

# FINAL REPORT

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Strategic Evaluation: Research Influence on Policy

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Information & Communication Technologies for  
Development (Acacia): The Case of  
Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa and Uganda

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## SUMMARY REPORT

As part of a larger study on the policy influence of its interventions around the world, the IDRC commissioned a series of case studies on its Acacia program in four African countries, namely Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa and Uganda. Acacia focused on the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for development. Fifteen projects were used in this study, which compares the types of policy influence, the means and mechanisms used and the contextual factors across countries in order to identify commonalities and unique aspects from which lessons for the future can be drawn.

Remarkable similarities and synergies were found between the four case study countries – in terms of national contexts, the IDRC interventions, the most effective types of policy influence and the most effective mechanisms for this purpose.

There were some important differences. The limited number of policy role players in Mozambique, the influential position and advocacy of its national Acacia Advisory Committee and Secretariat, the small circle of well-networked ICT champions and the exceptional government commitment all helped to ensure the greatest IDRC policy influence in Mozambique of all the case study countries. In South Africa, the transition to democracy and later on changes in policy approaches and processes due to new decision-makers and government foci, meant that the IDRC could have a significant policy influence during the early 1990s, but far less during the latter part of the decade. In Senegal the focus on decentralization of government power to local and sectoral authorities brought a bottoms-up approach to policy influence efforts, compared to the more top-down approaches followed in the other countries. The local partnerships created within the various layers of coordinating bodies that had to steer the Acacia strategy also enhanced opportunities for policy influence. In metaphorical terms activities which could enable policy influence in Mozambique was “a clear sprint to the finish line”; in Uganda, with its greater number of policy role players, “a longer, slower and more winding relay race”; in South Africa with its various policy phases, “initially a sprint, followed by an ongoing marathon”; and in Senegal with its decentralization approaches, “different races to a variety of finishing lines”.

Few instances could be given to illustrate the *direct* influence of IDRC interventions on policy content. Intermediate influences were much more commonplace. There was a surprisingly large spectrum of IDRC supported activities with the potential to influence policy and which were confirmed by key informants as having had such influence. When the similarity in national and intervention-related contexts in each of the case study countries is considered, the reasons for this situation become clearer. There is a series of contextual factors that seemed to facilitate policy influence. Among others “policy windows” were opening as the IDRC entered the ICT policy arena. In the political environment this was brought about by the national stability and growth after decades of devastation and oppression, a general feeling of optimism, governments committed to development, also in rural areas, and searching for development solutions, a growing awareness of the role ICTs could play, and encouragement of donor investment. Policy frameworks existed which encouraged development as well

as reforms in key sectors, while policy-makers started to recognize the need for coherent, integrated policies to counter disparate efforts. Influential ICT champions from various sectors created awareness among decision-makers and the public of the potential of ICTs for development. At the same time ICTs was a relatively new field. Few if any ICT models for development existed and policy-makers had little knowledge and few preconceived ideas in the field. Institutional capacity in ICT policy research was very limited and there was little institutional collaboration towards ICT growth and policy formulation. Participation in international events assisted in inspiring and informing national decision-makers about ICTs. This was supported by the timely support for and encouragement of the field of ICTs for development by a few important players in the international donor community. This included the facilitation of interaction between local decision-makers and international experts in ICT policy research and formulation.

The IDRC interventions themselves also assisted in creating a sympathetic environment for policy influence. Factors common across the case study countries were

- ❑ The early entry of the IDRC during the opening of the policy windows.
- ❑ The highest level of government support for, and active promotion of, ICTs and related policy processes.
- ❑ Government commitment to transparency, consultation and multi-sectoral stakeholder processes during policy formulation.
- ❑ A small group of well networked key decision-makers interacting at different forums, enabling the fast transfer of ideas and experiences.
- ❑ The National Acacia Advisory Committees, Secretariats and other coordinating bodies which included ICT champions from government and other sectors.
- ❑ The Acacia strategies developed in a consultative manner and hence based on national needs and priorities.
- ❑ The interlinked and complementary nature of the projects in the Acacia strategies, enhancing in conjunction with one another, opportunities for policy influence.
- ❑ The capability of Acacia representatives, researchers and project leaders to link research to opportunities to put these results to use.
- ❑ The exposure of policy-makers to see first hand some of the pilot projects and the action research results. They could also get information from the policy research studies that were of immediate value for policy formulation.

At the same time there were relatively few constraints to policy influence in most of the case study countries. In the national environment the presence of a plethora of ICT role players and agenda complicated opportunities for policy influence, especially where the IDRC supported structures were not well positioned within that arena. In South Africa changes in national policy approaches and foci in the late nineties partially closed a policy window, as did institutional instabilities in Senegal and the lack of interest by some key decision-makers in ICT related interventions. Of particular detriment was the lack of government focus on cooperation and the creation of synergy between policies, exacerbated by competition between government departments, as was found in South Africa during recent years.

Constraints to policy influence within the context of the interventions themselves included uncertainties and weakened management processes caused by changes in IDRC leadership and the closure of the IDRC Regional Office in Southern Africa; overarching policy formulation processes not located in a neutral place in government; the late implementation of the Evaluation and Learning System of Acacia (ELSA); the lack of understanding of gender issues in the ICT environment, which impacted negatively on the

planning and execution of the IDRC supported projects; and inadequate communication and synergy between the various coordinating bodies within the Acacia strategy in Senegal\*. In some cases the inefficient implementation of interventions also served to lower the opportunities for potential policy influence\*.

In most cases where policy influence was indeed identified, the *extent* of that influence was difficult to determine. Due to the variety of activities and thrusts in the IDRC interventions, most of the types of policy influence according to the typology of Lindquist (see later) were represented. In all the case study countries the most significant were the modification of existing policies and the establishment of new policy regimes; the enhancement of the knowledge and information of policy-makers and other stakeholders; the provision of opportunities for networking and learning among colleagues; the introduction of new concepts and ideas and the stimulation of public debate on ICT policy issues.

