in the previous pages. The way in which think tanks conceive of their mission, whether as a clearing-house for information, as a networking site, as an agency that promotes learning, or in terms of advocacy, will define the kind of impact they want to have. Equally important are different organizations' governance structures, whether TTs operate as collections of individuals doing research, or whether there are spaces for more collective thinking and research agenda-setting.

Another major factor affecting the work of think tanks is the sources of funding on which they operate. As shown by Correa (2009) with reference to Latin American think tanks - but this probably applies to TTs working in developing countries in general, where sources of funding are more disperse - TTs research agendas tend to be defined by the priorities set up by donors and funders, rather than by the organizations themselves, as the research portfolios of their members will be prone to variation and will be focused on specific projects, rather than on the development of a personally defined field of ideas. This is a major point of contrast with American and European TTs which count with less disperse and more stable sources of funding which enable them to develop more coherent and cohesive research agendas.

Also following from the points made above, the way in which different TTs conceive and manage their research, whether they are concerned with producing information/data or whether they are in theory generation and arguments will also have a strong bearing on how they conceive and measure their impact.

One final set of endogenous factors influencing TTs impact has to do with the communication and diffusion strategies that they employ. For instance, whether they have an area and personnel within the organization specifically dedicated to deal with such matters and how they conceive this role (whether it is about raising visibility, establishing relations with policy makers and other stake holders, etc.).

Exogenous factors
One thing that the literature makes clear is that the role played by TTs and the impact they can generate is strongly influenced by the economic, political and institutional context in which these organizations operate. While in contexts such as the US and Europe, TTs have a highly institutionalised and thus very stable role in the policy process, in developing country contexts, the usual (although also varied) degree of institutional weakness, the nature of the political party system, the characteristics of the

civil service and the bureaucracy, etc. all contribute to a more volatile role of TTs in policy debates (Braun et al. 2010; Correa Aste 2009; Tanaka, Barrenechea, and Morel 2011; Young 2005). In such contexts it is not infrequent to find that political and governmental agendas are not only fairly undefined, which makes it more difficult for TTs to engage in public policy debates.

The demands for legitimacy through the incorporation of research evidence into policy decisions are also lower in contexts where populist and personal political styles are the order of the day. While in general this makes it harder for research to have an impact, the prevalence of informal networks can often mean that think tank researchers can, eventually, exert highly influential roles in policy definition, so the informality of the system can allow for impact, albeit the kind of impact that is especially difficult to measure.

Strategies for measuring impact

Taking into account the discussion presented in the preceding pages we will now focus on some of the actual strategies that TTs can use for measuring their impact. This section incorporates many of the measurement strategies proposed in the literature. Following Davies et al. (2005), we have organized the different strategies into: forward tracking from research to consequences; and studies of research in user communities, adding in the end a category of impact that attempts to capture more directly evident impacts than those suggested by measures of output and use. While this does not constitute impact in itself, the resources found at this level will have a strong influence on the type and extent of impact achieved by different organizations.

Before moving on to the specifics of impact measurement it is important to caution readers that different evaluations of impact are analytically framed and can attribute alternative weightings to the same measurements, giving rise to different assessments of an organizations' impact. Such analytical frameworks will be influenced by the factors discussed above, that is, the different understandings of research; of the process of knowledge production and diffusion; of the role of think tanks vis a vis academia and the policy community; by different conceptions of the policy and political processes, of the role played by civil society institutions. Also, it is important to note that these output indicators may not biased in some cases as they are measured and presented out of context (for example, media appearances or advisory roles may just reflect a particular proximity to a non very important group while in other cases may reflect real impact)

Forward tracking from research to consequences[7]

As Davies et al (2005) show, studies of research impact 'may emphasise the use of quantitative methods and relatively linear pathways between research and products and research impacts' - producing the kinds of indicators listed in above - 'or may instead highlight non-linear interactive mechanisms of impact described through detailed qualitative study' (p.8). <mark>The problem with the former is that they tend to overemphasize the role of TTs or of their research, rather than their contribution to knowledge or the production of ideas more generally - the conflation of the two is rather reductionist, in a similar way as the conflation of policy influence with the notion of evidence informed policy, where the former is much broader and might include the latter, but not necessarily.</mark>

Output indicators

The most commonly used indicators of impact are in fact measures of output, which actually constitute measures of intermediate impact and, as noted by Weidenbaum, are indicators of visibility more than anything else. Having said this, however, it is relevant to generate such measurements as they might contribute to generate a level of reflexivity within the organization that can enhance its ability to generate impact.

Such indicators of intermediate output can include quantitative measurements of:
- Publications: where it is important to distinguish between publication type, especially whether they are peer-reviewed or not, whether they are intended for specialised audiences, citations of research produced by the organization, etc.
- Internet activity: this includes activities and information published by the organization in its own website, downloads of papers and other documents produced by the organization (<mark>although this is a fairly weak indicator and appearance on others' website is considered stronger</mark>)
- Media appearances: which constitute a form of "secondary distribution" through members' contributions to or appearances in newspapers, magazines, radio, television or the internet.[8]
- Advisory roles played my members of the organization to: domestic or international policy makers, and other relevant institutions

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[7] This categorization has been taken from Davies et al. (2005)
[8] It is important to mention, that in some contexts as pointed put by participant in the TTI Exchange in South Africa, media may not be a valid option for research dissemination (for example if it is politically controlled), this in some cases, media appearances may not a valid output indicator.

- Networking activity played by members of the organization or by the organization as such
- Conferences and seminar presentations: both those organized by the TT and those where the organization's members have taken an active part.

Reputation is another important indicator of impact, as it reflects the credibility of the organizations' work (McGann 2011). Reputation is assessed through some of the same measures mentioned above, such as media appearances, advisory roles, papers and citations in scholarly publications, all of which reflect the overall credibility and value attributed to the organization's work. McGann (McGann 2011) also includes other more indirect, reputational measures of impact, assessed through esteem shown by key stakeholders and research use in particular communities. Although this work has been criticised for putting too much emphasis on subjective appraisals of TTs work - in particular because these are then used to create a global TT ranking - we do consider that such reputational measures, especially when used alongside other variables, are important. This is so because reputation, other than an indicator of visibility, can also show the extent of research use in particular communities. This last point must be taken carefully, since reputation exists within particular communities, so it might reflect only impact at particular stages (a particular government, for instance).

Monitoring research impact in user communities
Here, the measurement of impact tends to take a 'case-based approach' using a diversity of methods, from 'simple surveys of policy makers [or other relevant stake holders] (asking about their use of research', to 'more detailed and sophisticated studies... such as surveying 'user panels' or individuals 'who might be expected to draw upon the results of the research' (Davies, Nutley, and Walter 2005, 9).

There are also more qualitative approaches which seek to draw attention 'to the unpredictable, non-linear and contingent nature of research impact processes' such as that seen in (Gabbay et al. 2003; Gabbay and May 2004) who use the notion of communities of practice to examine knowledge diffusion and impact within particular communities. These may include interviews and focus groups with selected stakeholders.

It is worth noting here that the more complex analyses that seek to move beyond mere output measurements are more costly and would require specific initiatives to assess impact than the easier to institutionalise measurements of output.

Impact indicators

Although the above may be all considered indicators of impact, many gauge only intermediate impact. Following McGann (McGann 2011) we have added this final category of actual impact that includes:

> 'Recommendations considered or adopted by policymakers and civil society organizations; issue network centrality; advisory role to political parties, candidates, transition teams; awards granted; publication in or citation of publications in academic journals; public testimony and the media that influences the policy debate and decision-making; listserv and web site dominance; and success in challenging the conventional wisdom and standard operating procedures of bureaucrats and elected officials in the country.' (19)

Again, we have included many of these among our quantitative indicators of impact, so in the analytical framework we add a category of impact which focuses only on actual recommendations or immediately traceable impacts on decisions, legislation, etc.

Davies et al.(2005) discuss how in recent years 'attempts have been made to go beyond simply examining research outputs to describe and quantify impacts of research, sometimes using models that call attention to.... 'research payback' (Buxton and Hanney 1996, quoted in p. 6). These approaches typically identify a number of *categories* where impacts might be expected from research, for example:

- knowledge production (e.g. peer reviewed papers);
- research capacity building (e.g. career development);
- policy or product development (e.g. input into official guidelines or protocols)
- sector benefits (e.g. impacts on specific client groups); and
- wider societal benefits (e.g. economic benefits from increased population health or productivity)

The authors provide a number of examples of studies that have sought to assess research impact in these lines, which can include such strategies as user or stake-holder surveys, literature reviews and panel deliberations to gather information about the actual influence that research might have had. It is relevant to note that these more complex assessments of impact that seek to go beyond mere quantifications of output, tend to include more qualitative analyses of how research has been diffused.

An interesting case of such broader impact evaluations is the one proposed in the UK by the Research Excellence Framework (REF). Here, the category of impact is assessed as distinct from output (the latter weighing 65 per cent of the overall, against the 20 per cent currently attributed to impact). In the context of the REF impact is assessed through case studies, a strategy that acknowledges the complex dynamics of impact and which therefore eschews direct or linear attributions of impact (HEFCE 2011). The REF also includes a category of environment, which refers to the extent to which 'the research environment supports a continuing flow of excellent research and its effective dissemination and application' (HEFCE 2009). This category of environment seems appropriate to academic institutions, which have sometimes been criticised for their insularity. In the context of TTs, the quality of the research environment is already incorporated in the impact frameworks through reflections on the quality of networks, relations with the media and policy makers, as well as through those on the different institutions' ability to recruit and retain researchers of proven quality.

All previous indicators, however, face problems. As pointed out by Jones (2011), "while these tools (referring to output and user indicators) can provide useful indications of the influence of evidence and advice, they will not always be reliable. First, analysing outputs may not always be the most useful way forward, because the quality and presentation of evidence may be only one small factor in determining its influence. Second, relying on indicators such as citations and references presents two problems. On the one hand, research will rarely be used directly, but often influences policy-makers more gradually and in an amorphous way through 'enlightenment', by providing concepts and ideas. On the other hand, where research is quoted this may be tactical, to justify a political decision that has already been made and over which the actual research, in fact, had no actual influence. For this reason, it will often be valuable to carry out more in-depth studies, using frameworks built around a more suitable framework for understanding the messy, political interactions that influence the use of knowledge in the policy process." Thus, monitoring impact need to include evidence based examples considering raw qualitative data and information, context and processes, as explained later on.

II. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK AND CASE STUDIES GUIDELINES

The analytical framework presented in the following pages has been elaborated on the basis of the literature review presented earlier on how to assess the impact of think

tanks. It is assumed that different understandings of these issues will lead to different weightings, or even selection, of the proposed variables.

It is important to mention that, while there are a number of think tank types - those that see themselves mainly as independent research institutions, and those that mainly perform advocacy roles with regards to particular ideas or policies, while others perform an explicitly educational role - for the purpose of this study we have excluded those cases of partisan TTs to include only those organizations that seek to maintain a strong degree of ideological independence in their research production.

The framework is organized into the following sections:
- o Conceptions of impact
- o Factors influencing impact, among which we find:
    - Endogenous organizational variables
    - Exogenous variables
- o Measures of impact, which include:
    - Output measurements
    - Use measurements
- o Concrete examples of impact measurement

The framework that follows also provided the guidelines for researchers on how to address the case studies. The central aim of the case studies is to enable reflection upon the different aspects and elements of impact measurement, the difficulties surrounding them, the extent to which each organization is struggling to assess these issues, or whether they consider them important or susceptible of measurement and the process of learning regarding this.

It is important to consider that the framework presented next should be taken as a reference. As monitoring is mainly useful for each TT interest, in order to better, contribute more knowledge and be more accountable, TTs should develop their own framework, prioritizing and improving the indicators listed below.

II.1 Conceptions of impact

There is an important distinction in the literature, as seen before, between conceptions of impact, which are based on somewhat linear understandings of the causal relation between research and policy, and more comprehensive understandings of impact where the latter is understood in terms of the contribution that research makes to

knowledge, argumentation and policy debate (Fischer 1985; Yee 1996; Earl et al. 2001; Stone 2000, 2001, 2001). These perspectives suggest the need for more elaborate frameworks to understand impact, which should account for the complexities of the knowledge transfer process, including the particularities of this process in particular environments that are characterised by certain political and institutional patterns. They also suggest that evaluations of impact should go beyond a focus on output and visibility, to consider the contribution of research to the development of arguments and to elevate the level of debate about important social issues (Weidenbaum 2009; Ricci 1994)(Weidenbaum 2009; Ricci 1994)(Weidenbaum 2009; Ricci 1994)(Weidenbaum 2009; Ricci 1994)(Weidenbaum 2009; Ricci 1994)(Weidenbaum 2009; Ricci 1994)(Weidenbaum 2009; Ricci 1994)(Weidenbaum 2009; Ricci 1994)(Weidenbaum 2009; Ricci 1994)(Weidenbaum 2009; Ricci 1994)(Weidenbaum 2009; Ricci 1994)(Weidenbaum 2009; Ricci 1994)(Weidenbaum 2009; Ricci 1994)(Weidenbaum 2009; Ricci 1994). These different ways of conceiving impact will determine how impact is measured.

For the purpose of this study, and in order to reflect the heterogeneity of TTs as discussed in the literature review, we want to work with a broader understanding of impact that includes not only policy (policy change, change in the way policy is made, the way policy is monitored and evaluated, etc.) but also academic impact as well as impacts generated on particular population. Thus, we suggest that data gathering should incorporate considerations about the two different ways of conceiving impact (technocratic and comprehensive). This is so partly because rather than establishing a definition of impact, the case studies should show how the different organizations conceive it and how this influences their struggles to measure it.

II.2 Factors influencing impact

The literature highlights the influence of organizational characteristics on the generation of impact. These characteristics can include such broad things as the organizations' mission definitions as well as more specific things as whether they have an outreach policy and a specific team in charge of this task. Braun et al. (2010) define these elements as endogenous variables, which they contrast to other exogenous variables such as those relating to the political and institutional environment in which think tanks operate. We have taken this distinction and included many of the variables proposed by Braun et al. for a study of the relations between think tanks and public policies that included case studies of many such organizations in developing countries,

including GRADE, and which is part of a volume published by CIPPEC on this topic (Garcé 2010). For the purposes of this study, we have included further variables under the 'endogenous' heading, such as the organizations' mission definitions and more nuanced understanding of the types of research produced and of diffusion strategies have been incorporated. This follows partly out of a consideration of the rather technicist focus of the variables proposed by the authors, and also considering that the present study has a specific focus on impact.

We have also included resource variables as suggested by McGann (2011) which provide an indication the available funding, human resources and quality of the organizations', networks.

Given that in many developing contexts there will tend to be a weak relation between research and policy making, the generation of impact will involve considerable work in 'educating' the policy making community about the benefits of incorporating evidence into policy decisions, apart from the already hard work in making research visible. It is important to learn about how the different organizations conceive of their role in this respect and in research brokerage more generally. Therefore, relevant data on this issue will be collected through the sections on communications and diffusion strategies as well as through the section on policy linkages.

<u>Endogenous/organizational variables</u>

    a. Mission statements: whether the organization considers itself to be more inclined towards[9] independent, academically sound, research production; advocacy of particular ideas and/or policies: or knowledge transfer towards the policy sector

    b. Main approaches to the work carried out by the organization: whether the organization is mainly concerned with Information production, Policy advocacy, Networking, Academic production and/or educational activities

    c. Organizational characteristics and resources

        - Origins and evolution of the organization

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[9] It is clear that in the case of mission statements and in the case of the functions listed below, many organizations will perform a number of them. What would be useful is to have an indication of the extent to which each of these fits with the organization (only if possible assigning weight, if not establishing a ranking) , so as to have an idea of the organizational identity of each of the TTs.

- Governance structures: Strategic management and administration[10]

- Funding: Level, types, quality and stability of financial support

- Human resources (Entry requirements, ability to recruit and retain leading scholars and analysts, Incentive structures)

d. Research management: are topics defined on the basis of the availability of funds and/or in relation to important issues in the national/regional/global political agenda?

e. Type of research produced: Applied research, Academic research, Data/information, Producing and analysing arguments, considering also the degree of domestic/international (regional/global) focus of the research produced.

f. Primary audiences of the research produced: Politicians, Civil society and Academia, civil servants, the media, donors.

g. Communication and diffusion strategies deployed by the organization, including strategies and tools for institutional outreach, strategies and tools for research dissemination, relationships with policymakers and relationships with other relevant actors

h. Networks: Proximity and access to decision-makers and other policy elites, academic communities and the media

In addition, the literature review has also shown the importance of the political, economic and institutional environment within which think tanks operate. Regarding these factors, we take as a starting point Braun et al.'s definition of 'exogenous variables' and add some further degree of complexity stemming from considerations about the nature of the political party system, the organization of the bureaucracy and the civil service, the degree of continuity/discontinuity in policy making, etc. which other studies have shown are fundamental to understand the policy making environment and the relation between think tanks, as knowledge producers, and policies. Amongst the exogenous variables we have also included a section on policy linkages which, though often initiated by the organizations, is clearly dependent on the overall political environment, the demand for research and evidence from policy makers, etc.

Exogenous variables

a. Political-institutional variables[11] including: extent of civil and political freedoms in the country, existence of political demand for research, windows of opportunity

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[10] Is there a difference between these two? Some organizations have a management team that is different from the directory, while in others researchers perform strategic and management roles.

for TTs to make an impact on policy (economic, political or social crises), characteristics of the bureaucracy and degree of government capacity, degree of political stability/instability and existence of a structured and competitive political party system, characteristics of the academic community; donor policies; the existence or not of a philanthropic community

b. Media: characteristics of the local media and relationships between research producers and the media (if there is independent credible media)

c. Policy linkages[12:] general relation of TTs with the policy making community, policy environment and its openness to research

II.3 Measures of impact

Here we have included variables that reflect attempts both at forward-tracking from research to consequences (see literature review), as well as measures seeking to establish the use of research among stakeholder communities. The selection and organization of the variables has drawn from a number of sources as discussed in the literature review, in particular from (Davies, Nutley, and Walter 2005; McGann 2011)

In the case studies, we urged researchers to give due consideration to all the variables included, but it is clear that the different information that will emerge from the cases will reflect the overall approaches to research and impact supported by the different organizations, as well as the nature of the environments in which they operate. We believe these differences are key for the discussion and advancement of these and other similar institutions' struggles to measure impact.