The IDRC support and promotion of policy formulation processes led to the development of at least five national policies related to telecommunications reform and to ICTs. It also helped to expose policy-makers from other sectors to the ICT policy issues. This resulted by their own admission in a number of modifications to existing policies or to policy formulation processes. The development of knowledge and individual and institutional research capacity through the support of systematic long-term research studies was not supported by the IDRC. However, the knowledge and information in the ICT for development field was enhanced by a significant number of ad hoc feasibility and project monitoring and evaluation studies, as well as research studies aimed at informing specific policy issues. Action research results, the exposure of decision-makers to pilot projects, the active dissemination of research results and advocacy and awareness campaigns further informed a variety of stakeholders. The policy formulation processes and many of the other IDRC interventions included a large variety of opportunities for networking and the sharing of information among policy-makers (including at Ministerial level) and (to a lesser extent) researchers from the same and related sectors at national and in some instances, especially in Senegal, also at local level. The same events also provided many opportunities for IDRC representatives, facilitating and coordinating structures and project leaders to put new concepts, ideas and arguments flowing from their experiences on the table. These could then stimulate debate and create awareness and understanding of policy issues among the stakeholders.

Types of policy influence where the IDRC did not have a high profile include supporting recipients to develop innovative ideas, improving their capabilities to communicate ideas, educating researchers and others in new positions with a broader understanding

of issues and, surprisingly in view of the conventional IDRC focus, developing new talent for research and analysis. These could be interesting foci for future IDRC interventions.

Informants in this study did not bring to the fore significant new insights into types of policy influence. A new category of policy influence has been included to reflect the need for the establishment of new policy regimes in areas where these did not exist before – typically where new technologies can underpin whole new fields of endeavor. There is also a need for considering formulating a type of policy influence related to efforts to influence the way in which policies are made. This is of special relevance in developing countries, where policies are often made in a non-transparent, authoritarian manner. Advocacy, awareness campaigns and lobbying are often used by civil society and other stakeholders as policy

influence instruments. A category that emphasizes the potential influence of these types of activities might also be useful.

The IDRC was one of the first organizations to recognize and address ICTs as a priority area for development in Africa. It chose to focus its actions on community access and services – a difficult arena about which little was known in Africa and in the rest of the developing world. Its pioneering focus increased its risks as funder. Outcomes were uncertain and little was known that could direct strategies and approaches. The early emphasis on feasibility and background research studies as well as the establishment of pilot projects laid the groundwork for an integrated, multi-pronged approach to the Acacia strategies in each country. The approaches and components which characterized Acacia strategies were similar in each of the case study countries and worked together to provide significant policy influence potential. Facilitating, planning and coordinating bodies were established in each country to manage the execution of the Acacia strategies. These functioned with various levels of success, which in itself assisted or constrained policy influence. In each country projects were supported that

- ❑ could be used as models in a number of sectors, and to learn lessons about the use of ICTs for (rural) development;
- ❑ could direct consultative and participatory processes for the establishment of national policies and strategies; and
- ❑ through a focus on policy implementation, could help provide opportunities for policy modifications in a next policy cycle.

The similar Acacia strategy design in each case study country made it possible to use a number of similar mechanisms to enable and enhance policy influence. The most effective of these were the following:

- ❑ The support of research studies as well as action research syntheses conducted by international and/or consultants (or project participants in the case of the action research). ELSA was to be part of these efforts; its late implementation hampered the impact of the research on policy influence. The research had to be accompanied by the effective dissemination of the findings.
- ❑ The support of pilot projects, and the exposure of national and local decision-makers (and local communities) to these projects and their findings. This was one of the most important mechanisms through which awareness was raised of the potential of ICTs for development and through which advocacy was encouraged at both policy-maker and community level.
- ❑ The appointment of respected individuals on facilitating, planning and coordinating bodies, ensuring their participation in forums and in policy formulation processes.
- ❑ Advocacy and awareness activities and campaigns by National Acacia Advisory Committees, their Secretariats and other coordinating bodies, usually due to the inclusion among their members of ICT champions active in promoting the usefulness and use of ICTs in various sectors and among different target groups.

- ❑ The direct funding of policy formulation processes, which in turn included a series of the other mechanisms (such as forums for interaction and sharing of experiences) which could add to the policy influence opportunities.
- ❑ The support and organization of consultative and transparent processes and events which bring people together across sectors, for example in designing the Acacia strategies. These processes and events consisted of the support of public forums (symposia and conferences) as well as meetings where stakeholders could interact and share experiences and findings. The annual Ministerial meetings also fell into this category.
- ❑ The support of a variety of information collection and dissemination activities, usually conducted by the pilot project teams or the National Acacia Advisory Committees, their Secretariats or other coordinating bodies (in the case of Senegal). These included Websites, newsletters, media contributions and briefings at public events or closed meetings.
- ❑ The exposure of researchers and policy-makers to high-level technical expertise provided by the IDRC through their own staff or contractors, international consultancies or visits by African decision-makers to Canada.
- ❑ Capacity building through partnerships, especially prominent in Senegal where there were more organized coordination and partnership mechanisms to ensure maximum direct or indirect involvement by the major local and national players in the Acacia activities. This facilitated mutual learning.
- ❑ Training of stakeholders, which took place in some projects where staff members were trained to monitor and synthesize data for action research, and in ad hoc initiatives such as the strengthening of the ICT parliamentary network in Senegal by hosting a training and awareness seminar for members of the Assembly.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Many IDRC programs and projects reflect the expectation that the research supported will influence public policy at the national and local levels. This implies that the organization should have a clear understanding of what it means by policy influence and how this is achieved through its project and program activities. Three key questions have to be answered:

- ❑ What constitutes public policy influence in the IDRC experience?
- ❑ To what degrees, and in what ways, has IDRC supported research or projects influenced public policy?
- ❑ What factors and conditions have facilitated or inhibited the public policy influence potential of the IDRC supported research?

A number of initiatives are being undertaken by the IDRC as part of a concerted study aimed at answering these questions. The study will provide an opportunity for learning at the program level, where it can enhance the program and project design to address policy issues. It will also support corporate level learning by providing input into strategic planning processes, enable feedback on performance and assist in the design of the next corporate program framework.

One of the components of the study is a series of case studies in a variety of countries in which the IDRC is active. Now completed, they were to explore the work undertaken by the IDRC, the changing context in which it was carried out and the processes that were used. They had to present rich, detailed stories of the policy influence process, developed through a document review as well as interviews with program leaders, participants, those said to have been influenced and relevant IDRC staff.

The case studies were conducted by a team of international evaluators in various developing regions in the world. In Africa the Acacia Program, which is aimed promoting the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for development in Africa, was selected as the main focus for the case studies - in particular its first phase which was concluded in 2002. The case study countries were Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa (where in addition to the Acacia Program an earlier initiative, the National Information and Communications Program, was studied) and Uganda.



The case studies in Mozambique, South Africa and Uganda were conducted by Zenda Ofir, Evaluation Specialist from South Africa, and the Senegal case study by Khamathe Sene, Consultant in Project Evaluation, Management and Training, and Ramata Thioune, Knowledge Analyst in Acacia, both from Senegal.

**Table 1.1**

Table 1.1 lists the projects used in the four Acacia country case studies.

COUNTRY	CASE STUDIES
<b>Mozambique</b>	The Mozambique Acacia Advisory Committee I The Mozambique Acacia Advisory Committee II The National Information and Communications Policy ICT Policy – Strategic Implementation, Leadership and Promotion The National ICT Policy Lead Project Initiatives
<b>Senegal</b>	The Acacia Strategy and its Permanent Secretariat Youth Cyberspaces in Secondary Schools ICT support for the Gender Equality Program in Senegal The Role of ICTs in Decentralization Policy
<b>South Africa</b>	The South African Acacia Advisory Committee (SAAAC) The National Information and Communication Program for South Africa (NICP)
<b>Uganda</b>	The Acacia National Secretariat for Uganda The Development of an Integrated Information and Communication Policy for Uganda Policy and Strategies for Rural Communications Development in Uganda The Development of Operational Guidelines for the Uganda Rural Communications Development Fund

## 1.2 The Acacia Program

### ACACIA I: OBJECTIVES

- ❑ Demonstrate how access to information and communication technologies can most effectively contribute to enabling communities to solve development problems in ways that build upon local goals, cultures, strengths and processes;
- ❑ Build a body of knowledge identifying the policies, technologies and methodologies that are most instrumental to promoting affordable and effective use of ICTs by poor disadvantaged communities; and
- ❑ Create a growing momentum in support of expanded rural access.

### *The Program Concept*

According to anecdote, the idea of Acacia emerged at the 1996 ISAD Conference and perhaps more strongly at the “sister” conference for civil society held at Helderfontein in Johannesburg. These conferences were the first of their kind held in a developing country and they were thus from the outset closely aligned with efforts by African countries to ensure that their voices would help shape the Global Information Society.

Acacia I (the first five year phase) was one of the first major donor-supported initiatives in Africa to focus on breaking new ground in the comprehensive understanding of the role ICTs can play in community development, especially among poor, disadvantaged communities. At the time precedents in Africa did not exist and the focus was to be on lessons learned from project experiences. As there were few ICT projects on the ground in most African countries, this meant that Acacia also had to initiate projects that were outside its normally strong focus on research. It was therefore at the time regarded as somewhat of an anomaly in the IDRC portfolio of programs.

In March 1997, the Board of Governors of the IDRC approved Acacia as a program that would aim to establish the potential of ICTs to empower poor African communities. It was to focus its actions on four fronts, including policy. In the conceptualization of Acacia the importance was recognized of policy frameworks linked to research, as well as the need for demonstration models that could inform public policy initiatives in the countries participating in Acacia.

Issues such as affordability, sustainability and the easy use of technologies came to the fore as priorities for study (and not only ICT access which often dominated debates). The need for an enabling policy environment and thus sound ICT policies in the participating countries became important issues in the Acacia approach. In its approval of Acacia the IDRC also recognized that social and policy research would be critical in assisting with the possible replication of those Acacia pilot projects considered to be successful.

Apart from the abovementioned aspects of the Acacia program design, in each of the participating countries common issues quickly arose out of the national strategies, leading to the recognition of the need to address a broad spectrum of ICT policy issues across countries. This led to a decision that Acacia should focus on projects that addressed policy issues which required a sub-regional or regional perspective.

This approach meant that in the emerging ICT policy arena Acacia had the potential to contribute significantly to the total knowledge base on ICTs for development in Africa, especially around issues of universal access and community development.

An important component of Acacia was ELSA, which was conceptualized as its “learning, evaluation and management tool”, the main instrument through which it aimed to contribute to policy development. ELSA was to test the core Acacia hypothesis and stimulate learning in the communities where development was to take place. It had to balance the management needs of Acacia, the learning needs of donor organizations and, “most importantly, the learning needs of those responsible for policy and implementation in Africa”. One of the target groups for ELSA activities was therefore policy-makers who would require a more solid basis for decision-making than was currently available.

The initial ELSA strategy focused on establishing the mechanisms through which community learning and impact assessment could take place in the context of telecentre development. The telecentres as a major Acacia thrust were seen as points where many of the critical issues converged – policy, infrastructure, technology and applications. It was envisaged that new knowledge would be generated through studies and monitoring and evaluation activities across the participating countries, facilitating opportunities for comparative studies on the continent.

It was furthermore envisaged that apart from ELSA, discrete research activities would be undertaken to contribute to the tools available to support decision-making on the extension of ICTs to rural areas. Promising research was to be investigated for incorporation into ELSA, thus retaining a flexible research agenda.

### 1.3 The Terms of Reference

In this study the consultant was asked to review the projects in these four case study countries in order to provide a comparison and synthesis based on the information presented. Key points had to consider the context and policy processes in each case and were to include:

- ❑ Similarity/commonality and/or uniqueness regarding the type of policy influence reported;
- ❑ Similarity/commonality and/or uniqueness regarding the means or mechanisms used in the projects which have reportedly influenced or contributed to policy influence;
- ❑ Similarity/commonality and/or uniqueness regarding the factors that contributed to, or hindered, policy influence.

The report had to synthesize the resulting information across the four reports and provide qualitative and quantitative information with reference to the relevant sources. The report will be presented at various forums to obtain input from different role players before submission of a final report.

### 1.4 Method

No new information was gathered for this study. The following reports were used to inform its content:

- ❑ Strategic Evaluation: Research Influence on Policy. The Case of Mozambique. Prepared by ZM Ofir for the IDRC Evaluation Unit. January 2003.
  
- ❑ Strategic Evaluation: Research Influence on Policy. The Case of South Africa. Prepared by ZM Ofir for the IDRC Evaluation Unit. January 2003.

- ❑ Strategic Evaluation: Research Influence on Policy. The Case of Uganda. Prepared by ZM Ofir for the IDRC Evaluation Unit. January 2003.
- ❑ Strategic Assessment: The Policy Influence of Projects financed by IDRC's Acacia Program. The Senegal Case Study. Prepared by KM Sene and R Thioune for the IDRC Evaluation Unit. January 2003.

Due to the concentration of information in the synthesis of the four case studies, in this report references to justify arguments are not given. Familiarity with the four case study reports is therefore assumed, otherwise it will be difficult to grasp the basis on which the cross-country comparisons have been made.