Output indicators

a. Publications: reports, working-papers (non-peer reviewed), papers in academic journals, other peer-reviewed papers and editorial membership

b. Internet activity in owned website[13]

c. Media appearances: written contributions by the organization's members to the media, references to the organization's research (in general or from individual

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[11] Based on (Braun et al. 2010)

[12] Based on the TTI M&E strategy

[13] A post in the blog 'On Think Tanks' proposes a 'Pragmatic Guide to monitoring and evaluating research communications using digital research tools', which proposes strategies and tools for evaluating a number of communications strategies included amongst the output indicators listed here (see On Think Tanks, blog)

members) in the media, television appearances, radio appearances and appearances or other references on the internet (other than in own website)

d. Advisory roles played by the organization's members to[14] domestic and international policy makers and oher relevant institutions (civil society, etc)

f. Networking participation[15] in national or international policy or other thematic networks by individual members and by the organization as such

g. Conference and seminar presentations (both as presenters or commentators and both internally and externally organized)

h. Educational activities conducted within the organization (courses, workshops, other).[16] It should also include extension activities related to promotion of research and enhancing research capabilities within and out of the institution (organizing research methodology courses, internship programmes, exchanges of scholars and others)

i. Other roles played by the organizations' members including teaching in higher education institutions, positions in government institutions, positions in civil society institutions and others

Indicators of research use

a. Invitations to provide expert judgement to[17] policy-makers, media and others

b. Invitations to participate in panel deliberations

c. Citation of published works by the organization and its members

d. Visits to the organizations' website

Reputational and final impact measures

a. Stakeholder engagement to assess their perception of the organization (including groups such as policymakers, civil society, the media, the private sector) through the use of surveys, interviews or focus groups.

b. Awards granted to the organization

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[14] This includes participation in government consultative committees, positions in government, as well as more informal advisory roles to policy makers, as well as similar roles with regards to other relevant civil society organizations (Ombudsmen Offices, international organizations such as the World Bank, etc.)

[15] This includes participation in networks such as the Global Development Network, etc.

[16] In this point, for many TTs training in research is very important, both through the courses offered and through the training of young researchers. One possibility is to include an indicator that looks at alumni.

[17] These include invitations to members of the organization to provide an expert judgement with regards to issues of public interest that might be the object of debate (They are more specific invitations than longer term advisory roles served by members of the organization.

c. Examples of research use and influence: of success in challenging the conventional wisdom, of recommendations considered or adopted by policymakers or civil society organizations or societal impacts of the TT research (it seeks to capture ultimate impact, which, in the final stance, refers to actual changes in people's lives). Impact can also be achieved through people trained by the institution.

These examples are the most important in terms that only through them qualitative impact, context and process (the nature of the policy and/or specific projects) can be considered.

III. CASE STUDIES

It is important to keep in mind that the objectives of the case studies is to reflect upon the different aspects and elements of impact assessment and the extent to which each organization is measuring these issues, and not to show their influence or impact

CASE 1:
INSTITUTE OF POLICY STUDIES OF SRI LANKA (IPS)

Context

The Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS) was conceived in the mid-1980s as an autonomous research institution, designed to work in close cooperation with the government and other relevant stakeholders. It was established by an Act of Parliament in 1988, and became a legal entity by formal gazette notification in 1990. Today, the IPS is recognized as a national and regional centre of excellence in socio-economic policy research with a total research and support staff strength of 55. In-house research capacity includes nine senior researchers and 16 mid and junior level staff. The Institute's research program at present focuses on eight thematic areas, aimed to provide an integrated analysis of the medium to longer term development challenges facing Sri Lanka in order to meet the fundamental policy objectives of sustainable growth, equity, and poverty alleviation. The Institute's annual budget stands at approximately US$ one million.

Although established by an Act of Parliament, operational autonomy from financial and administrative regulations of the government was very much a part of the rationale for IPS to emerge as an independent policy 'think tank'. In retrospect, this autonomy has proved to be significant. Although closely linked to the policymaking process, the

Institute's financial and administrative independence enables it to set an independent research program, and be both constructive and critical as a promoter of policy advice.

I. Conceptions of Impact

The IPS has two clear conceptions of policy impact. First, as a semi-government organization,[18] the IPS takes the view that its ability to influence policy making at the national level is its most critical objective. Such policy influence can be direct and measurable such as in the case of inputs to government policy frameworks. In the second instance, given a clear mandate to "engage in, and to encourage, foster and facilitate socio economic research",[19] the contribution made by the IPS to national development policy debates in order to generate awareness and knowledge is considered another key indicator of impact. Here, the impact on policy may be indirect and harder to capture, but can be as important in policy formulation by building a critical mass of support and a knowledge base for policy reform.

II. FACTORS INFLUENCING IMPACT

1. Endogenous Organizational Variables

1a Mission statement

As a semi-government research organization, the IPS can face complex challenges, dependent in part on the prevailing socio-political environment within which it aims to influence the policy process. Its overriding objective is to ensure that it is perceived to be an independent and credible source of research-based policy analysis. Thus, the Institute's mission statement places singular emphasis on timely, independent and high quality research, and a commitment to inform and influence the public policy debate. The priority focus on independent, academically sound research cements the credibility of the organization, and in turn allows the IPS to meet its secondary objective of informing and facilitating knowledge transfer towards the policy sector through engagement with a broader constituent base. The IPS' mandate as expressed in its mission statement has remained consistent since the establishment of the organization.

1b Main functions performed

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[18] Although the IPS is established by an Act of Parliament and comes under the purview of the Ministry of Finance and Planning, it functions outside the formal government sector with operational autonomy in financial and administrative matters conferred by the Act.

[19] Parliament of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, Act No. 53 of 1988.

The IPS attempts to strike a balance between academic production and information production. Whilst academic production is considered to be critical to establish credibility on the basis of research rigor, given the Institute's overall mandate to inform and influence the policy process, the main function performed is information production. Networking is an integral part of the knowledge transfer process for IPS – to strengthen research capacity as well as outreach of its research – and is considered the third most important function performed. The IPS is not performing a policy advocacy role explicitly to date, but is moving in this direction over time. So far advocacy has been limited to engaging with stakeholders and encouraging an informed debate about particular policy reforms.

1c Organizational characteristics and resources

IPS is established by an Act of Parliament (1988) designed to have formal links to the government of Sri Lanka, along with financial and administrative autonomy. It is managed by a Board of Governors, including three ex-officio representatives of key economic policy agencies and three appointed members from the academia and private sector that provide overall guidance to the Institute's operations. Whilst the IPS has a Finance and Administrative Unit, operational management and strategic planning rests with internal committees that have been established over time, comprising of senior research and administrative staff.

At its inception, the IPS received financial support from the government of The Netherlands and counterpart funding from the government of Sri Lanka. The IPS gradually diversified its income base, including the establishment of an Endowment Fund in 1995 with contributions from external donors, in preparation for long-term financial autonomy and sustainability. With the phase-out of assistance from The Netherlands in 2004, the IPS made the transition to financial independence. Today, the main sources of the Institute's annual budget are project earnings (50%), Think Tank Initiative grant (20%), interest income received from IPS investments (12%), and an annual government grant for meeting maintenance costs of the IPS building (12%).

To build and retain a core cadre of highly skilled staff in both research and support categories is a prime concern for the IPS. Whilst recruitment to junior research positions – requiring at minimum an undergraduate degree – is not a problem, the IPS does face problems in finding suitable candidates at mid and senior levels. Senior researchers are expected to have post-graduate qualifications with a strong publications record. At present, the IPS has eight senior researchers (six with PhDs,

and two PhD candidates). In-house training and encouraging pursuit of post-graduate studies have been employed as the key means of developing resource capacity in research. Within the existing financial base of the IPS, all efforts have been made to offer a flexible incentive structure to attract and retain staff. However, the IPS acknowledges that it cannot always match financial remuneration offered by the private sector/donor agencies, but instead focuses on building a conducive environment for research within the organization.

1d Research management

With the expansion of IPS research activities and staff, a new position of Deputy Director was created in 2005 to oversee the setting and implementation of the Institute's core research program, and release the Executive Director from day-to-day management of research activities. A Research Committee comprising senior staff was also put in place with the responsibility for setting an independent medium-term research agenda, encapsulating key policy issues under thematically selected areas of research. These are arrived at through a careful assessment of the perceived areas of policy need, including discussions with relevant stakeholders. Whilst all attempts are made to ensure that any projects fall in line with the research agenda, some limitations are acknowledged given continued reliance on project based funding to bridge annual expenditure gaps. Moreover, there are instances where the IPS has been unable to generate funding, or generate funding in a timely fashion, in areas it considers to be of national economic interest. To overcome such shortcomings, core funding from the Institute's own resources are made available. A good example is the production of its annual flagship report "Sri Lanka: State of the Economy" which explores areas for policy attention that IPS considers to be critical for policy attention. IPS funds have been supplemented with core grant funding provided under TTI to meet such research gaps since 2010.

1e Type of research produced

The primary output of the IPS is applied policy research. This is produced mainly in the form of reports that explore policy gaps and recommend viable options for consideration of government, donor agencies and private sector to assist in policy formulation. Such policy analysis encompasses the production and analysis of arguments. Depending on the target audience, the IPS produces varying research outputs in the form of easy to digest policy briefs, blog articles and research papers for dissemination of its research and analysis in an attempt to build a wider constituency of support for certain policy measures.

While much of the research is focused on addressing national policy issues, drawing on comparative experiences, there is also a substantive body of research that takes a regional South Asian perspective, especially where the IPS collaborates with other regional research partners. The most prolific area of research where the Institute has gained regional expertise is in trade related issues.

1f Primary audiences

The primary audience targeted by the IPS is that of national policymakers. Here, a distinction needs to be made between technocrats and politicians. While the IPS attempts to gain the attention of politicians, it considers technocrats as the more appropriate target audience for maximizing policy influence in view of changes of government at regular intervals, frequent changes in ministerial portfolios, limited time available for politicians to devote to details of policy development, etc. The third most important audience is the private sector, particularly as stakeholders to be kept informed of knowledge derived from research and thus act as an indirect means of influencing policy. The fourth most important segment is civil society, to inform and generate/contribute to discussions on policy imperatives. The IPS also targets the academia and donor community to share research experiences and build collaborative partnerships, and thereby raise awareness of policy issues at a more specialist level.

1g Communication and diffusion strategies deployed

As the IPS' research activities and output expanded, a Publications and Communications Unit was established in 2002 and given overall responsibility for in-house desk top production of its research output, organizing conferences, managing web content, and liaising with the media. The Institute as of necessity manages its exposure to public comment strategically in view of sensitivities that can arise from its semi-government status. The climate for open debate and discussion on policy issues vary, with some governments indicating a greater willingness to engage in dialogue as opposed to others. It is also often the case that some policy strategies are politically more sensitive than others. In such circumstances, engaging in public debate can often be more challenging for a semi-government organization such as the IPS, relative to think tanks that operate as NGOs.

Written research dissemination takes the form of working papers, policy briefs, blog articles, articles in the print media, a blog digest, etc. In addition, presentation of research findings at conferences, inputs at meetings with policymakers and media

interviews are some other forms of dissemination strategies adopted. Networks with the media are established on a selective basis, whereby the media are invited to cover IPS dialogues or researchers accept invitations to be interviewed in both print and electronic media. IPS research output is publicized via its website and select material is made available for free downloads. Efforts are currently underway to incorporate social media tools into the IPS' dissemination/communication strategies. A searchable database of stakeholders has been developed recently in an effort to better target research dissemination to the most relevant audience by way of e-mail alerts, etc. Besides targeted diffusion of research output to policymakers, the IPS brings together policymakers and other relevant actors in discussions and dialogues through conferences and seminars.

1h Networks

Whilst the IPS is formally engaged in many collaborative research networks, from a perspective of policy impact, the most critical are the policy committees on which researchers serve on invitation. These can be at the highest level (e.g., National Economic Council chaired by the President of Sri Lanka) or ministry level committees set up for continuous policy review or short term committees set up to formulate specific policy frameworks. Invitations to serve on such committees arise partly from the reputation the organization has built over time or as a result of networks built by individual researchers in their specific areas of expertise. The fact that the latter tends to dominate suggests that although access to policymakers helps, credible research does capture policy attention and thereby enables access to the policymaking process.

The IPS maintains its network of contacts in policy and academic communities both in Sri Lanka and the region through collaborative research, formal research networks and conferences. Indeed, the IPS is uniquely situated as the only institution in Sri Lanka undertaking socio-economic research on a continuous basis. Sri Lanka's university system lacks a culture of research as a result of which the IPS fills a much needed gap in producing both academic and applied policy research. The collaborative research networks that the IPS is engaged in across South Asia, as well as further a field is testament to its recognition as a respected economic policy research centre.

2. Exogenous Variables
2a Political-institutional variables

Sri Lanka's democratic process functions within a broad two-party political system. Since the mid-1990s, the country has witnessed significant political fluidity in the context of a rise in coalition government arrangements. In practice, policy formulation under coalition arrangements in Sri Lanka's democratic process often stall or hinder progress in implementing a consistent set of policy reforms. The relatively unstable nature of such arrangement also encourages a more short-term view on policymaking. Another related development has been a tendency for policymaking to be concentrated in a few hands, made up of both politicians and high-level bureaucrats where the bureaucracy itself is highly politicized. This often leads to an erosion of talent within the formal government structures.

In this climate, there are two clear implications for think tanks such as IPS. Access to the policymaking process becomes more constrained, while lack of policy consistency hinders the ability to influence policy in any consistent fashion. Second, as a semi-government institution, the organization can face challenges in retaining its autonomy and independence from overt political influence to promote a particular policy perspective. The credibility of the organization, build through a consistent approach to steer an independent path, has stood the IPS well in working within Sri Lanka's often complex political-institutional environment.

2b Media

Sri Lanka's media coverage of socio-economic policy issues tends to be weak. The media is often divided along the lines of state-controlled and private media and coverage of issues gets politicized accordingly. Policymakers tend to be more sensitive to criticism in some areas more so than others. As a result, the Institute's relations with the media are typically handled on a case-by-case basis, dependent on both the nature of the topic under discussion and the type of media involved. Whilst IPS has made inroads into the mainstream English language media, it has been much less successful in networking with the local language media, whose readership encompasses the broad spectrum of civil society at large and where debates on policy discussions can often be very different to those taking place in the more business-oriented English language media. Recent initiatives to better target local language media readership include efforts to translate IPS research into short abstracts that can be placed in local language (Sinhala and Tamil) print media.

2c Policy linkages

The IPS has built up fairly strong links with the policymaking community over the years. The presence of ex-officio members of key economic agencies in the Governing Board and IPS representation in policy committees and ministry level contacts provide vital insights into policy issues where research gaps exist. In addition, the Institute's unique position as a semi-government organization, but with considerable operational autonomy has also proved useful in bridging and bringing together various stakeholders such as the donor community and private sector into the policy discourse. The openness to research in Sri Lanka's policy environment is not static and changes over time. While at times there is more space for policy engagement, it can be less so at other times. However, the IPS sees considerable advantages in having created the space to set an independent research agenda that allows it to make use of windows of opportunity that arise even when the general climate for involving independent research to influence policy is on the wane.

III. MEASURES OF IMPACT

1. Output Indicators

From the outset, the IPS has had an internal quarterly reporting system in place, requiring all research staff to submit an account of their research activities for the quarter. This included research studies underway or completed, papers presented at conferences, publications, meetings attended, supervision of students, participation in policymaking bodies and other positions held, etc. The information received was compiled into a Quarterly Report (QR) thereafter, summarizing the research activities/output of the organization. From 1997, the IPS began to put out an Annual Report, detailing research activities/output for the year, drawing on its QRs as well including new elements. The information contained in the Annual Report include a summary of main research studies completed in the year, publications, presentations made, policy engagements with the government and private sector and networks of collaborative research established. The Annual Report also gives the organization's audited financial accounts for the year.

In 2010, with the introduction of the Think Tank Initiative (TTI) core funding, one of the key objectives of the IPS was to improve its existing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) arrangements. With this in mind, the IPS devised a searchable database reporting system drawing on some elements of the Annual Monitoring Questionnaire (AMQ) of TTI. While still capturing the same elements as before, a more detailed reporting of activities has been incorporated, including allocation of research staff time spent on the various activities being reported, whereby the database can generate a summary

of information as needed. Where IPS had to rely on manual counting to measure and report variables such as reports, publications and seminars, the new searchable database introduced from the beginning of 2011 allows easy access to gathering the required information. From the individual reports submitted by each researcher, a summary of research activities for the quarter is extracted by the Database Manager and compiled into a hard copy document and archived as before.

1a Publications

The vast majority of IPS research studies are produced in the form of reports. The numbers of research reports completed are monitored quarterly as per reporting requirements in place as explained previously. Some of these are published formally at the behest of agencies that may have commissioned them, published jointly by the IPS and collaborative agencies. Some reports remain as unpublished documents, particularly when commissioned by a government agency for limited circulation. The IPS has its own peer reviewed working papers (Research Studies Series), primarily authored by IPS staff, but also can include submitted works of external researchers. In addition, there are external publications of research staff, both locally and internationally in academic journals, books, working papers, blog contributions, policy briefs, etc. These are also measured and captured easily through the quarterly reporting arrangements referred to earlier. Editorial membership is not currently measured in any systematic fashion as the numbers tend to be few. However, it can be incorporated into current reporting systems quite easily if required.

The compiled QR of the IPS is submitted to the Board of Governors for their perusal. The information on research activities and output of the IPS on a quarterly basis is monitored by both the Executive Director and the Deputy Director. The Research Committee is kept informed of progress and areas where activities and/or output need to be improved for the IPS to meet its organizational objectives.

1b Internet activity in owned website

The IPS monitors hits on its website as a means of tracking overall website usage, source of hits, areas of interest, downloads, etc. With the launch of the IPS blog site in 2009, hits on blog articles are also measured from time to time. Whilst such reports are made available from periodically or on request, the Institute does not systematically record internet activity in any formal reporting arrangements. As the IPS intends in the near term to upgrade its website and introduce social media as a central means of

dissemination, incorporating measures to capture, record and monitor activity on its website will be an integral part of this process.

1c Media appearances

The IPS has a policy of selective media coverage (both print and electronic) of its events, depending on the nature of the issue covered. If controversial or political sensitive issues are under discussion, the IPS may opt to leave the media out in order to encourage a frank exchange of views. In other instances, where raising public awareness and/or disseminating research output is the primary objective, select media are invited. Clearly, closer interaction with the media is viewed as important, but the often biased nature of the media coverage itself and poor reporting on economic issues have not encouraged the IPS to aggressively court the media. For instance, media appearances on TV programs largely occur only when researchers are invited, as opposed to IPS actively seeking such opportunities with the media.

IPS has made attempts to capture media coverage of its research or events, albeit with some limitations. References to IPS research, comments to the media by individual researchers or written contributions appearing in the mainstream English language press is collated by the Institute's Library on a daily basis. While this information is then archived in the IPS website, no separate archiving process is in place at present. The most significant limitation is that the monitoring is confined to the mainstream English media and overlooks local language media. Television appearances when formally interviewed are captured on a quarterly basis when research activities are reported by individual researchers. However, other television appearances, such as when a speech delivered at an event is broadcast independently, are not captured under current arrangements. Similarly, there is no system in place to capture and monitor references to IPS research or individual researchers appearing on the internet. This is largely due to lack of knowledge on how best to capture such indicators in a timely and efficient manner.