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## 2. The Types of Policy Influence

### 2.1 Defining Policy Influence

The following are the types of policy influence defined by Lindquist<sup>1</sup> for the purpose of this study:

<b>Expanding Policy Capacities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Improving the knowledge or data of certain actors;</li> <li>❑ Supporting recipients to develop innovative ideas;</li> <li>❑ Improving capabilities to communicate ideas;</li> <li>❑ Developing new talent for research and analysis.</li> </ul>
<b>Broadening Policy Horizons</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Providing policy-makers with opportunities for networking or learning within their jurisdiction or with colleagues elsewhere;</li> <li>❑ Introducing new concepts to frame debates, putting ideas on the agenda, or stimulating public debate;</li> <li>❑ Educating researchers and others who take up new positions with broader understanding of issues;</li> <li>❑ Stimulating quiet dialogue among decision-makers (and among, or with, researchers).</li> </ul>
<b>Affecting Policy Regimes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Modifying existing programs or policies;</li> <li>❑ Leading to the fundamental re-design of programs and policies.</li> </ul>

During the case studies, informants provided insights into their interpretation of the concept of policy influence. In many cases their initial understanding (before discussion of the Lindquist model) of policy influence was limited to the view that such influence has to lead to some modification of existing policies, or to the adoption of new policies.

They regarded policy influence as being the result of

<sup>1</sup> *Discerning Policy Influence: Framework for a Strategic Evaluation of IDRC-Supported Research*. Evert A Lindquist, School of Public Administration, University of Victoria. 1 September 2001.

- ❑ awareness campaigns, lobbying and advocacy, among others using research results;
- ❑ strengthening of the policy capacities of a variety of role players, including researchers, policy-makers, decision-makers from other sectors, grassroots communities and civil society in general, so that they can contribute effectively to policy formulation debates and processes;
- ❑ networking between role players.

Few new ideas were generated. Several informants remarked during interviews, and at the November workshop on the draft reports, that provision could be made for a greater focus on policy processes in view of the lack of transparency, consultation and focus on societal needs that often accompanies policy formulation in developing countries. Influencing the *processes* through which policies are made can be an important eventual influence on the (quality and nature of the) policy formulations or modifications. In these case studies several examples were found where specific approaches, activities and inputs influenced the way in which policy processes were conducted (refer to Section 2.3.4).

The case studies also indicated the need for formulation of a type of policy influence that could describe the establishment of a new policy regime, for example in cases where new technologies such as ICTs necessitate a new set of policies.

## 2.2 Tracing Policy Influence

As noted consistently in the literature, tracing policy influence is a complex matter. The situation in each of the four case study countries proved to be no different. Few instances could be given to illustrate the direct influence of IDRC interventions on policy *content*. Intermediate influences (usually more difficult to trace directly to their source) were much more prevalent.

There was a surprisingly large spectrum of IDRC supported activities with the *potential* to influence policy and professed by key informants as having had such influence. The extent of this influence within the multitude of related activities and influences from other sources remains difficult to determine. Most were aimed at creating a nurturing environment for policy formulation, such as providing opportunities for knowledge sharing, building capacity and facilitating consultative processes – well in line with the IDRC's way of conducting business in a facilitating rather than prescriptive manner (an approach often applauded by stakeholders) .

On the other hand, the policy environment and the way in which Acacia was conceptualized make it easier to understand its apparently considerable impact on policy. The fact that ICT (and especially ICTs for development) is a relatively new and fast developing field in Africa means that there were interesting opportunities to participate in the creation of new policy regimes. The integrated and multi-pronged nature of the Acacia interventions (refer for more detail to Chapter 3), coupled to the timely entry of Acacia during a “policy window” in each of the countries positioned the IDRC very well to play a significant role in these processes.

As noted in Chapter 4, there were also a number of other factors which facilitated opportunities for policy influence. Among others, the fact that the IDRC focused much of its efforts on the relatively new field of ICT for development brought another dimension to opportunities for policy influence: fewer preconceived ideas among policy-makers, less confidence in their own knowledge and thus active searches by policy-makers for information that could provide answers to policy questions.

Where direct policy influence could not be traced, decisions to include types of policy influence were taken based almost exclusively on triangulated perceptions of key informants and, where available, documented evidence in this regard. As many of the key informants were directly involved in policy formulation processes, their comments carried significant weight and credibility.

## 2.3 Policy Influence and the Acacia Strategies

In Mozambique, Senegal and Uganda, Acacia sought to encourage a national strategy for adopting and integrating ICTs to support development. In these countries Acacia aimed to promote policy formulation initiatives while developing, through pilot projects and research, scientific arguments that decision-makers could use to integrate ICTs more thoroughly into the social and economic fabric of society. This approach was underpinned by advocacy and sensitization activities that could inform all relevant sectors of society, including policy-makers.



The components and scope of the activities of the Acacia activities (refer to Chapter 3 for more detail) in these three countries indicate that they were intended to foster an awareness of the role of ICTs in development, support this through the creation of new knowledge through research and use the results to induce policy-makers to take appropriate steps towards a national strategy. According to key informants involved in Acacia in these three countries, policy was from the beginning an important focus of program-initiated discussions, emphasizing issues such as regulation, universal access and the roles of the different sectors.

In Mozambique and Senegal in particular, Acacia was to establish a framework which could help to provide the political authorities with a solid basis for their ICT policy initiatives. In each case the strategy became part of an attempt to establish a framework for coordination of disparate attempts in the ICT sector (although in Senegal this was met with little success). This aim was less pronounced during program implementation in Uganda, where the National Acacia Advisory Committee and Secretariat struggled at times to formulate and execute the strategy in a manner that could optimize its influence on policy-makers. The Uganda Acacia strategy did not have the same marked impact in the policy environment as the Mozambique and Senegal strategies, among others because of the larger number of ICT policy role players and other influential policy inputs, for example from the private sector.

In South Africa a somewhat different situation existed. While the IDRC-initiated National Information and Communication Program exerted significant influence in the telecommunications sector during the country's transition to democracy in the early nineties, the Acacia Program was less successful in its policy influence during the late nineties. By that time there were many ICT role players with often conflicting agendas; many of the policy regimes were already established; the government had created very specific forums for policy input and formulation; and there was an emphasis on policy implementation rather than formulation. Acacia was therefore not as prominent in the policy making arena in South Africa as was the case in the other countries.

One of the key informants for the case studies noted that the IDRC policy influence activities could be seen in terms of a metaphor. This was supported by the findings in the various studies:

- ❑ In Mozambique, “a clear sprint to the finish line”.
- ❑ In Uganda, “a longer, slower and more winding relay race”, with more players involved and a much less direct effect on policy.
- ❑ In South Africa, initially (until around 1995) “a sprint, followed by an ongoing marathon” – with many more players and many different agendas than any of the other countries, having to interact across a wide field, often with conflicting interests.
- ❑ In Senegal, with its focus on decentralization and local capacity building, “different races to a variety of finishing lines”, in some ways effective but still without the desired cohesion in purpose towards an overall policy framework.

## 2.4 Types of Policy Influence

### 2.4.1 EXPANDING POLICY CAPACITIES

#### i) *Improving the knowledge or data of certain actors*

This type of policy influence was found to the greatest extent, but not exclusively, in those projects aimed at policy formulation, viz. the National Information and Communications Policy in Mozambique, the National ICT Policy and the Policy and Strategies for Rural Communications Development in Uganda, and the National Telecommunications Policy Project in South Africa. The policy formulation processes were stimuli for a wide variety of activities which resulted in

the improvement of the knowledge or information of a number of role players (*refer to Figure I.1 in Addendum I*). These include:

- ❑ Research undertaken specifically to inform the policy formulation processes. This usually consisted of research studies where consultants were commissioned to provide information within a given framework. Other research studies contributing to this category are feasibility and evaluation studies.
- ❑ The synthesis of monitoring and action research information collected from pilot projects. This information was not very detailed but could help to identify problem areas or give some ideas for the solution of specific problems.
- ❑ The support and facilitation of forums, meetings and retreats where documented information and new knowledge could be shared and debated. Dissemination was also done (albeit less effectively) using tools such as Websites and newsletters.

- ❑ The establishment and exposure of decision-makers to pilot projects that could inform policy formulation processes. This was complemented by participatory planning processes and the formation of partnerships with local communities as well as national and local institutions, which further exposed these stakeholders to the information gathered from the pilot projects.
- ❑ Advocacy and awareness campaigns among rural communities, local decision-makers as well as government representatives. These were most effective in the IDRC supported activities in Mozambique and Senegal, and to a lesser degree in Uganda. They created a much greater awareness of the potential of ICTs and helped to ensure that people and institutions from different sectors and societal backgrounds could provide inputs into policy formulation processes. Training of politicians to stimulate their interest in, and understanding of, ICTs took place in Mozambique and Senegal.
- ❑ In Senegal in particular, partnerships were created at local level through the various coordinating bodies, including the regional focal points and the sectoral and horizontal planning groups. These partnerships increased opportunities to share information and enhance the knowledge of the stakeholders at local level.

There was particular appreciation among key informants for the insights produced by the research studies (usually conducted by consultants). These were usually initiated to inform policy or strategic planning processes. In several cases the IDRC was instrumental in supporting experienced international consultants from developed and developing countries for this purpose. In nearly all projects they worked in tandem either with local consultants or with local policy formulation task teams or think-tanks. Both local consultants and task team/think-tank members

acknowledged that the opportunities had provided them with significant new insights into the ICT policy issues. It also informed some of the policy decisions.

There was also great appreciation for the reports and presentation of ideas and results at forums, meetings and planning retreats where the documented information and experiences with the pilot projects were disseminated. Supplementing the research studies was the action research and monitoring and evaluation information related to the pilot projects. This was complemented by the exposure of policy-makers to some of these projects so that they could inform themselves first-hand about the impact of these projects on the lives of community members and other stakeholders.

The effect of these activities was especially prominent in Mozambique and Uganda, where members of the national ICT task teams were adamant that synthesized research results as well as ideas generated from personal experiences and exposure did indeed inform the policy debates. The knowledge and policy information of the following groups were extended through the various Acacia activities:

- ❑ The local researchers/consultants (possibly also the international consultants, although this was not investigated);

- ❑ Policy-makers from different sectors;
- ❑ Local decision-makers from various sectors;
- ❑ Project participants responsible for monitoring performance and activities;
- ❑ Those who vote in public legislatures;
- ❑ Other local stakeholders, including civil society and grassroots community participants who attended forums and conferences.

Some of the key facilitating factors for this type of policy influence were

- ❑ the ability of the researchers to link their findings with practical implications and applications;
- ❑ the limited existing knowledge among policy/decision-makers and the public;
- ❑ the limited alternative sources of information;
- ❑ the involvement of a well-networked group of policy and decision-makers in several forums or projects where knowledge was transferred, accelerating the policy influence impact; and
- ❑ the policy and decision-makers' search for relevant information.

Weaknesses that impeded this type of policy influence included:

- ❑ In some cases (in Uganda and South Africa), inadequate dissemination of findings;
- ❑ The lack of systematic and comprehensive collection and interpretation of action research findings, mainly due to the late implementation of ELSA;
- ❑ The lack of local and national research capacity and activity, especially in conducting systematic (longitudinal) research studies that could inform policy making on a consistent basis (It might be that the action research results compensated for, and even surpassed, the impact that such long-term studies could have had. It must also be acknowledged that with the novelty of the "ICT for development" field, many opportunities for such studies would not have existed).

## ii) *Supporting recipients to develop innovative ideas*

It is assumed that this type of policy influence refers mainly to opportunities given to researchers to do the type of work that can lead them towards innovation in the policy arena. Typically this would entail systematic research that could in time increase their knowledge and capacity for innovation in this field. It would also refer to exposure of researchers to opportunities that could help them develop innovative ideas.

The IDRC did not support such research activities in the four Acacia countries. At the very best the research studies conducted by consultants or the work done by project participants could have provided some opportunity for innovation. However, this was not noted anywhere and is therefore not regarded as a significant contribution to the policy influence of the IDRC interventions.

To some extent this type of policy influence was recognized in the IDRC support of policy formulation processes (in Uganda, South Africa and possibly Senegal; IDRC did not fund the policy process in Mozambique), and then specifically the task team/think-tank type of activities where the participants were given the opportunity formulate new ideas based on experience, exposure or research information (*Refer to Fig. 1.2 in Addendum I*).

### iii) *Improving capabilities to communicate ideas*

In each case study country, forums were created as part of the IDRC interventions. At these forums researchers, IDRC staff and (pilot) projects leaders could explain their experiences and findings to various audiences. Typically these consisted of presentations at conferences or participation in think-tanks and meetings where they could share their knowledge and debate key issues. In particular the consultative policy formulation processes provided opportunities for such interaction.