1d Advisory roles played by the organization's members

Advisory roles played by researchers to both domestic and international policymakers are again captured via quarterly reporting arrangements in place. These are also archived historically under the individual profiles of researchers available on the website. However, such archiving is not separate from website dissemination efforts and tends to be lost when profiles are removed as researchers leave the organization. With the implementation of the improved quarterly reporting arrangement mentioned

earlier, the IPS now captures such advisory engagements, including other stakeholders besides domestic and international policymakers. The Institute will have this information on a searchable database going into the future.

1e Networking participation

Network participation at the institutional level is captured and reported in the Annual Report of the IPS each year. This is a measure of the number of networks of which the IPS is formally affiliated to, but does not capture the number of occasions on which the network may have met in the course of the year. Moreover, formal participation in networks by individual researchers are not currently measured and monitored. Less formalized arrangements that constitute the vast bulk of networking opportunities, such as the presence of individual researchers at conferences/meetings, are reported on a quarterly basis. However, capturing formal network membership (such as that of GDN) has been overlooked to date, possibly due to the fact that these are more limited in occurrence, but it can be easily integrated into the IPS quarterly reporting system.

1f Conference and seminar presentations

Participation of IPS researchers, either as presenters or discussants/panelists is captured quarterly under the reporting arrangements in place as previously detailed. This is done so for events organized externally as well as internally, at both local and international levels. Under the current searchable database, the information on presentations made (by keywords) over any given time period can be extracted easily for measurement/monitoring purposes.

1g Education activities conducted within the organization

IPS training programs for external users are limited in frequency, but are captured within current quarterly reporting arrangements. However, the number of external participants is not captured, apart from perusing hard copy registration files. In the event that the Institute engages in more conducted training programs, measuring numbers trained will need to be incorporated into the monitoring process. At present, the bulk of educational activities conducted within the organization cover in-house training provided by staff. Here, quarterly reporting of research activities captures training provided by individual researchers, including supervision of interns, etc.

1h Other roles played by the organizations' members

The Institute's quarterly reporting on research activities also requires research staff to report on other roles played. These include teaching in universities, other education

institutions, supervision of student thesis, positions in government, private sector and civil society institutions and bodies, etc. These are captured easily on the existing database.

2. Indicators of Research in User Communities

2a Invitations to provide expert judgment

Invitations to provide expert judgment to policymakers, media or others was not a variable that IPS attempted to estimate and monitor in any definitive manner. These were invariably reported by individual researchers but there was no consistent fashion in which to extract the information at any given time. However, with the implementation of a stronger M&E mechanism under the TTI grant, these variables are now being captured on a quarterly basis and can be easily accessed at any given time.

2b Invitations to participate in panel deliberations

Invitations to participate in panel deliberations are captured under the Institute's quarterly reporting arrangements. However, no distinction is drawn between that of being a panelist or discussant and the two are grouped together. This is primarily because of a perception that there is little differentiation to be drawn between them. In future, should it be recognized that panel deliberations should be captured as a distinct measure, it can be easily incorporated into the Institute's current reporting mechanisms.

2c Citations of published works by the organization and its members

The IPS Library started to build up a database of citations of its published works, prompted by learning from its application process for the TTI grant. However, this is confined for the moment to citations in policy documents, (e.g., government and donor agency documents) and does not capture citations in other published works such as working papers, journal articles, etc. There are also limitations to the current process of capturing citations in policy documents as the Library depends on information received of recently released documents whereby there is a strong possibility of some documents being excluded. Extending the database to include citations in working papers, journal articles, etc., can be done by resorting to such tools as Google Scholar. This is an area currently under exploration by the IPS. Another key variable that the IPS captures is citations of its work in Parliamentary debates, particularly during annual budget debates.

2d Visits to the organizations' website

The IPS in-house web development team monitors visits to the site on a regular basis. The software permits monitoring of visits at the aggregate, by country, per page, by platform, etc. The current monitoring system also gives visits disaggregated by new and return visits. Visits to the IPS blog site (Talking Economics) are also measured separately by aggregate and each blog by number of visits, by country, platform, etc. However, although such indicators are monitored, there is no process in place to regularly report progress. An update is made available on request or if there is any significant development. On occasion a progress report is circulated.

3. Reputational and Final Impact Measures

3a Document downloads from the organization's website

The IPS web site monitoring allows for measuring downloads of its web content. This is monitored by the web development team, although there is no regular reporting in place. A report is made available on request or on occasions a summary update is circulated to relevant staff. As at present, the IPS website offers limited freely downloadable documents since it also aims to raise revenue through the sale of its publications. However, it is the intention to allow more research material to be freely downloaded not only to increase web based dissemination, but also as a means of wider dissemination of the Institute's research output.

3b Stakeholder engagements to assess their perceptions of the organization

The IPS does not engage in surveys, interviews or focus groups to assess the perception of stakeholders. On a very few occasions, the Institute dispatched a questionnaire on the relevance/quality of its research as projected in its annual flagship publication on the 'State of the Economy'. Although the feedback was useful, the process is not institutionalized as a regular occurrence. As part of its TTI objectives, however, the IPS identified the need to better evaluate the relevance of its research and policy influence with the assistance of external expertise.

3c Awards granted to the organization

Sri Lanka's Presidential Awards for research currently captures only published research in the physical sciences, although efforts are currently underway to extend this to include the social sciences. In addition, given the Institute's leaning towards applied policy research as opposed to more academic research, pursuing research awards has not been identified as a factor to be measured and monitored.

3d Examples of research use and influence

Example of success in challenging the conventional wisdom of bureaucrats and elected officials

Sri Lanka has been aggressively promoting foreign employment for several reasons. Foreign remittances not only provide much needed foreign currency to the country but it is also an effective means of alleviating poverty. The government's present policy is to promote foreign employment for skilled workers with the main intention of increasing remittances. However, with unemployment levels reaching below 5 per cent and industries facing shortages of skilled workers, it is apparent that labour is becoming a scarce resource in the country. IPS research by way of published reports, books and papers presented has persistently highlighted the need to examine domestic labour requirements and to expand training capacity to increase the output of skilled workers in the country before launching initiatives to promote foreign employment, particularly of skilled workers. IPS is voicing its concern in this regard at the national level Advisory Committee Meetings on Labour Migration convened by the Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare. IPS policy inputs in this regard are being considered by the Advisory Committee in formulating its policy position on migration.

Examples of recommendations considered or adopted by policymakers and civil society organizations

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are the backbone of the Sri Lankan economy, particularly in regions that are lagging behind in growth. However, Sri Lanka is yet to have a comprehensive SME policy and SME development strategy. In Sri Lanka's post-conflict growth strategy, the government is looking to drive industrial development more aggressively. The Ministry of Industry and Commerce set up an Expert Committee on Industrial Development to strategize the way forward and devise a Five Year Action Plan (2011-2015). IPS staff served on this committee and authored critical sections in the final plan, which is now the key working document of the Ministry. In addition, inputs provided by an IPS staff to a Draft SME Policy are now being considered by the line ministry and National Enterprise Development Authority (NEDA). In advocating for a new, holistic approach to SME development, IPS researcher has provided written and oral inputs to committees and forums such as the NEDA Policy Advocacy Working Group that brought together government, private sector (chambers) as well as civil society (selected NGOs, INGOs).

Examples of societal impacts of research produced by the organization

At the close of Sri Lanka's three decades long conflict in May 2009, the Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights convened a High Level Steering Committee

to develop a National Framework Proposal on Reintegration of Ex-Combatants to Civilian Life in relation to approximately 10,000 surrendered armed combatants. IPS researchers serving in the Working Group on Economic Reintegration prepared the background policy document detailing necessary steps required to allow ex-combatants to regain their livelihoods in post-conflict Sri Lanka. In this effort, inputs from line ministries, donor agencies and NGOs were sought to arrive at a concrete set of policy recommendations. With the implementation of the National Policy Framework, of which economic reintegration was a critical component, the rehabilitation and reintegration of most ex-combatants has been successfully pursued by the government since the end of the conflict.

3e Issues in monitoring impact

Given the IPS' core objective of attempting to influence policymaking at the national level, monitoring direct IPS contributions to government policy frameworks and its research citations in policy documents (of government and donor agencies in particular) is the most relevant estimate of impact. However, current monitoring of the above is not perfect and there are shortcomings in the way these are measured at present as elucidated elsewhere. In addition, it is most often the case that many government policy documents do not as a principle provide a bibliography/reference to material drawn from research inputs, including where material drawn from IPS inputs. Participation of IPS researchers in policymaking committees is also another key indicator that is being easily monitored, although the impact on policy formulation per se may not always be obvious.

A second key objective of the IPS is to foster and encourage public policy engagement and here, participation of IPS research staff in seminars, panels, media appearances, publications, etc. are easily measured and monitored. However, it is difficult to estiamte the impact of such engagements on policy, either directly or indirectly.

The Institute's quarterly report of research activities and output are compiled into a Quarterly Report submitted to the Board of Governors as mentioned previously to allow members to monitor progress. In addition, the IPS is required by its status as an organization established by an Act of Parliament to submit its Annual Report to the ministry under which it is gazetted (Ministry of Finance and Planning).

Internally, the compiled information is perused regularly by the Executive Director and Deputy Director to monitor research activities, output and outreach of the IPS. The

information also provides the necessary inputs to monitor research staff performance, in line with a Performance Development Review (PDR) introduced in 2006. With the inclusion of time spent on various research activities in the current reporting system, the intention is to analyze the information collected to assist in strategic planning for the future, be it in human resource development (e.g., time allocated for training), improving outreach (e.g., time allocated for research vs. dissemination), etc.

IV. CONCRETE EXAMPLES OF IMPACT MEASUREMENT

Measuring policy impact: Influencing Sri Lanka's trade policy agenda

IPS has an established history of influence in the area of trade policy formulation in Sri Lanka. When Sri Lanka began to focus its trade policy on preferential trade agreements from the mid-1990s, IPS research output began to actively concentrate on the implications to Sri Lanka's economy of such trade agreements.[20] The key issues examined being to assess whether such agreements are likely to result in a net welfare gain or loss to the economy, the scope of liberalization, etc., and to make relevant policy recommendations with regards to formulating a coherent overall trade policy framework.

Through a considerable research output in the form of reports, articles in peer reviewed international journals, conference papers, etc, the IPS was able over time to establish a reputation for high quality trade policy research, both locally and internationally. Its reputation within the region was made evident by the selection of the IPS as the independent consultants to the Secretariat of the South Asian Association for Regional Economic Cooperation (SAARC) to prepare a report outlining issues to be dealt in drafting a 'Framework for a South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA)' (2003). As the outreach of its trade policy research grew, IPS staff were also invited as faculty for training programs on trade related issues, including the delivery of training under the Regional Trade Policy Course conducted by the World Trade Organization (WTO), Geneva.

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[20] Kelegama, S., 1996, "SAPTA and Its Future"**,** *South Asian Survey,* Vol. 3, Nos. 1&2; Kelegama, S., 1999, "SAPTA and its Future" in E. Gonsalves and N. Jetly (eds.), *The Dynamics of South Asia: Regional Cooperation and SAARC,* Sage, New Delhi, 1999; Weerakoon, D., 2001, "Indo-Lanka Free Trade Agreement: How Free Is It?", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 34, No. 8; Weerakoon, D., and J. Wijayasiri, 2002, "Regionalism in South Asia: The Relevance of SAPTA for Sri Lanka", *South Asia Economic Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 1.

As the Institute's reputation in trade policy research grew, so too did its collaborative efforts in the policy process in Sri Lanka. Early collaborative efforts included the preparation of analytical reports on trade policy for a 'Presidential Committee on the South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement' (1998) and 'Joint Study Group Report on India-Sri Lanka Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)' (2003). Such policy collaboration was complemented by invited participation of IPS researchers into key technical committees set up to formulate Sri Lanka's position in trade negotiations. These included representation in the Macro and Trade Policy Framework Steering Committee (2002-04), Task Force on Trade (2002-04) and the Trade and Tariff Committee (2004-10) established by the government. The IPS was thus able to directly influence the policy process through such partnerships. For instance, paragraphs detailing the government's approach to external trade policy spelt out in the Budget 2005 were a direct input of the IPS through its participation in policymaking committees.

As the Institute's trade research capacity and expertise strengthened, the IPS was drawn even closer to the policy process with the inclusion of its staff in official trade negotiating delegations. These included Chairing the Technical Committee on the Pakistan-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (2001-02), official delegate of the Committee of Experts on Trade Negotiations on SAFTA, and Chair of Negotiations in Trade in Services of the India-Sri Lanka CEPA (2005-08).

In policy terms, it is often difficult to discern that research output has led to any policy impact per se. Nevertheless, in the area of trade policy research, the IPS carved out a fair degree of space to influence the policymaking process on trade issues in Sri Lanka. Its success has been contingent two key factors: (i) a timely response to an evolving area of policy research, substantiated by a critical mass of high-quality and rigorous research, and (ii) the retention of senior researchers working on trade policy at the IPS over time, allowing the Institute to establish strong networks in the trade policymaking community in the country.

The Institute's influence in the area of trade policy has also not been confined solely to shaping policy by working with policymakers directly, but this has also been accompanied by efforts to inform and building a broader constituency of support for certain policy actions. This is perhaps most clear in the IPS' engagement in the CEPA policy discussion process. The extensive body of work carried out by the IPS on regional integration issues strongly suggests that Sri Lanka has much to gain from

integration with a rapidly expanding Indian economy. As Chair of the Sri Lankan delegation on trade in services and economic cooperation under CEPA, the IPS has strongly advocated the benefits of such an arrangement. Indeed, it was in a position to play an active role in building support for liberalization measures through wide stakeholder consultations. As would be expected in any reform process, there has also been opposition to CEPA from sections of stakeholders. The Institute has been at the forefront in attempts to broaden stakeholder participation and address such concerns through public seminars, media interviews, policy briefs, etc., using its research to provide an objective forum to bring together policy makers, business community, academia, and civil society for informed debates. As outstanding stakeholder concerns are addressed, the CEPA is expected to become a reality in the near future – where the IPS can take some credit for being an important contributor in the policy formulation process.

Measuring policy impact: IPS research on public enterprise reform

Research carried out by the IPS in the area of public enterprise or state-owned enterprise (SOE) reform is an example of work where measuring policy impact is a challenging exercise. As will be evidenced in this case study, IPS' research on SOE reform points to the divergence between influencing the policy process – through initiating and stimulating informed discourse amongst disparate stakeholders in the policy process for instance – and impacting on a specific and tangible policy output. Moreover, IPS' engagement within the policy process in this regard has not comprised a series of well-defined, linear events. Rather, the trajectory of work in this area has traced the contours of policy cycles pertaining to the political and institutional context within which the Institute's research has been embedded.

The Institute's research on public enterprise reform began in the early to mid-1990s with an emphasis on understanding the conditions and mechanisms for privatization or ownership change. This phase of work corresponded with the political and economic realities prevalent in Sri Lanka during what the policy literature terms the "second wave of liberalization".[21] Budgetary transfers to loss-making SOEs averaged around 10 per cent of GDP indicating that the macro-economic fallout of wavering on public enterprise reforms could not be ignored for much longer and the donor community made aid contingent on macro-economic stabilization. The political leadership of the

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[21]Dunham, D and Kelegama, S. (1995) *Economic Reform and Governance: the second wave of liberalization in Sri Lanka 1989-93.* Institute of Policy Studies, Research Studies, Governance Series No.2. Colombo: IPS.

time undertook a large scale divestiture program, with the partial and full privatization of around 43 entities.

Although the direct impact of IPS' work is hard to capture in terms of policy outputs, the Institute established itself as a key hub of expertise in the area of privatization and public enterprise reform during these years. Most visibly, IPS staff served on the Board of Directors of the Public Enterprise Reform Commission (PERC), a body established in 1996 to manage and make crucial policy decisions on the privatization process. IPS researchers also served on government appointed policy committees in specific sectors where public enterprise reforms were underway – for example the Fare Commission to restructure passenger bus and transport fares set up in 1999. Direct involvement in the policy process has been complemented by rigorous research, with outputs ranging from policy briefs and working papers to journal articles and chapters in edited volumes.[22] IPS researchers have also been called upon to engage with stakeholders in the policy space through media interviews, local and international conference presentations and workshops on issues relating to privatization.

Although the political leadership in the 1989-1993 years did not focus on the importance of robust regulatory institutions in the privatization process or on any serious evaluation of options other than divestiture for SOE reform, the IPS initiated research on these crucial areas, perceived to be critical policy gaps by the Institute.[23] The establishment of the Institute's presence in policy discourse in these areas was also reflected in the appointment of IPS researchers to key policy committees such as the Policy Development Committee for Infrastructure Development (2002-04) and the Policy Development Steering Committee on ICT/Telecommunications Development (2002-04) set up by the government; and the frequent involvement of IPS researchers on sector-specific issues such as various consultations on the liberalisation of international telephony and licencing carried out by the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka (TRCSL). IPS researchers were also called upon by government officials to carry out formal training programmes on regulatory issues in

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[22]For instance: Kelegama, S. (1993) *Privatisation in Sri Lanka: The Experience During the Early Years of Implementation.* Colombo: Sri Lanka Economic Association; Kelegama, S. (1997) Privatisation and the Public Exchequer. *Asia Pacific Development Journal,* 4 (1), 14-25; Knight-John, M. (2005) "Assessing Privatization in Sri Lanka: Distribution and Governance". In *Reality Check: The Distributional Impact of Privatization in Developing Countries* (Eds. John Nellis& Nancy Birdsall) Washington D.C: CGD.
[23]For example: Knight-John, M. (1997) "Private Participation in Infrastructure Development". In *Infrastructure Development in Sri Lanka: Regulation, Policy and Finance.* Hong Kong: Asia Law & Practice; Knight-John, M. (1997) *Performance Contracting: A Strategy for Public Enterprise Reform in Sri Lanka?* Colombo: IPS.

Sri Lanka – for instance, a training session on 'Competition Policy in Sri Lanka' for new recruits of the Public Utilities Commission in 2003.

The Institute's early work in the area of regulatory governance in the infrastructure sector in particular paved the way for IPS to align its research program to the political economy realities in more recent years when the political leadership took a concerted decision to exclude privatization as an option for SOE reform and look instead to modalities such as public private partnerships (PPPs). IPS spearheaded research in Sri Lanka on Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) in collaboration with leading researchers from the University of Manchester and with a local team comprising diverse stakeholders from the private sector, media, and state regulatory entities. The findings of the RIA study were submitted to the highest levels of government, with the Finance Minister at the time citing the research at several media events.[24]

Based on the credibility and reputation of the Institute's work in this area, IPS researchers are often called upon by non-government stakeholders to engage in policy dialogue relating to critical issues of regulatory governance such as the nature of the state, political capture and the absence of independent regulatory institutions. However, the challenge the IPS faces in terms of policy impact is that there is very little meaningful engagement with government actors in what is increasingly perceived to be a shrinking political space.

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[24] See for instance: Lanka Business Online (2009) Sri Lanka public enterprises eating development capital: minister. *LBO*, 29th June (Online).