In spite of this, improving capabilities to communicate ideas is not regarded as a significant policy influence in any of the case study countries. It is possible that the effect of these activities has been underestimated due to a lack of focus on this aspect during the case study investigations. However, it is more likely that this type of impact was not felt in any strong measure as there was no *specific* effort to develop the communication skills of researchers during any of these opportunities.

If the conjecture is made that communicating more with interested parties from different sectors would automatically improve communication, participation in these forums might have led to some improvement in researchers' capabilities to communicate their ideas. Unfortunately this was not mentioned during the case studies in any of the participating countries and is therefore not regarded as a significant policy influence.

### iv) *Developing new talent for research and analysis*

IDRC is normally regarded as a research-oriented organization. However, in its ICT interventions in Africa there was little focus on building research capacity even though existing capacities were recognized as limited. The delayed implementation of ELSA certainly was a major factor in diminishing its potential influence in this regard. By contracting a few researchers for feasibility, policy information and evaluation studies, individual research capacity was built, but only among a handful of researchers in the academic, consultancy or research environment (fewer than five in each of Mozambique, Uganda and South Africa). Limited capacity for collecting, monitoring

and interpreting data was developed among project staff in some of the pilot projects (especially the telecentre projects). Institutional ICT research capacity was not built.

In Senegal several Acacia project components included a training component to equip role players with the tools for analyzing the role of ICT use in development. It is not certain whether this was done as a matter of course in the other countries.

There remains a significant challenge in building indigenous research capacity in Africa in the ICT field. The new policy regimes and increased number of pilot projects mean that the potential to conduct relevant (long-term) policy studies in each of the participating countries has increased dramatically. This approach will require a focus on systematic, in-depth studies combining classical research methods with action research to study policy implementation results and identify policy choices for the future.

It would thus be important to develop new research talent in each country both at an individual and institutional level. This could be a focus for future IDRC interventions, should the organization have a long-term view of capacity building in Africa in this field. However, the tension between this approach and the frequent need for quick and high quality results in certain types of policy studies is recognized. *Refer also to Figure 1.3 in Addendum 1.*

## 2.4.2 BROADENING POLICY HORIZONS

- i) *Providing opportunities for networking/learning within their jurisdiction and with colleagues elsewhere*

One of the most powerful types of policy influence in the IDRC ICT interventions in Africa was the provision of opportunities for stakeholders from the same sector or from different sectors to interact on ICT issues. This was particularly true for government decision-makers and for task teams and think-tanks involved in policy formulation processes. In Mozambique, Uganda and Senegal as well as in South Africa (the latter during the NICP and not the Acacia period) the IDRC supported a variety of networking activities that provided effective platforms for interaction on ICT policy issues between these role players.

Due to the similar approaches to policy making processes (using wide consultation and participation, including task teams representing various government departments and other relevant sectors), similar results were obtained in Mozambique, South Africa and Uganda. All four policy formulation processes in these countries consisted of a series of meetings, forums and retreats where colleagues from the same and different sectors could interact around their common interest in ICTs. These included high level stakeholder dialogues, working group meetings as well as broader forums at conferences and symposia.

The meetings of the facilitating bodies (NAACs; the coordinating forum, sectoral working groups and regional focal points in Senegal) in each country achieved the same across a variety of sectors. In Senegal this enabled a strong focus on discussion between various stakeholders at

local level, which led to the development of a local development strategy which could feed into a national ICT strategy. In the other countries the impact was mostly felt at national level. The NAAC in South Africa was less effective in terms of policy influence as there was no close link with government departments. The Acacia Secretariats in Mozambique and Uganda played active roles in facilitating many of the opportunities.

Another significant contribution was made through the Ministerial Meetings held every year between relevant Ministers from the four participating Acacia countries, where views and experiences were shared and policy issues discussed. Acacia also contributed to other forms of networking with international colleagues through the support of national experts responsible for telecommunications reform from South Africa and Senegal to meet with counterparts in Canada.

The main results of these activities were similar across the participating countries:

- ❑ Greater awareness and understanding of ICT policy issues among all role players, including among policy-makers at national and even local levels;
- ❑ Elucidation of the roles of different parties and sectors in the ICT policy arena;
- ❑ Increased interaction and communication between role players, including between different government departments;
- ❑ Expanding awareness and understanding of policy issues within the ICT arena, as forum participants in turn influence others, strengthening their negotiating power and argument bases.
- ❑ Improved understanding among various government sectors of how policy processes could be managed effectively to include broad consultation (The latter aspect was of particular interest in the policy formulation processes in Mozambique and South Africa, where high-level government decision-makers from various sectors acknowledged the policy formulation processes as models for their departments); and
- ❑ In Mozambique, Uganda and Senegal in particular, integrated policy making – or at least policy development in synergy between government departments.

This type of networking was of particular importance in the pervasive ICT arena, where the technologies and approaches cut across many different sectors such as health, education and others. Traditionally there has been inadequate interaction between policy-makers in these fields. The open processes and networking activities promoted and supported by the IDRC ensured that traditional boundaries were removed, resulting in greater understanding and cooperation between stakeholders.

Similarly, opportunities were also created for *researchers* to network and learn from one another, but always only within the context of larger meetings and conferences *not* aimed at the researchers themselves. Although this does not negate the value of the opportunities for interaction between researchers, policy-makers, civil society role players, etc., it might be useful

to promote more opportunities for researchers to share findings and interpretations among themselves. *For more detail refer to Figure I.4 in Addendum I.*

ii) *Introducing new concepts to frame debates, putting new ideas on the agenda, or stimulating public debate.*

Aside from the direct support of policy formulation processes, this type of policy influence has been one of the most significant contributions by the IDRC ICT interventions in Africa. In all four case study countries this has been achieved through similar activities – albeit in some cases these activities were more successful than others. New concepts and ideas were introduced for consideration during policy formulation processes, and public debate stimulated.

Relevant activities in all the countries include:

- ❑ Exposure of policy-makers to pilot projects and some of their initial action research findings, and the discussion of these at forums, conferences and meetings.
- ❑ Advocacy around the use of ICTs for development by ICT champions, the national Acacia Secretariats and the various coordinating bodies in Senegal.
- ❑ Sharing of policy research study results with policy task teams, within think-tanks, symposia and conferences around ICT policy issues and among local communities.
- ❑ Discussion of research results and ideas at public meetings and stakeholder conferences, held as part of the policy formulation processes.
- ❑ Participation by IDRC staff, researchers/consultants and pilot project leaders in task teams, think-tanks and other forums which allowed them to share their own ideas and experiences with the public or with decision-makers from a variety of sectors.

Some of the relatively novel ideas acknowledged by key informants as having been promoted during IDRC interventions include the whole concept of ICTs for development and in particular different models of telecentres for rural development; the high costs of connectivity and download times coupled to the need for subsidized costs to facilitate access by the rural population; the need for local content in local languages; universal service; and the role of a Universal Service Agency.

Once again the complementary nature of the Acacia projects in each country facilitated the opportunities for this type of policy influence. Project leaders, the NAACs, coordinating bodies, IDRC staff and the national Acacia Secretariats could draw on the pilot projects and research study findings to present new ideas and stimulate debate and consultative stakeholder conferences and task team sessions – in many cases also funded by the IDRC.



*For more detail refer to Figure I.5 in Addendum I.*

### iii) *Educating researchers and others who took up new positions with a broader understanding of issues.*

There has been no particular strategy for, or obvious example of, this type of policy influence, except in cases where pilot project staff were trained to monitor specific types of information. It is not clear in how many projects this was done.

Although not an intended strategy, it is likely that new researchers, policy-makers and decision-makers from various sectors were to some extent educated through their exposure to pilot projects and participation in discussions at relevant forums.

It is unlikely that this type of policy influence has been a significant factor in any of the four case study countries.

### iv) *Stimulating quiet debate among decision-makers*

Although the term “quiet” debate raised a lot of questions among discussants at a recent IDRC workshop on the findings of the four case studies, it is understood to refer to the type of interaction during intimate meetings rather than at conferences and other public forums.

Examples of this type of interaction are some of the retreats held in Mozambique by the ICT Policy Commission and their task team members to enable them to gain a better understanding of the ICT policy issues, and the two Acacia Ministerial meetings held in Maputo and Kampala. The latter offered opportunities for advocacy and allowed Acacia to interact with the highest decision-making levels in the ICT arena in these four countries.

Some of the advocacy work done especially by the NAAC and Uganda Acacia Secretariats among key government officials in sensitizing them to the need and importance of ICTs, could also qualify for this category. Similarly, Acacia participants in Senegal had an opportunity to interact about ICTs with NEPAD players in West Africa.

Acacia also contributed further by arranging and funding visits of national experts responsible for telecommunications reform from South Africa and Senegal to meet with counterparts in Canada.

All of these meetings have been acknowledged by informants as significant, if indirect, influences on policy formulation processes.

*For more detail refer to Figure I.6 in Addendum I.*

## 2.4.3 AFFECTING POLICY REGIMES

i) *Modification of existing programs or policies*

According to key informants in Mozambique, Senegal and to a lesser extent in Uganda, the IDRC support of national ICT policy processes has had the important spin-off of encouraging the modification of policies or policy processes in other sectors.

In Mozambique, for example, several Ministers initiated efforts to address ICTs in their own sectors as a result of the national ICT policy process. Changes were made to import tax

regulations for ICT equipment, while the Minister of Higher Education acknowledged that her experience on the ICT Policy Commission has made her consider changes to her own policy approaches and processes. In Uganda ICTs were incorporated into the latest version of their Poverty Eradication Action Plan, while education and agricultural policies and programs were being reconsidered in the light of the greater awareness of ICTs. In Senegal the IDRC supported policy processes influenced the direction of the national education policies.

These modifications to existing policy regimes are largely the result of the consultative and participatory manner in which the ICT policy formulation processes were conducted in the participating countries, with the resulting opportunities for policy-makers to network and share ideas and information. *More detail can be found in Figure I.7 in Addendum I.*

ii) *Fundamental redesign of programs or policies*

This took place in the telecommunications sector in South Africa. The transition to democracy and the need for reform in the sector as a priority activity after the end of apartheid gave the IDRC the opportunity to support the National Telecommunications Policy Project as part of its National Information and Communications Program.

This process led to a series of fundamental changes in the telecommunications sector. Both the funding and technical support by IDRC staff members were highly appreciated by the then policy-makers in the sector.

*More detail can be found in Figure I.8 in Addendum I.*

## 2.5 Possible New Types of Policy Influence

i) *The creation of a new policy regime*

This category of policy influence could be included in the Lindquist framework. It is relevant when new policies are constructed for the first time in emerging fields, for example when new technologies open up new requirements for policy making - in essence establishing a new sector or major cross-cutting policy arena.

This is the case with information and communications technologies, whether seen as a sector on its own or as a cross-cutting focus across sectors. The implementation of ICTs in African countries has highlighted the need for a policy regime addressing this field in a comprehensive and integrated manner.

This is exactly what was done in Mozambique and in Uganda in three national policy processes: the establishment of National ICT Policies in Mozambique and Uganda, and the Policy and Strategies for Rural Communications Development in Uganda.

*More detail can be found in Figure I.9 in Addendum I.*

*ii) A focus on policy processes*

Respondents to the case study reports raised the issue of the need for considering formulating a type of policy influence related to efforts to influence the way in which policies are made.

This is of special relevance in developing countries, where policies are often made in a non-transparent, authoritarian manner. If they are successful in changing policy processes, this might be regarded as a type of policy influence (Affecting policy formulation processes).

*iii) Advocacy and lobbying*

Advocacy, awareness campaigns and lobbying are often used by civil society and other stakeholders as policy influence instruments. While these assist in enhancing the knowledge of certain actors, a category that includes these activities in a more structured way might be required.

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### 3. Means and Mechanisms of Policy Influence

#### 3.1 The Integrated Design of the Acacia Interventions

The IDRC was one of the first organizations to recognize and address ICTs as a priority area for development in Africa. It chose to focus its actions on community access and services – a difficult arena about which little was known in Africa and in the rest of the developing world. Its pioneering focus increased its risks as funder. Outcomes were uncertain and little was known that could direct strategies and approaches. The early emphasis on feasibility and background research studies as well as the establishment of pilot projects laid the groundwork for a more integrated, multi-pronged approach to the Acacia strategies in each country. Figures II.1-4 (refer to Addendum II) show that the approaches and components which characterized Acacia in the case study countries were similar and worked together to provide significant policy influence potential - this even though most of the IDRC projects were not specifically designed to influence policy, but rather to provide opportunities to learn from experience.