CASE 2: THE EXPERIENCE OF AFRICAN INSTITUTE FOR APPLIED ECONOMICS (AIAE)

CONTEXT

African Institute for Applied Economics (AIAE) was established in 2000 but began operations in 2001. It is an independent research organisation that seeks to promote evidence-based policymaking in Nigeria and Africa, by research, networking and capacity building. Its main areas of research are macroeconomic policy, public finance and fiscal policy, business environment and competitiveness as well as poverty and social-economics. The research personnel include 3 senior researchers (holding PhD) and 4 mid-level researchers (holding MSc Degrees). Annual budget in the past 4 years averaged about 140 million Nigerian Naira, that is, about, about 876,000 USD.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, an estimated 348 think tanks exist in a total of 48 countries carrying out policy research and advocacy across a wide range of social, economic and political issues. The think tanks are highly variable in terms of mix of research-advocacy, nature of ownership, governance and institutional systems, subject scope and geographical coverage. The bottomline of the typology is whether the think tank is a government department or semi-government, part of a university or privately owned. Across Sub-Saharan Africa, privately owned independent policy research institutions are mostly traceable to self-motivated professionals with prior university-based academic credentials and/or rich experiences working as top government technocrat or in international research and development agencies. By their antecedents, such promoters are able to attract resources and external support for the establishment of think tanks but often face sustainability challenges if governance is weak.

The wave of democratic systems of governance and the resulting opening up of the public policy spaces have challenged the TTs to develop their public relevance capacities for policy influence. While government-owned institutes are funded from public treasury and donors, the private policy research institutes are heavily dependent on donor-funded programmes and projects. Consequently, many private policy research institutes are heavily constrained by a limited resource base, due to the absence of long-term institutional funding for independent research. Their funding circumstances compel them to find funding from short-term consultancies and contract studies that tend to crowd out independent research.

I. AIAE's CONCEPTION OF IMPACT

Based on its mission and objectives, AIAE defines its impact by the extent of influence in the targeted research/scholarship, policy and practice communities. This implies that its expected impact is multidimensional and multifarious. AIAE would therefore assess its impact as an aggregation of the following, among others:

- Positive influence on capacity, networking and orientation of researchers and academics in its operating environment;
- Uptake and use of its research evidence by private sector and civil society;
- Uptake and use of its research findings and recommendations by policymakers and government authorities;
- Mention and use of its research information for public debates and policy discussions (conferences, workshops and seminars);
- Amount of public respect and credibility by means of requesting AIAE's expert opinions and judgements on national/regional economic policy questions;
- Requests and demand for its research and programme outputs including research papers, meeting documents, policy briefs, etc.;
- Responses of stakeholders and participants to invitations for research seminars, policy conferences and technical workshops;
- Invitations received from government and non-government agencies and organisations to serve in technical working groups or prepare background papers for policy initiatives; and
- Requests for internships and mentoring opportunities received from graduate students in social sciences, management sciences and humanities.

AIAE learning curve in measuring impact

Since 2003, the Institute has accumulated remarkably unique learning experience in monitoring its impact. The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system has been characterised by successive stages of development tied to circumstances and progress of organisational learning curve. Initially (in the first one or two years of commencement of operations), the M&E was sporadic and undefined. It was primarily driven by the need to document outputs and outcomes in terms of research and policy linkages (dialogue events and networking), for the main purpose of making proposals/applications for funding support, institutional profiling and responding to enquiries by donor and funders.

However, over time, the Institute recognised the need to go beyond just episodic stock-taking and case-specific reporting. Monitoring therefore progressed to the use of

more easily accessible and comprehensive documentation of our research and networking outputs, training outputs, policy influence outcomes and several organisational activities and their effects on our stakeholders. This period saw the use of several reporting and tracking techniques to assess our activities, outputs and impacts on stakeholders. The monitoring reports were mostly annual activity reports, financial reports, quarterly newsletters and the monitoring tools and techniques included the management meetings, annual staff appraisals[25], peer research meetings and research conferences, scheduled meetings of Board of Directors, survey of feedback from policy stakeholders in own-or other-organised conferences, workshops and seminars.

But, with the launch of the 5-year Strategic Plan 2009-2013 (Project Leading-Edge), the M&E became more systematic and functional. In developing the Strategic Plan, the critical challenge was planning amidst funding uncertainties. To cope with the situation, the Plan integrated a resource mobilisation plan to match the program portfolio. However, more than three years into the Strategic Plan period, most of the anticipated funding has not been realised, thereby underscoring the stakes in TTI's planning amidst funding uncertainties.

The Strategic Plan mainstreams a framework of benchmarks and indicators for monitoring and reporting performance and impacts. In order to advance the institutional mainstreaming of impact monitoring, AIAE in 2010 developed and adopted its Monitoring and Evaluation Policy, which has been further distilled into a Practice Manual specifying 'what needs to be monitored', 'who in the Institute should do it', 'when' and 'how'. The M&E Policy also covers the dissemination and use of reports of monitoring. The reports are disseminated mostly within AIAE, that is, shared across Departments and sent to the Board of Directors and Associate Fellows. Less often, the reports are circulated outside the Institute, except where there is a special external request or need. However, there is a large scope to explore mechanisms for sharing relevant elements of monitoring reports with outside stakeholders, as a way to promote public confidence and appreciation.

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[25] Research staff appraisal includes: development of fundable research projects, execution of research and studies, research publications and citations, attendance of conferences, workshops, participation in training courses, involvement in technical working groups, research networks and invitation for press interviews. Administrative staff are appraised depending on job description and assigned duties: contributions to research implementation, interpersonal relations, job knowledge, problem-solving and leadership skills, timeliness in delivery and steadfastness at work, among others.,

Currently, performance assessment, impact monitoring and evaluative learning are integral elements of the programming and execution of the Institute's research, research communication and policy linkages. The learning experience has been bolstered by the monitoring template (annual monitoring questionnaire) issued by the Think Tank Initiative . The process of answering the comprehensive and detailed questionnaire instils much discipline in tracking and documenting outputs and outcomes across a wide range of impact areas. Presently, the Institute's M&E framework, comprising indicator definition and tracking, performance measurement, reporting and documentation, is functional across multiple interlinked successive layers – the staff, the Departmental/Unit, the programme/project and the corporate/institutional.

Notwithstanding the progressive learning curve, daunting challenges beset efforts to institutionalise and operationalise M&E. Implementing and funding the M&E system has proved to be very tasking. Even though AIAE has now devoted its Communications and Relations Unit as the implementer of the M&E policy, the cost burden and logistical requirements are enormous, particularly considering the lean staff and absence of dedicated funding. Finding the right-size or best-fit organizational architecture for M&E is necessary to reconcile expectations and resources. In spite of having the M&E Policy and Manual, defining and measuring performance indicators remain hazy and the tracking covers mostly the output-outcome segment of results framework. Till date, AIAE is grappling with finding appropriate and valid mechanisms and tools for measuring and tracking penultimate and final end-user impacts. Tied to meaningful tracking of penultimate and final impacts is the imperative for well-deliberated longer-term programmes of research and policy engagement that can potentially generate discernible, more predictable changes. In addition, AIAE faces the challenge of how to deploy and harness the M&E system as the strategic driver of evaluative learning for organizational development. This entails having enduring mechanisms to tap and use M&E information as well as organising frameworks to appraise the M&E system itself.

II. FACTORS INFLUENCING IMPACT

1. Endogenous organizational characteristics
<u>1a Origin and mission</u>

The African Institute for Applied Economics (AIAE) is a not-for-profit, non-partisan, independent organization incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee in Nigeria in December 2000. AIAE was founded by mostly economists from within and outside Nigeria, based on a shared motivation to use good-quality research to constructively and proactively inform, support and influence public economic policy and public discourse in Nigeria and Africa. The Institute is devoted to economic policy research and facilitates policy advocacy, training and networking. It provides consultancy services to governments, local and international organizations and the Organized Private Sector (OPS). AIAE's vision is tied to Africa's economic and social development. AIAE envisions a renascent Africa that is democratic, prosperous and a major player in the global economy. In line with its vision, AIAE aims to provide leadership in helping Nigeria and Africa think through the emerging economic renaissance, by pursuing a mission "to promote evidence based decision making".

1b. Main functions

The mission of AIAE is to promote evidence-based decision making. The strategy mix for achieving this mission includes applied economics research, research networking, linkages with policymakers and stakeholders and capacity building. Within this framework, AIAE produces and facilitates the production of research and analytical evidence - both academic and applied- and takes deliberate measures to disseminate and transmit the findings and recommendations of the research to end-users including policymakers, private sector organisations and civil society organisations. Over the past eight years, the balance of research, research communication and policy dialogue and training has been in the ratio of 60%, 30% and 10% respectively. In order to compensate for relatively insufficient internal programming of advocacy, the Institute partners and collaborates with leading civil society and private sector organisations to use its research evidence for public debate, enlightenment and advocacy[26]. The mix of research, advocacy and training is reflected in the impact definition and measurement by the Institute, as monitoring and tracking tools are tailored to elicit achievements benchmarked according to the degrees of envisaged involvement in these respective areas. AIAE offers also critical educational, enlightenment and information resources for economics, management and social sciences students in neighbouring universities and for interested professionals from near and far places.

1c Organizational characteristics and governance

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[26] The Institute develops and implements joint advocacy activities together with civil society and private sector organizations.

The Institute is governed by the Board of Directors[27], with an Executive Director who functions as the head of research and administration. The Board provides strategic direction and policymaking and general oversight. Ranking next to the Executive Director in the organisational hierarchy is the management level officers including the Research Director (s), the Finance and Administration Manager and the Communications and Relations Manager.

Funding and income come from institutional or project-tied grants, independently generated research, client-commissioned studies, policy linkage projects, consultancies for technical assistance, training programmes and sales of publications. Total annual income of the Institute grew from about ₦35.8million in 2002 to about ₦104.4million in 2011, with average annual income from 2005-2011 at about ₦135.4 million[28]. The funding structure and research sourcing of the Institute are closely tied. Prior to the Think Tank Initiative grant, AIAE's research consisted of mostly commissioned studies and client-defined topics including donor-driven research projects. Hence, AIAE generated the bulk of its income (hovering between 35-80% during 2004-2009) from commissioned research and client-funded studies. However, with the Think Tank Initiative institutional core grant, AIAE has been able to initiate, develop and successfully execute a longer-term flagship research programme, which systematically builds-in scientific quality, policy influence and end-user feedback. Given the Think Tank Initiative grant, the proportion of grant to total income has increased considerably (to about 60%). Therefore, one major challenge of financial health is how to achieve stability of incomes and avoid irregular patterns of income inflow.

Human resources

The research execution model comprises three complementary mechanisms. First, there are full-time Researchers (7nos. as at 2011) who work as tenured employees[29] of the Institute. The second category is part-time employees who input varying number of days in a week on AIAE's research, based on monthly allowance. The third category is Associate Researchers who are affiliated to the Institute but networked into the Institute's research projects on case-by-case basis, but who are based primarily in respective employee institutions, particularly universities. Up to 60% of the total

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[27] The BoD consists of external members with the Executive Director as the only staff member.
[28] 848,902.82 USD, as at 28 May 2012.
[29] These are salaried employees with full employee benefits. But, they also earn honorarium from funded research and studies.

research output is produced by the Associate Researchers working on the Institute's research, occasioned by the insufficiency of in-house full-time research staff. In the coming years, the prospects of the Institute will largely depend on tackling the lingering challenge of recruiting and retaining critical research staff, particularly those with PhD in Economics or related fields. Tackling this challenge will require very innovative incentive structures for promoting career growth and professional advantages.

1d and 1e Research Management and Research Priorities

The selection of research is underpinned by a mix of criteria including: policy relevance for solving economic and development challenges in Nigeria and Africa and the Institute's comparative research advantage and alignment with 5-year Strategic Plan. The Institute's research is organised along five thematic dimensions. These include: macroeconomic analysis, modelling and forecasting; trade, regional integration and competitiveness; public sector expenditure and management; poverty, income distribution and labour market; and agriculture and rural development. Each thematic research area is coordinated by a designated Researcher who organises and facilitates the research initiatives and team work[30]. Over the years, AIAE's research has been dominated by national economic policy questions (about 70%) with only about 30% of the focus devoted to regional and international research. Most of AIAE's research is applied policy research, not academic research.

Based on recognised value of pooling together good-quality economic and social data and statistics for research and analytical work, the Institute in 2005 began the process of developing an in-house databank. Since then, the databank has been regularly updated and enhanced. Currently, the databank contains more than 6,141 indicators covering social, economic, demographic, governance and human development at the subnational and national level and across countries and regions of the world. Though the databank was initially designed as a facility for in-house use, the increasing external demand for the databank services by academics, researchers, graduate students in universities and professionals underscores it as a critical quick-access reliable reference resource. Based on the testimonies of users, the Institute is evidently making a major contribution to economy and society by easing access to scarce good-quality data by local researchers, media, graduate students, public policy analysts and other interested individuals or groups. The databank is funded with

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[30] Before the TTI, the selection of research was based mostly on client studies, research grants from international development partners in Nigeria and contract studies from government.

savings from research projects and earmarked funds from the overall institutional budget.

1f. Primary audiences

The primary audiences of the Institute's research include policymakers, private sector organisations and civil society organisations.

1g Communication and Diffusion Strategies

The communications capability of the Institute has evolved in tandem with its organisational development. At inception in 2001, AIAE had a Corporate Affairs Unit that was run by one of the research staff as a secondary assignment. In order to beef up the functioning and effectiveness of communications, AIAE subsequently employed a dedicated officer for Corporate Affairs including media relations, stakeholder mobilisation, event management and public affairs. Further strengthening was implemented in the last 2 years with the employment of a Communications and Public Relations specialist as Head of Unit. The results have been striking in terms of media reportage, more organised stakeholder database organisation, improved communication, publicity and dissemination of Institute's research.

Research communication is mainstreamed into research design, planning and execution. For every Institute's own policy research, policymakers and stakeholders are engaged at the inception and conclusion of the research by means of policy seminars or workshops. At the inception stage, the workshop elicits reviews about research questions/design from prospective research end-users. Towards the end of the research, the workshop obtains feedback on research results/findings and policy implications/recommendations. The research is then published in varying forms ranging from the more academic and technical research papers to more generalist policy briefs and key message flyers. In addition, the research findings and policy implications are repackaged as newspaper articles and op-eds.

1h Networks and Convening Capabilities

AIAE has high convening power in the country, as evidenced by good attendance and high-quality of participants in organised policy dialogue events. It has earned this position by the policy relevance of its research and active engagement with policymakers and research end-users throughout the research process. AIAE's visibility, profile and contacts in policy circles received a significant boost on the appointment of the Institute's former Executive Director as the Chief Economic Adviser

to the President of Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chief Executive of the National Planning Commission in 2003 and subsequently the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, in 2004. In particular, the sustained successes in winning and implementing competitive donor-sponsored research programmes has, over the years, enhanced interaction and accumulated goodwill among top-level policymakers and technocrats in government. Of course, AIAE Associate Fellows' network gives advantage for academic and intellectual intercourse with experts, professionals and researches from outside the Institute. For example, the Unit regularly updates the database with stakeholders. At the last count, the total number of contacts (stakeholders, partners, associates, collaborators) in the general mailing list was 1,372. Specifically, there are 460 members of the Development Policy Seminar (otherwise known as Enugu Forum) that are included as stakeholders in the database.

2. Exogenous variables

2a. The political-economic environment

Nigeria is politically constituted as a federal structure comprising three layers of government – federal, state and local. It has a vibrant political landscape featuring 63 registered political parties. The federal composition implies 1 federal government, 36 state governments plus the federal capital territory and 774 local governments. This federal structure equates to 812 constitutionally created political authorities, and by implication, public expenditure decision centres, connected through a web of revenue-generation, public spending, intergovernmental transfer and administrative relations. The current democratic era started in May 1999 after years of beleaguered alternation between military dictatorships and civilian democratic governments. After successive decades of poor growth and unstable macroeconomic conditions, the turning point in economic policy came in the form of the market-oriented and institutional reforms encapsulated as the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy and its associates, the State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies. The economic reforms that started in 2004 and have continued to date have presented large scope for economic research, stakeholder engagement and policy dialogue. The necessity of macroeconomic stability, fiscal sustainability and poverty-reducing growth also raised the stakes for inter-governmental coordination, collaboration and synergy.

2b The Nigeria Media in Perspective and AIAE's Relations with the Media

The media is a very critical potential partner for think tanks desiring to influence public discourse and policymaking. As mass communication tools, newspapers, magazines, radio and television are crucial for spreading research information to the largest

number and widest stretch of stakeholders. The Nigeria press has a history of being vibrant and irrepressible. It has survived several attempts by military dictatorships and often times civilian governments to muzzle it and reduce its liberties. The number of newspapers, radio and television stations is the highest in Africa. But, the press is criticised for lack of depth in reports and poor investigative orientation. On their part, the press cites the problems in accessing relevant information from government authorities as major constraint to investigative reporting. Recently, the press and civil society won a major victory by the enactment of the Freedom of Information Act 2011. In spite of this Law, access to information from government agencies remains difficult.

Until two years ago, the relationship with the media was ad hoc and unstable but for the past two years, the Institute has effectively maintained robust relationship with the Nigerian press. This has been made possible due to the Institute's Communications and Stakeholder Relations Unit bolstered with professional staffing, training and improved resources. The turning point in relations with the media was the strategic capacity building workshop organized for economic and industry reporters on 30 April 2010 in Lagos. The workshop was intended to 'convert' the media correspondents and press people to becoming partners of AIAE rather than being mere reporters of AIAE research and programme news. The event cemented the relationship between the Institute and the media, built mutual confidence and enhanced the respect of the media for the Institute's outputs. AIAE enjoys relatively improved relations with the media as evidenced by increased frequency of media mention in discussions, commentaries, interviews, human angle stories and others. For example, between January and March 2012, AIAE's research and policy dialogue recorded more than 40 mentions in the Nigerian media. These outstanding results have been made possible through a combination of ongoing methods and tools: collaboration with different reporters and editors, courtesy visits to media houses, press interviews by AIAE's researchers, press invitation for expert comments on burning national economic topics, published press releases, working with the press through attribution, press conferences, placing articles in newspapers and special magazines, appearances and broadcast in national and local radio and television.

2c The linkages of research and policymaking
While the democratic dispensation has expanded the space for public debate and policy dialogue, there is still acute undersupply of research and factual information to ensure good quality public discourse and policy engagement. The public sector demand for research is increasing but still ad hoc and not systematically built into the

policy process. Government funding for research and studies is far short of desirable levels, there is relatively greater reliance on studies funded, on behalf of government agencies, from grants by development partners. The relation between academia/research and policymaking is beset with poor linkages and interaction between research supply and demand. The demand for research among policy circles is weakened by low public sector capacity to access, process and utilise research for policymaking and programme planning. The supply and policy influence of research is muted by poor research dissemination and scanty interface between researchers and policymakers. While there is general hunger for evidence-based dialogue on policy questions, the process of feeding research into policymaking and practice are largely inchoate and intermittent.

III. MEASURES OF IMPACT

1. Output indicators

1a Research and Programme Publications

Publications are a major tool of AIAE's strategy for transmitting research findings and informative evidence for policymakers, civil society and private sector organisations, academic and research community and public readership. It also serves as one of the critical objects in monitoring the influence of the Institute. AIAE publications are organised into Policy Brief and Newsletter. The more academic of these Series is the Research Paper which describes the research, its results/findings and policy implications. As a comprehensive mirror of AIAE, the Annual Activity Report contains counts of the respective research and programme activities and outputs undertaken each year. The demand for these publications is monitored over time as indicated by the number of sales or special requests for complimentary copies. The total number of sales of respective editions in each Series is recorded on a continuing basis. In particular, the quarterly Newsletter is useful for tracking developments and achievements as they occur.

1b Internet activity in own website

Since the re-launch of the website in 2005, it has become increasingly deployed to various uses. It is used to quickly inform the public about AIAE's activities, to announce the programmes and achievements of the Institute, to conduct research communication and information sharing among members of the Associate Fellows network. Over the years to come, the challenge will be to increase and deepen the use of social media for research communication, stakeholder engagement and policy influence. Currently, the Institute's social media activity is undeveloped.

1c Media appearances

AIAE has been enjoying good relationship with the Nigerian press since inception. In 2009, the then Corporate Affairs Unit handling the media and public affairs was strengthened with the employment of a Communication and Relations Manager. One of the monitoring tasks is the tracking/documentation of media reportage on a regular basis. Using a template developed for tracking media reportage and appearances, the Communications Unit currently keeps regular and timely track of mentions in the print and electronic media. For example, from October -December 2009 the AIAE media mentions were 23 times. In 2010, 56 mentions were recorded, it increased to 89 in 2011. From January to March 2012, the tracking recorder caught 49 mentions in the press. Press conferences are used to quickly pass on and give mass publicity to critical messages reflecting informed opinions based on the Institute's research and/or research by affiliates.

1d. Advisory roles played by AIAE staff

AIAE researchers are frequently called upon by government agencies to give expert opinions and independent advice on policy questions. The count of government-sourced invitations to researchers was 10 and 5 in 2010 and 2011 respectively.

1e. Participation in national or international policy or other thematic networks

AIAE research staff and its Associate Fellows are members of national and international research and policy networks for example, African Technology Policy Studies (ATPS) Network, Global Development Network (GDN), Partnership for Economic Policy (PEP), Agricultural Policy Research Network (APRNet). By membership of these networks, AIAE researchers are able to learn new research methodologies, gain professional exposure and career growth, disseminate their research and take part in preparing large-scale regional research and policy programmes.

1f. Conference and seminar presentations

AIAE organises conferences and seminars in two basic respects. One is to convene critical mass of stakeholder perspectives and feedback on the Institute's research. The other is to use the seminar approach to contribute to raging public debate with informed insights and expert opinions. Examples include the biennial national stakeholder conferences on the business environment in Nigerian States, the national symposium on the global economic crisis in 2009, among others. Apart from the

participants' feedback elicited through event-specific questionnaires distributed and completed during the seminars, no other monitoring technique has been used to assess impact of these activities.

1g. Educational and Quasi-Educational Impacts

The Peer Learning seminars and workshops provide vital mentoring avenues for building inter-generational bridges and transmitting practical research skills, experiences and knowledge. In addition, monthly peer learning meetings were held to review developments in academic and research fields across the five thematic research themes.

There is a good blend between academics in surrounding universities and research activities of the Institute. The universities are a rich source of experts for the AIAE research works, just as the research programmes of the Institute provide a practice-field and learning experience for the academics. Besides, the participation of young budding university academics in AIAE research creates opportunities for mentoring and exposes them to early-career professional growth opportunities. In 2011, more than 10 young academics were involved in AIAE research.

1h: Roles played by AIAE members while on leave

This is not considered in the on-going monitoring of impact. While full members are expected to report on their overall research and professional engagements for adequate official documentation, their activities while on leave are not integrated into the monitoring framework of the Institute. Non full time members of the Institute are however encouraged to give information to the Institute about their professional and career activities, particularly significant developments and achievements. Such important news are usually shared within the members network through the web.

2. Use of AIAE's outputs (Outcome indicators)

Outcome-level indicators capture the use of AIAE's outputs and services by the target audiences.

2a and 2b Invitations to give expert judgements and professional opinions

Research staff and Fellows of AIAE get invitations to participate in government's technical working groups and policy advisory teams. In many instances, AIAE researchers have produced background policy papers that set the discussion agenda for policy discussions in various government ministries, departments and agencies.

Many civil society organisations seek and obtain AIAE research information to boost their policy advocacy activities.

2c: Citations and published works

This monitoring indicator is considered very important in assessing the impact of the Institute. Cases of citation of AIAE research in scientific, policy and professional publications and materials are noted as they are found. But, no systematic counting and documentation currently exists to track this indicator.

2d Use of AIAE website

The Communications and Relations Unit tracks and records the website activity. The number of pages available on the website increased from 85 in May 2010 to 120 in June 2011. In May 2010, the website recorded daily average of 80 visits, rising to 110 visitors daily in May 2011. Overall, the website recorded a total of 550,602 hits in 2011. But, there is yet no mechanism to record the number of downloads in the Institute's website.

3. Reputational and final impact monitoring

3a Reputational issues

AIAE's high convening power is proven by good quality participation of government, civil society and private sector leaders in AIAE-conferences, technical workshops and policy seminars. AIAE's reputation is indicated by the frequent invitations from radio and television discussions on pressing national economic and development topics as well as from newspaper houses for opinions on current policy debates.

As part of the monitoring practices, every research or policy conference, workshop or seminar is accompanied by a post-event feedback survey. The survey elicits how the conference, workshop or seminar has benefited the participants and for what they intend to use the benefits gained.

3b. Example of AIAE's success in challenging conventional wisdom

At the peak of the global economic crisis, specifically on 18 June 2009, the Institute convened a National Symposium to examine the implications for Nigeria, the lessons to be learnt and the challenges for the policymakers at all levels of government. This policy dialogue was in consonance with the principle of contributing timely evidence-based insights to burning national topical debates in order to promote the right public arguments, improve the quality of public debate and stimulate the right policy

responses. The tenet was to challenge the conventional commonplace rhetoric that favoured simplistic anti-cyclical behaviour in drawing from the country's excess crude account (savings from oil revenue during peak price). The symposium was attended by more than 250 persons including top officials of Federal and State governments, top leaders, experts and managers from the private sector, as well as professionals from civil society. The policy dialogue recorded considerable achievements in changing the orientation of the discourse from rhetorical chorusing of the imperative of economic diversification from oil to more fundamental questioning of the status quo in relation to sustainable fiscal management and public spending. The dialogue advocated the new notion of debugging the budget and public spending from the so called "oil price benchmark". The policy dialogue was the most epic and timely national deliberation on the global financial and economic crisis in Nigeria. Based on demand, the papers were transformed into a book which was published on January 2010 and widely distributed to government officials, civil society and private sector persons.

3c. Examples of research impact on policy
SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA ECONOMIC COMMISSION (SENEC)
The South-East Nigeria Economic Commission (SENEC) is a vivid example of how a think tank can channel research findings into policy and practice. SENEC is perhaps the most outstanding legacy of AIAE in the economic policy landscape of South-East Nigeria. It is evidence of research insights taken up by end-users and turned into practical use.

The concept of South-East Nigeria Economic Commission emanated from a Stakeholders' Forum on "The State of Industrial Clusters in South-Eastern Nigeria", organized by the AIAE, on 26th September 2006 in Enugu. The Forum was convened to disseminate the findings of research conducted on industrial clusters in the zone and to engage stakeholders in constructive proactive dialogue about key strategies and measures for harnessing the potentials of the clusters for social and economic development. The Forum observed that the poor state of industrial development in the south-east zone reflects the underlying lack of coordinated economic, institutional and infrastructural development. It recommended that though industrial clusters pose major policy challenges across the zone, they cannot be treated in isolation of the overall economic context of the south-east zone.

The Policy Forum concluded that holistic and systematic approach is required to harness the full economic potentials of the south-east states, instead of piecemeal

disparate measures by individual States. It was reasoned that there is compelling need to explore sustainable institutional mechanisms to generate and deliver common services in order to reap economies of scale for the accelerated development of the entire zone.

Based on the communiqué of the Forum, AIAE set up an Interim Steering Committee to facilitate the establishment of south-east economic commission. The Committee draws members from the cross section of stakeholders including government officials, private sector persons, academia, professionals and leaders of civic organizations. Following critical analysis of alternative models, international experiences and inputs from a variety of sources, the study subcommittee prepared this base document for the establishment of South East Nigeria Economic Commission (SENEC).

SENEC is conceived as a public-private-community partnership organization, to which state governments, private sector and civil society have mutually reinforcing stakes. It is playing vital roles in uniting the economic interests of the States of the zone and in encouraging cooperation and collaboration amongst the governments of the States. The vision of the SENEC is to become a robust platform that drives sustainable economic growth and social development of the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria. SENEC seeks to provide potent vehicles for the articulation of development strategies, mobilization of resources and coordination of policies for greater economic prosperity within the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria. The cardinal goal of SENEC is to promote economic competitiveness and sustainable development of the south-east geopolitical zone within the national and global economies.

The SENEC seeks to facilitate and midwife the creation of world-class investments in the south-east zone; development of large physical infrastructural schemes; implementation of programmes for sustainable institutions; creation of centres for human capacity development; and development of coordinated framework for the formulation and implementation of public policies and plans.

Since commencement of the establishment process, several significant achievements have been recorded. The wide sensitization and mobilization of all stakeholders at home and in diaspora, has brought about shared appreciation and legitimacy for SENEC. SENEC mobilization cells have been established in various towns and cities within and outside the southeast zone. The base document for the establishment of SENEC has been produced. The document sets out the key proposals, frameworks,

relationships and modalities for SENEC. To date, the MoU for the establishment of SENEC has been signed by four out of the five Executive Governors of the Southeast States. Some State Houses of Assembly have held deliberations and or passed motions for the establishment of SENEC.

3d. Societal impacts of AIAE research

Assessing the impact of policy research on peoples' lives is fraught with the risks of asymmetric attribution and unverified and subjective claims. Policy research is consumed over space and over time and often very thinly distributed across micro-units - individual persons or groups. <u>AIAE faces the task of constructing and testing objective verifiable indicators and frameworks for evaluating the impact of its policy research in terms of changes in peoples' lives.</u> The transmission process between research outputs, policy uptake and changes in peoples' lives can be too long, non-linear, arduous, intricate and subject to multifarious external factors. Based upon evidence showing that AIAE's research has contributed to better conception, tools and measures of economic policymakers at the federal and state government levels in Nigeria, it is logically presumed that such policy improvements would have impacted positively on social and economic welfare. But, no systematic credible measures of societal impact have been used by the Institute.

3e: What is considered relevant to monitor as impact?

AIAE considers the feedback from research end-users including policymakers, fellow researchers, civil society organisations, business or private sector organisations very important. Participants' impressions of the research outputs and delivery mechanisms of these outputs are taken very seriously. Hence, AIAE conducts after-action surveys or reviews to ascertain programme outcomes and how they can be improved in the future.

Even though the extent of policy uptake of AIAE research is important for impact measurement, it is not adequately integrated within the on-going monitoring framework. Policy uptake is a fluid iterative process for which no single research programme could reasonably claim credit. Developing the tools and procedures to capture research impact on policy uptake is a complex task, and yet unresolved by the Institute. Moreover it is difficult to estimate the impact of AIAE research on public enlightenment and policy debates since stakeholders obtain and use information from multiple formal and informal sources.

Concrete example of Impact: Business Environment and Competitiveness across Nigerian States (BECANS)

Origin and context

Business Environment and Competitiveness across Nigerian States (BECANS) was started in 2003 by the AIAE and implemented in collaboration with the National Planning Commission, Central Bank of Nigeria, private sector organizations and State Governments. It seeks to produce and disseminate knowledge to support business environment reforms in Nigerian States. The idea was muted by the Institute at a brainstorming session to critique Nigeria's economic performance in relation to globalization challenges of competitiveness. The session reviewed evidence about the low international competitiveness of the Nigerian economy occasioned by the high cost of doing business. It was reasoned that a research-based advocacy intervention was needed to stimulate reforms for a better business environment to make the private sector more competitive. By the logic, for Nigeria to be competitive, its constituent states must be competitive by providing the right environment for private enterprise. Focusing on the state-level was considered an effective way to devolve business environment reforms so as to correct the disproportionate concentration on federal-level jurisdictions.

A small research team was therefore set up to prepare the Concept Paper which was later developed into the Full Project Document, through scientific and methodological workshops. Concurrently, the Institute initiated a mobilization process to elicit buy-ins from relevant government and private sector institutions. The mobilization resulted to the signing of MOUs with the relevant stakeholders in the government, private sector and civil society. With the Full Project Document ready and MOUs signed, project structures and organs were set up. The research team began to formulate models, methods and instruments to estiamte and benchmark business environment across the states and FCT. The methodology peer review and stakeholder validation processes culminated in the 1st BECANS National Workshop Business Environment in Nigeria which held from 6th-7th July 2006 at Abuja. The Forum set the stage for the survey and data collection in the states. From December 2006 – February 2007, BECANS field teams collected data from government and private sector institutions. Data analysis and quality reviews then ensued.

The BECANS research results and findings are the source materials for the flagship publication series – Business Environment across Nigerian States. The first in the

series was the Business Environment across Nigerian States, 2007 which was launched at the National Stakeholders Forum on Business Environment across Nigerian States. The Forum laid the foundation for enlightenment, sensitization and advocacy activities on promoting policy and institutional reforms of the business environment. The second in the series of BECANS Business Environment Reports was produced in 2010. This was epitomised by convening the 2nd National Forum on Business Environment across Nigerian States (FOBEANS 2010) & the Public Presentation of the Business Environment Report on Nigerian States.

Rationale and objective of BECANS

Like every federation, the responsibility for shaping the business environment in Nigeria is shared between the federal, state and local. The logic of BECANS is that state and local governments are crucial to ensuring good business environment and enhancing Nigeria's global economic competitiveness. State and local governments have foremost responsibility in providing and managing basic public services, utilities and social welfare. State governments are also responsible for the bulk of business regulatory services including property registration, tax administration, industrial and enterprise zones, contract enforcement, justice administration, business and construction licensing. So, without commensurate business environment reforms by state and local governments, the macroeconomic and institutional reforms of the federal government cannot produce the desired impact on employment and poverty.

The overall goal of the BECANS is to promote evidence-based reforms of the business environment in Nigeria, with focus on the subnational jurisdictions. The initiative is designed to supply independent research-based evidence on the business environment across Nigerian states, in an ongoing or recurring manner. It is deliberately focused at the state-level business environment. BECANS is designed to perform critical research, dissemination and advocacy tasks, as follows: develop framework benchmarks and indicators for evaluating and monitoring business environment and competitiveness across the states; gather empirical data for evaluating the benchmark and indicators; fit the data on the benchmarks and indicators to gauge states' performance. Others are: prepare business environment reports and ratings; facilitate the use of business environment reports for private sector advocacy; promote the use of the business environment reports/ratings as bases for reforms; and provide feedback on business environment conditions at the state level. Also, BECANS seeks to provide benchmarking tools for business managers, investors and policymakers to identify specific competitiveness obstacles, thus stimulating

critical thinking about strategies to overcome them. This business environment scorecard of Nigerian states is the flagship product of BECANS.

The expected impact of BECANS include: (1) to inform and influence/stimulate policy and institutional reforms for better business environment across Nigerian States, (2) to engender mutual learning, peer review and dissemination of best practices among Nigeria's state governments, and (3) to provide systematic framework for regular self-monitoring and benchmarking of policy and institutional reforms by state governments.

The structure of BECANS integrates research, dissemination and advocacy. Within this framework, the organs are as follows: Advisory Committee (comprises the key partners including the AIAE), Technical Working Group and State-level Advocacy Committees. The technical working group is the research hub and its membership is drawn from experts and practitioners from across the country. The State-level Advocacy Committees are the advocacy organ at the state level that bring together government, private sector and civil society in an open and frank dialogue based on the BECANS reports. The Committee represents government-private sector partnership for setting and promoting the BECANS agenda for reforms in the state. The Advocacy Committees provide feedback on the reports, disseminate the report, canvass for needed reforms and provide feedback on reforms.

BECANS runs in successive cycles of research, surveys, dissemination and policy dialogue. The BECANS model defines subnational business environment along four dimensions. They are Infrastructure and Utilities; Regulatory Services; Business Development Support and Investment Promotion; and Security. The overall measure of the quality of business environment is the business environment index of Nigerian States (BEIONS). The BEIONS uses a continuous scale from 0-100, where a score of 100 represents the maximum score. The business environment index is a weighted aggregate of scores on the four benchmarks. The weights are as follows: Infrastructure and Utilities (28%); regulatory services (30%); business development support and investment promotion (20%) and security (20%). Every benchmark is divided into measures which are further subdivided into evaluative indicators.

Since 2005, BECANS has employed a variety of methods and tools to promote legitimacy and communication of the business environment research, including peer review and technical validation seminars, stakeholder dialogue, public enlightenment forums, publication of policy briefs, working papers and the use of mass media.

Challenges and Lessons in Measuring the Impact of BECANS

The impact of BECANS is spread over space and time. The anticipated direct impact points are government policymakers at the federal and state levels, business community, private sector organisations and civil society groups. BECANS impact measures would include:

- policymakers' acknowledgement of BECANS research
- citations and use of BECANS research by business membership organisations in their policy engagement and advocacy papers
- response to invitations to conferences convened around BECANS research
- reportage and independent commentary in the print and electronic media
- independent invitations to make presentations of BECANS research to conferences and seminars
- use of BECANS research publications as reference materials in graduate studies in business environment benchmarking.

But, till date, no systematic measurement of impact is currently taking place, even though there are scattered information and feedback from users about the relevance and usefulness of the research. For instance, the Institute has observed and reported one remarkable public testimony of government officials on how the BECANS research became the basis for generating policy reform memorandum to the State's authorities and getting authorisation for certain changes in service procedures. What exists so far is the practice of collating and documenting the feedback given by various segments of the end-user community. A sample of the feedback is given below.

"The BECANS assessment constitutes the evidence tool for a more credible and effective advocacy by the private sector and civil society organizations as well as means for self appraisals and peer review among state governments. - *Deputy Governor of Central Bank on economic policy Mrs. Sarah Alade at the inauguration of organizing committee of FOBEANS 2007*

"The BECANS programme aligns well with the national objective of growing the private sector by creating a very conducive environment for private enterprise. The programme is directly supportive of Nigeria's vision of becoming one of the 20 largest economies by the year 2020. We therefore consider the publication of BECANS reports and the convening of this stakeholders Conference, timely as it would serve as an important baseline information against which stakeholders will track developments

in the business environment across the states" - *Minister of National Planning/Chief Executive, National Planning at the BECANS launch in 2007*

"Discussing the benchmarks of the BECANS survey which are, Infrastructure and Utilities, Legal and Regulatory Services; Business Support and Investment Promotion and above all, Security, put the view of the organizers of the forum in tandem with the call NACCIMA has been making for the past 46 years for a conducive environment for business to grow through the provision of necessary infrastructure such as energy, as you cannot industrialize on charcoal life, good roads, water for domestic and industrial use, railway, communication at affordable price, loanable funds at affordable interest rates and long term lending, security to lives and property and review of laws and regulations inimical to business growth and the making of laws and regulations that promote business growth across the nation". - *President of National Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA).*

"What BECANS has provided for us, is for those who are ready to do business to take a good look at the reports. When we say year 2020, it looks very far away but it is only 13 years to come. We need all that is in the BECANS reports to make the economy grow. ………. "The importance of the BECANS initiative is best illustrated in the choice of the benchmarks used in the report….., and I believe this report focuses and concentrates our attention on what matters the most and what we must do together to address them. ………." – *Publisher, BusinessDay Newsapers and Chief Executive, BusinessDay Media Ltd.*

"The need to deepen the quality of business environment and its competitiveness remains imperative, if we are to redress the numerous challenges facing the private sector, particularly in the areas of physical infrastructure, financing and international competitiveness of Nigerian products. I am optimistic that the proposals arising from the BECANS will help in fast tracking the attainment of our vision of making Nigeria join the league of twenty largest economies by the year 2020. *His Excellency, Vice President Dr. Goodluck Jonathan on the BECANS launch, 2007*

"….. BECANS is a self examination exercise. It is very implicating and I am sure many of you are looking forward to improvements year by year. We need to do this because eventually it is not government money that will develop the states. If the business environment is not right, the private investors will not come. ….. I guess that is the

message we will go home with. I think this is a very important beginning." - *Governor of Central Bank at BECANS launch, 2007*

"NASME is a major stakeholder in the BECANS project because the Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector employs a huge part of our population and this part has been neglected for a very long time. The BECANS project is a very welcome development. In our estimation, the project will benefit the MSMEs in more ways than can be mentioned. All hands should be on deck to make the BECANS project a huge success". - *President of National Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (NASME) at BECANS Validation, 2006*

As a way to gauge the impact of the BECANS Fórum on participants in the event of 23 September 2010, an after-event feedback survey was conducted. The survey showed that 62% of the participants rated the impact of the BECANS Symposium as "high" while 35% rated it as "very high".

"The report would stand the test of time; government of Nigeria should embrace it to better the lives of the citizenry. AIAE has again demonstrated its commitment to the International Development Research Centre (IDRC)'s vision and it runs concurrently with the hallmark of Think Tank Initiative which is to link research with policy" *-IDRC Senior Programme Monitoring Officer of IDRC Dr. Diakala Sanogo, 2010*

"African Institute for Applied Economics led by Executive Director Prof Eboh has done a great work on this research work. It is a delight to note that AIAE joined NASME as an institutional member at par with other research institutes in the country. Most importantly, he co-opted NASME into the BECANS project, which, to the best of my knowledge, was the first independent study of business environment across Nigerian states. The report will indeed be a useful tool for advocacy by the Business Membership Organizations (BMOs)."**-** *Immediate past president, President of the Nigeria Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (NASME), Dr. Ike Abugu, 2010*

Example of impact of AIAE: special case of inability to estimate and the associated circumstances

Over the years, AIAE has conducted and disseminated a critical mass of agriculture sector research under its research thematic area – Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRUD). The research and background studies include: fertiliser policy, land use policy and law, agricultural development fund, postharvest competitiveness and

agribusiness benchmarking of Nigerian States. In addition, during 2005-2007, AIAE provided technical support to federal legislative committees on agriculture on a cluster of policy and institutional matters given as follows: national policy on agriculture, agricultural inputs subsidy, fertilizer procurement, distribution and administration, foreign private investment in agriculture, farmers associations and cooperatives, agricultural research systems, microcredit to agriculture. The technical support involved preparing background studies on these policy questions and transforming them into Policy Briefing Papers to members of the legislative committees. In addition, the key messages of the Policy Briefing Papers were canvassed in various seminars, workshops and conferences, by staff and non-full time members of the Institute.

AIAE's judgement is that these set of agricultural sector studies have contributed considerably in several ways including: enlightenment of policymakers and legislators, public enlightenment (since the key messages were well publicised), attention generated by the reports in the mass media, stimulation of reform-oriented decisions by policymakers and change of perceptions by legislators.

But, these impacts are merely conjectural. There was no deliberate tracking and measurement of the specific impacts. At the time these studies and dissemination programme activities were done, AIAE had not yet developed an organised monitoring system. The use of a multiplicity of methods and techniques including oral testimonies at the public hearings of the legislative committees, presentations at seminars and conferences meant that impacts would be diffused across a wide segment of stakeholders. Besides, these policy issues are very general and fluid in nature, moreover, they are the object of continued policy dialogue and advocacy by many other research institutions, private sector organisations and NGOs. Making any attributions of policy impacts to AIAE research would have been very difficult, highly contested and could also be highly exaggerated.

CASE 3: EXPERIENCE FROM THE GROUP OF ANALYSIS FOR DEVELOPMENT (GRADE) OF PERU

CONTEXT

The Group for the Analysis of Development (GRADE) is a private non-profit research centre with no political affiliation founded in 1980, in Lima, Peru. From only a dozen professionals at the beginning of the eighties, its staff has now increased to 90. In fact, this growth caused the implementation of new headquarters in 2010. Its professional identities have been diversified through the years: from economists and sociologists who worked with the institution from its foundation to psychologists, anthropologists, geographers and educators.

Since its inception, GRADE has been dedicated to economic, educational, environmental and social studies, in areas relevant to Peruvian and Latin American development. The institution aims to share its work results among those responsible for formulating policies, and with the public at large. In order to achieve this, the centre is constantly renewing itself, as demonstrated by its interest in training new generations of researchers. GRADE aims to develop models for disseminating studies relevant to technical and political decision-making processes, while maintaining high standards of research and knowledge management.

GRADE researchers participate in academic activities nationally and internationally and publish in books, working documents and international journals. They also contribute to the public sector by participating in directories, advisory commissions, as well as in academic and policy conferences and in workshops to discuss public policies. Through its research work, GRADE provides critical and independent analysis thereby contributing to a better understanding of current affairs in Peru and Latin America. As a result of these academic contributions, GRADE is able to enrich debate and improve the design and implementation of a broad range of public policy. Currently, the work undertaken at GRADE is focused around nine thematic areas:

1. Health and Nutrition
2. Education and Learning
3. Ethnicity, Gender and Citizenship
4. Poverty and Equality
5. Natural Resources, Extractive Industries and Social Conflict
6. Rural Development and Agriculture
7. Employment, Productivity and Innovation

8. Methodologies for Research and Evaluation of Policies and Programmes

9. State Reform and Public Institutions

Think Tanks in the region are very diverse in terms of main objectives and mission (knowledge production/advocacy mix), mechanisms of influence, research capabilities, organization, size, and other characteristics. As in the rest of the world, this depends mainly on the political, economic and institutional context. However, most share a research quality and policy influence mission and most share the same challenges of financial sustainability, attracting and retaining highly qualified researchers, and in particular the challenge of achieving impact and measuring it.

I. CONCEPTIONS OF IMPACT

GRADE's main mission is to undertake academically rigorous research in order to stimulate debate, and influence the design and implementation of public policy.

The quality of our research work is backed by a team of Senior Researchers with doctorate studies from prestigious universities. All of our researchers participate in academic activities nationally and internationally and publish their studies in books, working documents and international journals. They also contribute to the public sector by participating in directives, advisory commissions and round-table discussions, as well as in academic and policy conferences and in workshops to discuss public policy and proposals for legislation. Furthermore, GRADE researchers provide consultancy services in response to direct requests or via open calls launched in Peru and internationally. Several of our researchers have left GRADE temporarily in order to assume a public service role.

GRADE is committed to continuing its work as a first class inter-disciplinary research centre, renowned for academic excellence within Peru, Latin America and worldwide. In order to achieve this, the centre is constantly renewing itself, as demonstrated by our interest in training new generations of researchers. We aim to develop models for disseminating studies relevant to technical and political decision-making processes, while maintaining high standards of research and knowledge management.

II. FACTORS INFLUENCING IMPACT

1. Endogenous/organizational variables
1a. Mission statements

From its foundation in the eighties, GRADE describes itself as an independent research centre with no political affiliation whose mission is to develop applied research to stimulate and enrich the debate, design and implementation of public policy. The institution has been dedicated to undertaking economic, educational, institutional, environmental and social studies in areas relevant to the development of Peru and other Latin American countries. Likewise, GRADE aims to disseminate the results of its academic work to policy makers and the general public via diffusion activities as academic and public policy events, publications, briefs, web platforms, etcetera.

1b Main functions performed by the organization

GRADE's main activities focus on developing high quality applied research, mainly academic and information production, as well as on improving its production dissemination and communication strategies to provide solid evidence and knowledge and to enrich the public policy debate. GRADE increasingly aims to disseminate the results of its academic applied work to policy makers and the general public and, following its mission, influence policy.

The institution has been undertaking academic and applied production focused in areas relevant to the development of Peru and other Latin American countries. Activities include: publishing their studies in national and international books, working documents and journals, participating in academic and public-sector related activities, collaborating actively with other institutions, networks and alliances to undertake studies that promote development. GRADE is committed to the training of new generations of researchers. Interns and research assistants work under the tutoring of Senior Researchers who share a mission of contributing to their professional development.

1c. Organizational characteristics and resources

GRADE was established in 1980 in Lima, Peru, and it has been traditionally governed by a Members Board, comprised by the majority of its Senior Researchers. The Assembly defines the institution's research areas and identifies strategies for developing and guaranteeing GRADE's independence and standards for its quality of work. Likewise, the Members Board has the mandate of electing among its members an Executive Committee to be in charge of supervising the institution's progress over two-year periods. The Executive Committee is formed by an Executive Director, a Research Director and a Member. Together they coordinate GRADE's research

activities, publications, as well as its management and communications strategies. Under close and continuous coordination with the Executive Committee, an administration team is responsible for managing human resources, financial issues, maintenance and logistics.

Resources to fund GRADE's work come from the researchers' own efforts to establish contact with funding sources and diverse institutional alliances. These funds come both from international donors and national sources, including mainly international donors (USAID, IDRC, DFID, etc.), international organizations (World Bank and Interamerican Development Bank), public institutions and occasionally the private sector. Our institution has continuously struggled to be less dependent on short/medium term project related funding and obtain institutional support. This has been partially possible thanks to the Think Tank Initiative grant.

GRADE has 16 full time senior researchers, all with graduate degrees, most with PhDs (which is a requirement for becoming a principal researcher). In addition, there are about 30 professionals working as research assistants, junior researchers or consultants, in all cases under the supervision of a senior researcher. We also have affiliate researchers, working in prestigious universities outside Peru and collaborating with one or more of our senior researchers.

Researchers normally start as assistants, who after a few years, leave to pursue graduate studies in foreign universities (normally PhDs) and then come back to GRADE as associate researchers first and then finally become principal researchers. However, this process works out in some cases and takes a long while. We also attempt to recruit senior researchers but have had limited success. In fact, in an increasingly competitive market (mainly with local universities), one of our main challenges has been the ability to recruit highly qualified graduate professionals, particularly given our institutional arrangement that does not allow a stable and predictable income.

GRADE is committed to the training of new generations of researchers. Interns and research assistants work under the tutoring of a Senior Researcher. They can participate in internal seminars, submit proposals for national and international research competitions and publish their studies in Grade's Research Progress Papers.

1d. Research management

The Members Board defines the institution's research areas and identifies strategies for developing and guaranteeing GRADE's independence and quality of work. The research areas have been changing in order to adapt to the specific issues of the country at different moments of its history. Currently, the work undertaken at GRADE focuses on nine thematic areas (Institutions and State Reform; Ethnicity, Gender and Civil Rights; Natural Resources, Extractive Industries and Social Conflicts; Rural Development and Agriculture; Employment, Productivity and Innovation; Education; Health and Nutrition; Poverty and Inequality; and Research Methodologies and Policy and Program Evaluations. However, within these areas of research, generally the selection of topics is defined by the availability of research issues requested by funding sources and institutional alliances in accordance with the issues of the national and international development agenda.

1e. Type of research produced

GRADE' main research production is applied evidence based research in topics that generally focus on the development and solutions to the problems in Peru and other Latin American countries and on the improvement of methodologies to study those issues. Our research fits high academic standards and in most cases also produces and analyses arguments with solid evidence to contribute to the debate of key policy issues. In many cases, our research includes the production of primary data both quantitative and qualitative.

Depending on the target audience (policy makers, academic, students, donor agencies and private sector), GRADE develops diverse research outputs in the form of Research Papers that are published in academic journals, GRADE Research Papers (which also follow a review process), policy briefs (Analysis and Proposals bulletin), disseminating the results of its work on the web and by making regular contributions to opinion pieces in national and international newspapers.

Increasingly GRADE's researchers have participated in regional projects and research studies covering various countries and have developed studies and taken advisory roles requested by international agencies and public officials of other Latin American countries.

1f. Primary audiences of the research produced

GRADE identifies policy makers, government officials and academia (researchers, practitioners, teachers and students) as their main audiences at local, national and

international levels. Another important audience is civil society, to improve the effective use of information and communication to stimulate and enrich the debate. Different strategies are used to target these audiences and we work to develop models for disseminating investigative studies relevant to technical and political decision-making processes, while maintaining high standards of research and knowledge management. GRADE also targets the multilateral officials, and international agencies to share research experiences and build strong partnerships, as well as networks and alliances that promote research for development.

1g. Communication and diffusion strategies deployed by the organization

With the implementation of the Think Tank Initiative grant and after a diagnosis to develop a communication plan, GRADE'S Executive Committee provided the guidelines for the creation of an Information and Communications Unit (UNIC) responsible for its institutional publishing line, the organization of its academic and public policy events, the ex ante and ex post (internal and external) outreach of its main activities and/or selected projects, the management of its redesigned website and its newly created social networks, the development of easy to digest policy briefs and regular contributions to opinion pieces in the country's most important newspapers and by establishing a positive relationship with journalists.

Bi-monthly, UNIC reports to the Executive Board the influence of the work of its researchers via a system of indicators which draws data from the academic activities and public policy work carried out by the research staff, coverage in national and international media, figures from the institutional websites and open-access information repositories (such as document downloads and searches for GRADE publications), citations and references of GRADE publications, website traffic and social networks. This monitoring system is recent so it is still under a process of improvement in terms of mechanisms to gather influence information, indicators to be constructed and frequency. In particular, we are still working to find a suitable mechanism to systematically identify influence in public policy (we already have some qualitative ways of doing so). Likewise, GRADE continues to build a network of external contacts to be called upon for distinct outreach activities.

1h. Networks

GRADE has maintained proximity to policy makers and other policy groups through the active collaboration with other institutions-people and projects, networks and alliances designed institutionally and by the efforts of the researchers themselves   -although

some of them were first initiated by the institution. GRADE maintains a data matrix of stakeholders including: contacts from policy groups, academic groups, practitioners, donors, multilaterals and media to be called upon for different policy and academic activities that promote research for development.

Thus, the institution attempts to build bridges between academic research and the public sector. A distinguishing factor in GRADE's research model is its participation in projects, alliances and inter-institutional networks to undertake studies that promote development while leveraging local, regional and global partnerships to exchange knowledge and share interdisciplinary work.

Furthermore in an effort to bring its research to a greater number of participants and to have a greater influence in the debate on public policy, GRADE has improved its outreach and media presence using its web site and by getting opinion pieces published in highly acclaimed national and international newspapers while maintaining strong relationships with journalists.

2. Exogenous variables

2a. Political-institutional variables

In Peru, we have benefited for many years now, from relative political stability, democracy and freedom. However, the political parties are not institutionalized but are just temporary groups following a temporary leader. Therefore, there is almost no room for negotiation with partisan leaders and in any case, it would be a weak strategy to promote research, contribute to set the policy agenda and enrich the debate.

On the other hand, we increasingly faced opportunities to approach key government officials located in strategic positions and working in particular topics related to our research. Likewise, when political parties assume government responsibilities, they require experts and, in fact, appoint, technicians for government positions (even Ministries) which is why they often call for independent technicians linked to Think Tanks. These technocrats, who often have worked in GRADE or are familiar with our work, request studies and advice partly due to the weakness of the traditional bureaucracy. This context provides opportunities to improve our policy influence although we still face the challenges of articulating the agendas of research with these, short term, often politically guided issues.

2b. Media - briefly describe

While the quality of Think Tanks socio-economy research is well recognized by the national media specialized in this particular field and also media in general, usually the demand made by the media of Think Tanks research is weak. Although there are some exceptions, media publishing lines prefer the juncture imposed by public opinion than new fields for debate that researchers can propose.

However, this situation is increasingly improving and given its high credibility, GRADE manages to regularly contribute with opinion pieces or some results of research in the country's most prominent newspapers and journals, and participate in radio interviews and televised debates. GRADE has improved its outreachby disseminating the results of its work on the web. Likewise, the relationships between the institution and the media generally depend on the topic under discussion and the type of media involved (some researchers tend to collaborated only with specialized media).

2c. Policy linkages

Analyzing the testimonies of policy makers who have been aware of GRADE's work or related to GRADE on diverse projects, alliances and inter-institutional networks, there is a clear perception of genuine cooperation between GRADE and the policy makers. In general, the policy-making community recognizes GRADE's contribution to public policy through well-trained professionals who are committed to the development of the country through research evidence highly esteemed and well respected in debates on the main issues relating to local and regional development. This collaboration is reflected in the participation of its researchers in advisory committees, round tables, conferences, as well as seminars and workshops set up by government agencies to discuss policies and legislative proposals in various sectors.

However, the relative absence of Think Tanks impact on the Peruvian political system responds to the fact that research work agendas are hardly built side by side with policy makers. Given that intuitional funding is normally project dependent, generally Think Tanks research responds to project demands that frequently do not coincide with the policy agenda.

III. Measures of impact

We have been increasingly aware of the importance of monitoring our impact for many years and have been trying and improving our collection and systematization of information. For many years, we have collected a few main output indicators such as publications (both of GRADE and external publications of our researchers), main

media appearances and GRADE's events. They were annually or invariably registered through the participation of the secretaries and/or other supportive personnel (responsible to feed the website with profiles, news, events and awards and acknowledgments) and the person in charge of the library (responsible to measure GRADE's publication production at a national and international level, to report the appearances of the researchers in media, to report document downloads and searches for GRADE publications, quotes from and references of GRADE publications, website traffic). However, this information was not systematically organized or used to monitor and assess impact.

The Think Tank Initiative grant offered us the possibility of developing a systematized impact monitoring system. We started with an external study to identify what we consider and prioritize as impact and the main outputs and indicators that we should collect to develop our system. We also identified the need of having a unit committed to the interlacing of the impact monitoring activities. . Now, this unit collects bi monthly influence activities of our researchers and registers them in a system built to generate indicators. We include here what we have identified as main impact indicators, i.e. information related to publications, participation in events (academic and policy), media appearances, educational activities, and participation in meetings and other types of activities to provide expert judgement or knowledge debate. This process is still evolving as we continue to improve our system. It is important to note that we have realized that impact has many faces, influence activities can use different mechanisms depending on the context of time, type of impact (academic or policy in particular) and even according to different researchers' expertise. Furthermore, we have realized that in many cases our influence is very difficult (or even impossible) to objectively measure and requires qualitative information to be shown (citations, testimonies, invitations, etc.).

1. Output indicators

1a Publications

Publications have been monitored since the origins of GRADE, both its publishing series including Books, Research Papers, Research Progress Papers, Policy Briefs (Analysis and Proposals) and those published by its researchers in national and international journals and through other institutions. However, more recently GRADE's Documentation Centre monitors more publication information through a more systematic process. The process of monitoring covers the download of publications from the web and open-access information repositories, from the loan, exchange and

donation of copies through inter-institutional networks and alliances, from journal subscriptions and from the search of academic bibliography and syllabus in visits to universities, allied institutions and government agencies. In addition, each publication is updated in the open-access information repositories and online catalogues. As part of the information collected by researchers regarding functions and activities, editorial membership is also monitored.

Since publications are clearly a key output indicator for GRADE, we have an incentive system that awards monetary rewards for publications, with higher rewards for academic international recognized journals and GRADE publications.

1b. Internet activity in owned website

One of the functions of our Unit of Information and Communications (UNIC) is to manage and feed GRADE's website and social networks (Facebook and Twitter) with the latest news, events, awards, media appearances, and others. Likewise, the unit is committed to update each new issue of its publishing series, co-published publications, external publications (where a researcher is the author or co-author) and projects as well as to monitoring the visits of new and returning users, the time stayed in the website, the keywords used for the request, percentage of rebound and linked pages. In addition, the website has the option of user registration. Each name registered is part of a network of external contacts GRADE calls upon for distinct outreach activities, including publishing distributions.

The website is conceived as a multimedia platform that brings together text, images, audio and video. The unit is responsible for the development of audiovisual products and for linking each outreach product (publications and projects) with the research areas and the researchers themselves.

1c. Media appearances

UNIC measures contributions of GRADE's researchers to national and international newspapers and journals, radio interviews and televised debates through the review of the printed and digital versions of the country's most important newspapers. In addition, the unit monitors the Google Alerts configured for each researcher's complete name and 'Group for the Analysis of Development (GRADE)'. The alerts collect information not only from local newspapers but also from blogs, newsletters and national and international magazines and journals.

Although many of our researchers are not very enthusiastic about media appearances, we are increasingly aware of the importance of these communications strategies, in particular in some contexts and for some research issues, and are developing more systematic mechanisms for improving these output indicators, such as coordinating regular spaces in one of the most renowned newspapers. In all cases, our researchers are very vigilant that media appearances, particularly written, adequately reflect research results and opinions.

1d. Advisory roles played by the organization's members

Advisory roles have been common among our researchers for quite some time. However, these roles come with certain projects or consulting services, are directly requested, or gained via public competitions of national and international institutions and have only recently (2011) started to be monitored through a system of comparable dynamic indicators collected bi-monthly according to our new recent system. The qualitative analysis of the measurement includes the names of the organizations involved, relevant actors and the kind of participation including public policy events like advisory committees, round tables, conferences, seminars and workshops to discuss policies in various sectors. If it is the case, the report indicates the name of the project associated with the consulting service. However, we still face some difficulties to objectively reflect the significant qualitative differences that different types of roles can imply.

1f. Networking participation

GRADE's collaborations with other institutions, mainly through networks and alliances, are greatly appreciated and encouraged in our institution. We register and closely monitor GRADE's main networks and alliances (events, publications, quotes, etc.) perhaps less so in the case of more individual researchers' participation. In fact in our annual reports and web page main alliances are noticeably presented. This is the case of international inter-institutional alliances and networks such as TTI, PEP, Young Lives, PREAL and national alliances such as CIES, SIEP and SEPIA.

1g. Conference and seminar presentations (both as presenters or commentators)

The participation of GRADE's researchers in public policy work and academic activities –internally and externally organized- are monitored via a system of comparable dynamic indicators collected bi-monthly from each researcher and divided in terms assigned by the Executive Board only since the 2011 year. These terms include directories, advisory committees, round tables, conferences, as well as seminars -as

speakers, panelists or commentators-, workshops planned by government agencies to discuss policies and legislative proposals and international cooperation activities. The system collects also qualitative information such as the names of the organizations involved, relevant participants, nature of the event and specific nature of the participation of our researcher. Again, we find this qualitative information very relevant but difficult to objectively be incorporated into the monitoring system.

1h. Educational activities conducted within the organization

Although many of our researchers teach in prestigious universities of Peru, we have not yet conducted educational activities within our institution. In partnership with a renowned international or national university, we are currently developing a plan to offer specialized graduate diplomats in the near future.

In addition, as mentioned before, GRADE is committed to training new generations of researchers. Interns and research assistants work under the tutoring of a Senior Researcher.

1i. Other roles played by the organizations' members

The number of courses and hours invested on teaching activities including virtual and personalized tutoring to national and international students from pre degree and post degree (supervising of student thesis) and training research assistants is monitored again via a system of comparable dynamic indicators collected bi-monthly as well as hours, courses and other details of teaching positions in other academic institutions. In addition, information of other positions held by GRADE's researchers such as member of an Advisory Committee, member of a Board, Director or Editor of a magazine, member of a University Advisory Committee, and others are regularly collected by GRADE'S UNIC unit and registered in an annual internal report that compiles the quantitative results of the system of indicators. As mentioned before, we find it difficult to reflect the important differences in terms of impact that characteristics of the different positions imply.

2. Indicators of research in user communities

2a. Invitations to provide expert judgement to policy-makers, media and others

Invitations to supply expert judgement to actors like policy-makers, media and others are not an indicator measured specifically in the system monitored by UNIC, but we hope that most of these invitations are captured through other indicators such as participations in work meetings, which we collected recording also with who and the

purpose (if set up by policy-makers, external agents, media and private and public institutions to provided technical information, advice or proposals). The problem in this case is the difficulty associated to objectively identify the cases where the invitation is actually to provide an expert judgement and if it is going to be really listened. It would be important to know for example who asks for the expert judgement, i.e., if it is someone with policy faculties, and if there will be one, a few or several experts providing judgement.

2b. Invitations to participate in panel deliberations

Invitations to participate in panel deliberations are part of the public policy activities measured in the dynamic indicators system developed and bi-monthly collected by UNIC and annually reported to GRADE's Executive Board. We have tried to distinguish between being a panellist, speaker or commentator but differences are not that clear as there are possible disagreements among researchers in the use of the terms. Perhaps this should be re-analyzed to achieve a more accurate measurement. Again UNIC collects also at a qualitative level the issue for the panel deliberation and the names of those actors involved. An issue that should be highlighted is that UNIC only collects the participation of the researchers in panel deliberations open to the public.

2c. Citation of published works by the organization and its members

Since last year, GRADE's UNIC have been working in the collection of a list of citations of its publications (GRADE and of its researchers) in government and donor agency documents (for policy bibliography), which we had identified as a key indicator of influenceinfluence. However, this process has been very difficult. It has to be done practically "manually", since very few libraries and public institutions have their documents in an accessible electronic system. Furthermore, public documents do not tend to include citations. The system still fails to be appropriate and we know there is a strong possibility of many documents, actually the majority, being excluded. Therefore, these results are not being reported yet and we are still in the process of trying to find a suitable mechanism to monitor this output.

Another monitoring strategy implemented with the installation of UNIC has been the use of such tools as Google Scholar that enables the report of citations in working papers, books, journals and others already uploaded in the Internet. However, this indicator is not systematically constructed and reported yet as part of our monitoring system.

2d. Visits to the organizations' website

UNIC monitors every month the visits to the website on a regular matrix included in an annual report delivered to the Executive Board. The software allows monitoring of visits by country and platform. The current monitoring system also gives visits disaggregated by new and returning users. We are still working to extend the monitoring system to include variables like the time stayed in the website, the keywords used for the request, percentage of rebound, linked pages, landing pages and exit pages using tools such as Google Analytics. Although these variables are continuously consulted there is no process in place to annually report progress.

3. Reputational and final impact measures

3a. Document downloads from the organization's website

As mentioned before, UNIC monitors the download of its publishing series including Books, Research Papers, Research Progress Papers, Analysis and Proposals bulletins and those published by its researchers in national and international journals and through external institutions. The annual report only covers the download of its publications and inter-institutional projects like Young Lives.

The system used still does not allow knowing the characteristics of the users. One of the features considered in the redesign of our website was the creation of a community of registered users whose name and email were requested at first and data such as institution or interests later. However, we decided not to use this because it implied restricting the use of our web. However, the website still has the possibility of registration for enriching contact lists.

3b. Stakeholder engagement to assess their perception of the organization

Although GRADE does not use surveys, interviews or focus groups to assess the perception of its performance and impact by stakeholders such as policy makers, civil society, media and the private sector, in 2010 the institution celebrated its 30 years and part of the activities included developing an annual report that collects many testimonies showing the impact of its contributions towards the academic community, the public sector, civil society and to international cooperation.. Although the feedback was useful, the process is not institutionalized as a regular mechanism of impact monitoring. A considered alternative is to asses the relevance of its studies and its real impact on decision-making with the assistance of external expertise, but we will need a specialized consultancy for that purpose.

3c. Awards granted to the organization

The awards and acknowledgements granted to GRADE and its researchers as such are registered and reported in the website by UNIC and in our annual reports. Given the fact that these are events that occur occasionally we do not include them as a regular indicator in our monitoring system. More specifically, we have been registering the source of awards by grantee institution (i.e, TTI, GDN), international specialized rankings (i.e., Global Go To Think Tanks assembled by the University of Pennsylvania) and research project competitions (i.e, CIES, GDN and CLACSO).

3d. Examples of research use and influence

Example of success in challenging the conventional wisdom of bureaucrats and elected officials

Although Peru has a tradition of ethnicity related studies, it is one of the few countries that does not count with ethnic indicators collected through the national census or surveys. This situation responds to an historic disregard of the Peruvian State for minorities but also is explained at least partially by a lack of consensus among researchers about the characteristics and utility of those indicators. During the last years, through several studies, GRADE´s researchers have been providing evidence and and analysis to solve problems of minorities' exclusion, and to communicate their situation. They also showed the importance of counting with adequate indicators that could be obtained and monitored through the national census and surveys. It can be said that currently a consensus has been achieved in the academia and many public officials and policy makers that adequate ethnic indicators are needed and the required questions should be added to the national census and surveys.

Example of recommendations considered or adopted by policymakers and civil society organizations

(See IVa)

Examples of societal impacts of research produced by the organization

One of the most challenging policy issues faced by the recent boom of extractive industries in Peru is the land access negotiation between a large private corporation and a small rural community. Both, land acquisition and involuntary resettlement are among the main social dilemmas that extractive industries and the Peruvian government have failed to tackle adequately. GRADE's Researchers have done extensive research on resource access rules that may be compatible with the

expansion of extractive industries and local communities' sustainable development. One of the most important examples of the use of GRADE's research in these land access processes is the return of more than three hundred rural households previously displaced by a mine operation (La Granja Project, located in the Northern Highlands in the Province of Chota, Cajamarca). In the year 2002, BHP Billiton, one of the top mining corporations in the world, followed the proposal that in order to comply with international standards of involuntary resettlement the company had to facilitate the return of the displaced families since the original process of land acquisition and displacement did not fulfil the criteria of informed participation of local communities. From 2003 till 2006 the return process was completed, and a reconstructed local community was empowered later on when a new company (Rio Tinto) acquire the concession rights to explore the project. Currently (2012), local communities, Rio Tinto and the Peruvian government face a potential involuntary resettlement project but with an informed and empowered community.

IV. Concrete examples of impact measurement

IVa. Example of impact relatively simple to measure: Design and implementation of a quality education measurement system in the Ministry of Education

Since the 1990s, it was recognized that the main education problem was lack of quality, with Peru showing very poor results in the few students' education performance tests available. In this context, educational performance tests and standards gained a major position in the educational debate including the Ministry of Education, academia, civil society organizations specialized in education and the media. Within this debate, a demand appeared to improve the performance evaluation systems in the country and GRADE played a key role satisfying that demand.

Within this process, GRADE, which had already developed expertise and a reputation in educational policy, won through a public open call, an important contract (financed by the World Bank) to advise Educational Quality Measurement Unit of the Ministry of Education to establish a national system of educational performance.

GRADE´s advice placed a very important role in the improvement of the performance tests administered in 1998. In addition, GRADE´s proposals, resulted in a significant innovation in 2001, when the performance tests were changed from being based on a normative model to a more adequate criteria model. This new model, among other improvements, allowed the application of more suitable tests for rural and indigenous

students which showed the problems of inequalities. In addition, several studies were conducted by GRADE during the process to provide insights and evidence for further improvements of the educational quality measurement system.

The proposals were elaborated by an interdisciplinary team (including economists, sociologists psychologists), a multisectoral scope (working closely with the Ministry team in charge and with other civil society educational networks) and with a global perspective (based and in consultation with international experts).

In addition, it is important to mention that all the important proposals were discussed in public events that included the participation of academia, policy makers, public officials and civil society representatives. Also, the main related studies and proposals were published in opinion documents and academia articles and presented in the media (newspapers and TV interviews).

The influence strategy was mainly direct, as GRADE had a formal advisory role in the process. However, GRADE also implemented other indirect influence activities, in particular through its research studies and the several discussion events conducted throughout the process. In addition, the researchers involved participated in several other important educational policies debate spaces such as Congress, Education National Council and media, i.e. promoting a New general Education Law that include the educational quality measurement and the promotion of equal opportunities,

In summary, GRADE achieved the following policy influence impacts:
- Agenda definition, introducing the importance of measuring quality of student achievements and other indicators and promoting equal opportunities.
- Design and implementation of new policies, mainly through the change of normative to criteria based achievement tests, and in general through the design of the new student performance evaluation system (tests, samples, methodologies, analysis, among other aspects).
- Policy evaluation and dissemination, even after finishing its advisory role to the Ministry of Education, GRADE continued to develop and disseminate several research studies showing the importance and characteristics of sound evaluation systems and the adequate mechanisms for its use and dissemination.

Finally, it is important to note that the process of achieving policy influence was very important to strengthen the research capabilities, design and use of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, formations of high quality interdisciplinary teams and recognition of GRADE´s work in education policies both in Peru and in the region.

IVb. Example of impact hard to measure: "Contributing to a rigorous evaluation culture in Peru"

During the last decade in Peru, as in many other countries where a transition to a market-based system has taken place, social policies targeted to specific populations, e.g. social protection to poor people, job training, agricultural development programs to farmers, and others, have been increasingly important. In this context, decision makers, donors, and taxpayers have been increasingly interested in knowing whether the implemented programs have the expected benefits, and therefore, interest in impact evaluation has grown rapidly in Peru, as in many countries. However, rigorous impact evaluations are still very much concentrated, within this group, in a few relatively more developed countries. Peru has managed to belong to this small group of countries more advanced in terms of impact evaluation. We think that this accomplishment, introducing a real evaluation culture and the demand and use of rigorous evaluations in Peru, was a response to GRADE´s work and can be an example of an important impact of our institution. However, this happened over many years and through different types of influence activities, some of them difficult to measure and objectively proved.

We claim that GRADE is at least partly responsible for the way impact evaluations studies are being produced and used for policy making nowadays in Peru. For many years, impact evaluations studies were needed and some implemented, but mostly as a request of international agencies and donors. There was no real evaluation culture, much less in the public sector and there was no research knowledge to conduct rigorous and experimental evaluations. In addition, very few researchers (much less public sector professionals) were prepared to implement, monitor and use rigorous evaluations applying the latest trends observed in more developed countries of the region.

GRADE´s work in this area for the last ten years has focused on implementing and promoting impact using internationally developed and technically rigorous methodologies. Ideally, our impact evaluations should be started at the origin of the program, establishing an adequate baseline. Also, ideally our impact evaluations

should be based on an experimental design, randomly and simultaneously selecting an intervention and control group. If this is not possible, we make sure that the best possible quasi experimental design is used or that econometric techniques are used that rigorously minimize evaluation bias. We also promote analyses that complement quantitative and qualitative methodologies to provide more complete and adequate explanations of the evaluation results.

In the process of GRADE´s contribution to the development of a rigorous evaluation culture in Peru, GRADE also showed that impact evaluation studies offer a channel to engage in policy making debate with program managers, policy makers and other relevant stakeholders and provide inputs for an improved policy debate. For that purpose, it was not enough to provide rigorous evaluation studies (both experimental and non experimental), but also important to contribute to the formation of a favourable institutional framework.

This favourable institutional framework came with the Results Based Budgeting approach, incorporated in the Law of Public Budgeting in 2007 (including the requirement of the use of independent impact evaluations). It was the case that many public officials that were pushing to implement that approach in the state were ex GRADE research assistants, well trained in the importance of a sound evaluation for policy making. Also, since its creation, the work subcontracted by this office heavily relied on GRADE´s researchers. Nowadays, the recently created Ministry of Social Development is also focused on the demand and use of technically sound evaluations for old and new social programs and interventions. In this case too, many key officials of the new Ministry have previously worked in GRADE and currently several GRADE´s researchers are actively participating either in specific projects or as advisors in evidence based policy changes and impact evaluations.

Peru has had a total of 31 programs/interventions using sound impact evaluation strategy over the past 15 years.[31] Seven of them were implemented by GRADE and in five cases public programs were evaluated. Among these and other important impact evaluations implemented by GRADE in the last decade, we can mention: Impact Evaluation of the Public School Breakfast Program; Impact Evaluation of the Public Young Training Program, PROJOVEN; Impact Evaluation of a program of training and

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[31] Alzua, Djabbari and Valdivia (2012) Impact Evaluation for Policy Making: A closer look at Latin American countries with weaker research capacities, Draft.

technical assistance female entrepreneurship; Impact Evaluation of the public program of Land Titling (PETT); Impact Evaluation of the Public Program of urban land properties (COFOPRI); Impact Evaluation of Public National Rural Electrification Program; Impact Evaluation of the Public Program of Rural Roads; Impact Evaluation of the Public Program of One Laptop per Child; and others, In general, GRADE was a key player in the process of generating several technically sound impact evaluations that have helped reorganize some of the key programs.

However, these cases have not yet been able to set a new standard within the public sector, and a lot of work is still needed. For example, it is still the case that many public programs or important redesigns of existing programs kept popping up and being implemented and expanded without a sound impact evaluation strategy. GRADE continues to implement rigorous evaluations not only for the public sector but also for NGOs implementing innovative interventions. Furthermore, GRADE is planning to play an educational role offering evaluations courses with a focus on innovative and rigorous techniques, applicable to the Peruvian reality.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS FOR MONITORING THINK TANKS IMPACT

Many think tanks worldwide are working on identifying their impact areas and on developing mechanisms to assess them. The objective of this study is to provide elements for an analytical framework to monitor and assess the impact of think tanks working in less developed contexts. This is done by integrating different impact definitions and indicators, variables, contexts and approaches collected from the literature review and from cases in an analytical framework and learn some lessons from the process.

One of the main conclusions of this exercise, particularly after its discussion on the South Africa TTI Exchange, is that it is possible ad relatively easier to estimate many output (visibility) indicators are considered. More difficult and subjective is to monitor and estiamte impact through the use of reputational and research use indicators such as surveys and citations. However, what seems more relevant but also more difficult is to estimate final impact (influence) because this can only be done through subjective, qualitative, contextual example based instruments.

For the purpose of the study, we started by looking at what is considered impact of a Think Tank and found that, as pointed out by McGann (2011) '" not all think tanks do the same things to the same extent. TTs impact will largely depend on their overall orientation, that is, on how they conceive themselves and their mission and functions (whether they see themselves as organizations supporting specific political projects, as advocates for certain topics or policies, or as disinterested knowledge producers more akin to academia). In general, Think Tank's impact tends to have policy as its main correlate but it may also be the case that the generation of more academic knowledge is considered more important'.

The literature reviewed and case studies considered here also show that variations in the role played by TTs and their potential impacts are highly contingent upon the particularities of the political and civil society environment in which they operate, and upon the academic environment of their host countries. As stated by Stone (2001), methods (for successful use of research by decision-makers) are shaped by a host of factors that are peculiar to leadership styles, institutional architecture and political culture of a country or policy domain.

The evidence revised in the study, complemented by the review of responses of Think Tanks in the electronic forum previous to the TTI South Africa Exchange and in the TTI South Africa Exchange itself, show that there is quite a consensus that although Think Tanks missions differ, they share some combination of: providing high quality research, serve as informed and independent voice in policy debates, putting issues in the agenda and influence policies and contributing towards the well being of community and society[32]. Furthermore, for all those objectives, it is agreed upon that credibility is a key attribute. In fact, there is also a consensus that there is no common and systematic method for monitoring and measuring impact (and success). This is the case mainly because many of the impacts are very difficult to objectively be measured and compared

It can also be concluded that exogenous and endogenous factors are important to define, monitor and estimate TTs impact. As pointed out by Dr. Mamgain from IIDS (India) the success of a think tank can differ considerably given local or regional context as well as the subject focus of the institutions research and potential opportunities for their outreach. In fact, TTs undertake research in new and challenging areas, specifically arenas where there is either a deficit of high quality research due to local contextual limitations or methodological ones.

Similarly, TTs will include dissemination activities and select mechanisms for dissemination and influence depending on the particular characteristics of its organization and context of the country and their networks. The case of IPS (Sri Lanka) illustrates this situation. The Institute manages its exposure to public comment strategically in view of sensitivities that can arise from its semi-government status. The climate for open debate and discussion on policy issues vary, with some governments indicating a greater willingness to engage in dialogue as opposed to others. In such circumstances, engaging in public debate can often be more challenging for a semi-government organization such as the IPS, relative to other TTs.

Endogenous factors also clearly determine how to design and implement a monitoring system and how to estiamte impact. Within these factors, the Think Tank mission conception is the most important. This assertion is illustrated by looking at the case of AIAE. Its mission is to promote evidence-based decision making, so they produce and facilitate the production of research and analytical evidence and take deliberate

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[32] Ajaya Dixit, Executive Director, Institute for Social and Environmental Transition-Nepal

measures to disseminate and transmit the findings and recommendations of the research to end-users and based their impact in this conception. Accordingly, their mix of research, research communication and policy dialogue and training has been in the ratio of 60%, 30% and 10% respectively during the last years and this is reflected in their impact definition and measurement, as monitoring and tracking tools are tailored to elicit achievements benchmarked according to the degrees of involvement in these respective areas.

As the examples of impact presented in the case studies showed, monitoring TT impact by influencing policies is particularly difficult. This point was also clearly presented by other TTI grantees, Sanjay Srivastava & Zakir Husain (Institute of Economic Growth, India) "…But (short run) policy impact often depends on how palatable the TT's message is, strength of links with policy makers, how receptive policy makers are, etc. So, more important than simply influencing policy decisions is the ability to bring to the forefront (neglected) issues about current policies/strategies, take an unbiased critical look at existing measures (which may even lead to deterioration of relations with policy makers). Even if such questioning does not have any impact in the short run, by bringing critical and over looked issues into the public arena through publications in academic journals/reports/ newspaper articles/seminars, TTs can spark off a public debate and set off a chain reaction that has an effect on the long run." Monitoring this process through indicators in a system would prove very difficult. We will come back to this point later on.

Another important finding of the study is that the case studies have clearly shown an increasing interest and expertise of TTs in their monitoring systems, in particular after receiving the institutional support of TTI, both because of the resources received for institutional strengthening and as a consequence of the TTI´s introduction and requirement of systematic ways to track progress indicators. Therefore, nowadays, in all cases, a system is in place; indicators are regularly estimated for main outputs and used inside the institution.

In the case of IPS, the organization had from the outset an internal quarterly reporting system in place, requiring all research staff to submit an account of their research activities for the quarter. This included research studies underway or completed, papers presented at conferences, publications, meetings attended, supervision of students, participation in policymaking bodies and other positions held, and others. More recently, with the TTI core funding, IPS improved its existing monitoring

arrangement, particularly introducing a searchable database reporting system drawing on some elements of the Annual Monitoring Questionnaire (AMQ) of TTI. While still capturing the same elements as before, a more detailed reporting of activities has been incorporated, including allocation of research staff time spent on the various activities being reported, whereby the database can generate a summary of information as needed.

Similarly, the AIAE has accumulated a remarkably learning experience in monitoring its impact since its origin in 2001. Initially, monitoring was sporadic, undefined and primarily driven by the need to document outputs and outcomes in terms of research and policy linkages for making proposals/applications for funding support, institutional profiling and responding to enquiries by donors and funders. Over time, monitoring progressed to the use of more easily accessible and comprehensive documentation of their research and networking outputs, training outputs, policy influence outcomes and several organisational activities and their effects on stakeholders. But, with the launch of the 5-year Strategic Plan 2009-2013 (Project Leading-Edge), the process became more systematic and functional. The Strategic Plan mainstreams a framework of benchmarks and indicators for monitoring and reporting performance and impacts as part of AIAE Monitoring and Evaluation Policy, which has been further distilled into a Practice Manual specifying 'what needs to be monitored', 'who in the Institute should do it', 'when' and 'how' and the dissemination and use of reports of monitoring. The learning experience has been bolstered by the monitoring template (annual monitoring questionnaire) issued by the TTI. Notwithstanding the progressive learning curve, implementing and funding the M&E system has proved to be very tasking and the institution still faces important challenges.

In the case of GRADE, similarly as the other TTs, the institution was increasingly aware of the importance of monitoring its impact for many years and had been trying to collect and systematize information. For many years, some main output indicators such as publications (both of GRADE and external publications of our researchers), media appearances, web site traffic, and events were regularly collected. However, this information was not systematically organized or used to monitor impact. The TTI grant offered the possibility of developing a systematized impact monitoring system. They started with an external study to help them to identify their conception of impact and the main outputs and indicators that they should collect. They also identify the need of having a unit committed to the interlacing of the activities of monitoring. Currently, this unit collects bi monthly all influence activities of our researchers and registers them in a

system built to generate indicators. This process is still incipient but has already showed the institution that their impact has many faces, that influence activities can use different mechanisms depending on the context, type of impact (academic or policy) and even according to different researchers' expertises. Furthermore, GRADE has realized that in many cases their influence is very difficult to objectively assess and requires also qualitative information (citations, testimonies, invitations to provide judgement, etc.).

The case studies have also shown that some measures of impact, which really are output or intermediate impact indicators (showing mainly visibility) are more easily estimated across the TTs. This is the case of publications, web activity, media appearances (with some differences in the types of variables and range of media considered, particularly in the case of IES where the process face some limitations), conference, seminar and other events organized and educational activities within the institution (not in the case of other type of educational activities) and some other outputs that have been registered in all cases by the three Think Tanks, almost from the beginning of their activities.

Advisory roles of researchers and their participation in conferences or other types of events are being monitored in most cases, but these indicators seem to face important limitations because it is difficult to capture the type and importance (for TT impact considerations) of the participation or of the advisory roles. Furthermore, it is difficult to find a suitable way to monitor invitations to provide expert judgements. For example, in the IPS case, invitations to provide expert judgment to policymakers, media or others, were reported but not measured and monitored in any definitive manner. However, with the implementation of a stronger M&E mechanism under the TTI grant, these variables are now being captured on a quarterly basis and can be easily accessed at any given time. Similarly, GRADE collects some information on invitations for their researchers to supply expert judgement to actors like policy-makers, media and others. The problem in this case is the difficulty associated to objectively identify the cases where the invitation is actually to provide an expert judgement and if it is going to be really listened. It would be important to know for example who asks for the expert judgement, i.e., if it is someone with policy faculties, and if there will one, a few or several experts providing judgement.

Besides the production of high quality research, influence, improve knowledge, put issues in agenda and influence policies, most TTs consider that attracting and retaining

highly qualified core researcher and attaining financial sustainability are key for success and should be monitored and considered intermediate outcomes. Regarding, the first issue, all three cases mentioned its importance to achieve their respective missions and all also mentioned the difficulties they face in the process. In the case of GRADE, although it already counts with 16 full time senior researchers, all with graduate degrees (most with PhDs from international prestigious universities), the institution has been facing a challenge to recruit new senior staff. Researchers normally start as assistants, who after a few years, leave to pursue graduate studies and then come back to GRADE as associate researchers first and later on become principal researchers. However, this process works out only in some cases and takes a long while. Therefore, an effort has been needed to recruit senior researchers directly. In an increasingly competitive market, they face an important challenge to recruit highly qualified graduate professionals, particularly given that their institutional arrangement does not allow a stable and predictable income. For GRADE, therefore, it is important to monitor its success in recruiting, retaining, and developing within the institution, highly qualified graduate researchers.

In the case of financial sustainability, think tanks emphasize the importance of being able to diversify their sources of income in a sustainable manner and reduce volatility and dependence. For example, in the case of IPS of Sri Lanka, although the TT was established by a government act, the Institute's financial and administrative independence has enabled it to set and implement an independent research program, and be both constructive and critical as a promoter of policy advice.

On the other hand, more difficult and less usual to monitor seem to be outcome indicators, more related to the TT´s reputation, such as invitations to provide expert judgements and professional opinions, citations of published works (in other publications and even more difficult on public documents, norms or speeches). As was stated by Weidenbaum (2010, 135) given the extended nature of the policy process, it 'typically takes a decade or more for an idea to be transformed into a specific public policy decision', while in the meantime 'a variety of individuals and organizations... are involved in the inevitable modification of the original idea...', means that straightforward measurements of output are generally inadequate to assess impact.

Regarding those indicators, AIAE states that in spite of having M&E policy and manual, performance indicators remain hazy and are mostly in the output-outcome segment of results framework. To date, AIAE is grappling with finding appropriate and valid

mechanisms for measuring penultimate and final end-user impacts. What they already do as part of the monitoring practices is to include with every research or policy conference, workshop or seminar, a post-event feedback survey. The survey elicits how the conference, workshop or seminar has benefited the participants and for that they intend to use the benefits gained.

In a similar vein, although GRADE does not use surveys, interviews or focus groups to assess the perception of its performance and impact by stakeholders such as policy makers, civil society, media and the private sector, the institution occasionally collects testimonies to show the impact of its contributions towards the academic community, the public sector, civil society and international cooperation. However, the process is not institutionalized as a regular mechanism of impact monitoring. A considered alternative is to asses the relevance of its studies and its real impact on decision-making with the assistance of external expertise, but we a specialized consultancy for that purpose will be required.

Even more problems are faced by the TTs in their process of monitoring citations, key variable for measuring impact. According to IPS, given that their core objective is attempting to influence policymaking at the national level, monitoring their direct contributions to government policy frameworks and its research citations in policy documents (of government and donor agencies in particular) is the most relevant indicator of impact. However, current monitoring of the above is not perfect and there are shortcomings in the way these are measured. This is the case, as pointed out by GRADE too, because most government policy documents do not as a principle provide a reference to material drawn from research inputs. Participation of IPS researchers in policymaking committees is also another key indicator that is being easily monitored, although the impact on policy formulation per se may not always be obvious.

AIAE also considers citations of published works as a very important indicator in assessing the impact of the Institute. Cases of citation of AIAE research in scientific, policy and professional publications and materials are noted as they are found. But, no systematic counting and documentation currently exists to track this indicator. In the case of GRADE, although important efforts have been made to monitor citations, as it is consider a key indicator of influence, they are still facing difficulties, particularly when looking for citations of its publications in government and donor agency documents (policy documents). It has to be done practically "manually", since very few libraries and public institutions have their documents in an accessible electronic system.

Furthermore, public documents do not tend to include citations. Therefore, these results are not being reported yet and we are still in the process of trying to find a suitable mechanism to monitor this output.

One of the more important conclusions of the study is related to the acknowledgment of the complexities of monitoring and measuring impact when defined as policy influence. Rather than operating within a simple model of research-input/policy-output, a major part of the work of think tanks has therefore to do with educating policy fairly impermeable policy communities, helping to shape and re-shape policy agendas. This is were the idea of "research brokerage" comes in, as think tanks not only have to produce information but also convince policy makers, civil society or other actors that those ideas are worth considering.

Although in some cases research impact is relatively easy to identify and show, in some other it is very difficult. Even in the cases where the impact is clear, case studies show that qualitative information is required, i.e. somewhat detailed examples. This conclusion was also shown by the UK Research Excellence Framework (REF) which proposes that impact is assessed through case studies, a strategy that acknowledges the complex dynamics of impact and which therefore eschews direct or linear attributions of impact (HEFCE 2011).

The case studies included in this study contain examples of influence that were possible to show but through many mechanisms, over time, and thus, not through an objective indicator. A good illustration of this can be observed in the case of AIAE. This institution provided an example of clear impact, in terms of policy influence, knowledge transfer and improving and putting important issues in the public agenda in the case of a research-based advocacy intervention designed to stimulate reforms for a better business environment to make the private sector more competitive. A complete project was implemented by AIAE in collaboration with the National Planning Commission, Central Bank of Nigeria, private sector organizations and State Governments that integrated research, dissemination and advocacy seeking to produce knowledge to support business environment reforms in Nigerian States. Although no systematic measurement of impact was registered, the institute collected and provided ample evidence of impact (see case example for more details).

The case studies also provided very illustrative examples of impact difficult to measure. In the IPS example, refer to the influence of IPS research on public enterprise reform,

the impact is channelled mainly through initiating and stimulating informed discourse amongst disparate stakeholders in the policy process. Moreover, IPS' engagement within the policy process in this regard has not comprised a series of well-defined, linear events. Rather, the trajectory of work in this area has traced the contours of policy cycles pertaining to the political and institutional context within which the Institute's research has been embedded. Although the direct impact of IPS' work is hard to capture in terms of policy outputs, after years of high quality evidence based research, the Institute established itself as a key hub of expertise in the area of privatization and public enterprise reform and even IPS staff served on the Board of Directors of the Public Enterprise Reform Commission and on government appointed policy committees in specific sectors where public enterprise reforms were underway.

Likewise, the case study of GRADE shows an example of significant impact difficult to measure. GRADE maintains that the introduction of a real evaluation culture and the demand and use of rigorous evaluations in Peru, significantly responded to its work. However, this happened over many years and through different types of influence activities, some of them difficult to measure and objectively proved. This impact was a result of several GRADE´s research studies and impact evaluation but also because many public officials that pushed to implement rigorous impact evaluations in the state were ex GRADE research assistants, well trained in the importance of a sound evaluation for policy making. Nowadays, the recently created Ministry of Social Development is also focused on the demand and use of technically sound evaluations for old and new social programs and interventions. In this case too, many key officials of the new Ministry have previously worked in GRADE and currently several GRADE´s researchers are actively participating either in specific projects or as advisors in evidence based policy changes and impact evaluations.

As AIAE points out "… even though the extent of policy uptake of AIAE research is important for impact measurement, it is not adequately integrated within the on-going monitoring framework. Policy uptake is a fluid iterative process regarding which no single research programme could reasonably claim credit. Developing the tools and procedures to capture research impact on policy uptake is a complex task, and yet unresolved by the Institute".

In sum, the learning process of impact monitoring has shown that:

➢ First of all, it is important to start by clearly establishing objectives according to each TT mission and priorities.

➢ Impacts of TTs are highly contingent upon particularities of the political and civil society environment in which they operate. Thus, context should be taken into consideration, considering exogenous external factors such as political climate, academia development, government willingness to engage in public debate, media and policy linkages, among others.

➢ TTs has experimented a learning curve in the design and implementation of their impact monitoring systems, in particular thanks to the institutional support of the TTI. Although all TTs previously collected some output and outcome indicators, monitoring was mostly sporadic, on demand and incomplete.

➢ The most commonly used indicators of impact are in fact measures of outputs, which actually constitute measures of intermediate impact. These include publications, media appearances, internet and website activities, conference and seminar presentations and advisory roles played by core researchers. All three TTs revised collect and use these indicators, in most cases even before developing a monitoring system (probably less in the cases of seminar presentations and advisory roles played by researchers).

➢ Another key indicator that goes beyond visibility and faces more difficulties to be measured is reputation. This can be assessed through measures such as media appearances, advisory roles, papers and citations in publications, and other indicators of credibility of the TT´s work. These types of reputational measures are considered very important by the TTs reviewed, but they still do not count with their own mechanisms to monitor them (i.e. by using surveys).

➢ Other relevant indicators or variables that appeared as very relevant to monitor include the ability to attract and retain a core of good professionals and financial sustainability (diversity and evolution of funds to reduce volatility and dependence).

➢ We find also some consensus both in the literature and in the cases revised, that the final impact indicators are also the most difficult to monitor and objectively measure. Depending on the specific missions and priorities of the TT (which will be needed to weigh the different indicators), final impact will be

along the lines of recommendations considered or adopted by policymakers; awards granted; publication in or citation of publications in academic journals; public testimony and the media that influences the policy debate and decision-making; and success in challenging the conventional wisdom

➢ Although in some cases research impact is relatively easy to identify and show, in some other it is very difficult. Even in the cases where the impact is clear, case studies show that qualitative information is required, i.e. somewhat detailed examples, a strategy that acknowledges the complex dynamics of impact. It is recognized that policy influence is very difficult to be objectively measured and requires also qualitative provided by examples supporting various evidence and other information (citations, testimonies, invitations to provide judgement, etc.). Mostly, we can conclude that measuring TT´s impact is a complex challenge yet to be solved.

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