Projects were supported that

- ❑ could be used as models and to learn lessons about the use of ICTs for (rural) development in a number of sectors;
- ❑ directed processes for the establishment of national policies; and
- ❑ could (through a focus on implementation) help to provide opportunities for policy modifications in a next policy cycle.

IDRC inputs to realize its Acacia strategies (and in the case of South Africa, also the National Information and Communications Program) consisted of early feasibility studies and some ad hoc project support, funding, technical assistance and the initiation and support of facilitating and planning structures. In Mozambique, South Africa and Uganda these were

- ❑ the National Acacia Advisory Committees and
- ❑ the Acacia Secretariat.

In Senegal, with its greater decentralization and focus on local government, a number of coordinating bodies were established that could assist at national *and* local level with the realization of the Senegal Acacia Strategy. These were

- ❑ the Coordinating Forum which covered a nationally representative base of players involved in implementing the strategy;
- ❑ five Sectoral Working Groups which were standing forums for consideration and discussion among agencies and individuals of priorities in a specific field;
- ❑ a Horizontal Working Group,
- ❑ a standing supervisory body that evaluates recommendations proposed by the forum;
- ❑ the Regional Focal Points which serve as liaison with the ten regions of Senegal, and the SAS Permanent Secretariat.

The direct funding of the processes for the development of national policies in the four countries led to immediate policy impact through Acacia's efforts. In several countries the IDRC also funded studies and stakeholder workshops even before Acacia was launched. The most prominent example of this is the National Information and Communication Project in South Africa, which had a much greater impact on policy in that country than Acacia. These activities, together with other IDRC-funded ICT initiatives such as the establishment of telecentres and other often sectoral pilot projects, are credited by key role players as having been instrumental in mobilizing the interest of governments in ICTs for development.

The impact of technical assistance provided by IDRC staff was of particular importance in Mozambique and South Africa. IDRC staff and consultants acted as resource persons for various policy processes and assisted key decision-makers with advice. International ICT experts from developed and developing countries were also contracted on an ad hoc basis to assist with certain policy research studies.

A key input by the IDRC was the initiation and funding of the various facilitating and planning structures in each country. Except in the case of South Africa, their members held key positions in various sectors involved in ICT and development, including in government. These high-level individuals were exposed to reports, studies and findings from Acacia projects. There were many opportunities at forums and meetings where they could interact with peers on the policy issues raised by the Acacia studies and project reports. This led to cross-pollination of ideas before and during the various policy processes.

## 3.2 The Policy Influence Mechanisms

## *i. Research*

A common factor across all four case study countries was the very limited capacity and experience on the continent in ICT policy research. Few practical experiences and projects existed that could serve as models for policy decisions. Where capacity existed, it was mainly focused on the technical aspects of ICTs without adequate understanding of the accompanying socioeconomic issues. Building indigenous capacity in (policy) research related to ICTs was not a focus of academic institutions or government agencies. Although surveys, baseline studies and action research activities could be conducted to some extent by academic institutions, there was no expertise in systematic, in-depth, longitudinal research studies that could provide a sound basis for strategic decisions related to ICTs for development.

Those responsible for establishing bodies such as the NAAC and the National ICT Policy Task Force made an effort to mobilize the best local ICT (not necessarily policy) expertise available. Processes were put in place to assist with filling expertise gaps, usually by bringing experts from abroad to work with local (usually fairly inexperienced) consultants. Various role players, including the IDRC and NAACs commissioned a number of research studies directly aimed at informing policy decisions. They also managed consultative processes where ad hoc think-tanks provided opportunities to mobilize local expertise across a broader front.

Acacia chose to support two distinct types of research:

- ❑ Studies commissioned to provide background information and answers to specific policy questions, often raised as precursors to, or as part of policy formulation processes. Uganda (and also the other countries) provided several examples in this category, such as the studies conducted to inform the Rural Communications Development Policy process, the telecentre baseline studies and the four studies initially commissioned in 1998 to examine the status of ICTs in Uganda.
- ❑ Action research in the telecenter projects, which in Acacia usually took the form of monitoring and evaluation activities in conjunction with ELSA.

A strong focus on action research was a departure from the conventional IDRC research approach. Instead of working with projects directed by trained researchers, Acacia involved almost no researchers in day to day project management. According to informants, research components were not solidly embedded in the project activities from the beginning and there was (at least for an initial period) a perceived division in responsibility between project staff and the ELSA implementers – a situation that was exacerbated by the slow implementation of ELSA.

The research processes started to yield systematic results only recently with the completion of the first ELSA studies. These were released too late to have had clear policy influence, although the preceding processes of information dissemination through meetings and workshops could have provided audiences with some preliminary insights.

According to informants, discussion of research findings with participants as well as project reports on the telecentres did contribute to the policy processes, primarily by raising key policy issues and sensitizing decision-makers to the concept of using multi-purpose telecentres as a vehicle for rural development. The research studies have not yet provided clear answers to critical policy issues.

Some of the early studies in South Africa and Uganda, commissioned before the start of Acacia, provided critical information that highlighted the need for an enabling policy environment and noted priorities for development. They helped to bring ICTs to the attention of key government officials.

Local researchers did not have the opportunity to expand their skills in this emerging field before the IDRC and other agencies stimulated investigation into the status quo and ICT needs of the country. Several studies were therefore conducted by international consultants who could draw from their ICT experiences in other parts of the world. Some local ICT policy research capacity was developed through the commissioning of research studies in collaboration with international experts. Unfortunately the number of local beneficiaries was low and the research activities ad hoc rather than systematic and long-term.

The research generated through IDRC activities seems to have been used by policy-makers as a source of ideas and information rather than as data that could be used to solve a particular problem. This might be due to the fact that until now little systematic problem-solving research on ICTs had been done. Most reports on pilot projects as well as conference, workshop or meeting interactions on research results served to enlighten and educate policy-makers and give them new policy ideas – more in the “interactive” mode of research use espoused by Weiss<sup>2</sup>. However, several policy studies were commissioned to inform the policy formulation processes. These can be seen as efforts to obtain data for problem-solving – or at least to indicate where problems might lie.

Among the facilitating factors for research as important policy influence was the fact that ICTs was a new field and policy-makers therefore had not yet had the time to cast their own ideas in stone. They were actively searching for information that could provide solutions to policy questions. The research information therefore provided them at least with some base for decision-making.

In order to ensure impact it was important that the research had to be coupled to good dissemination methods. These could be found in some of the other mechanisms for policy influence applied in the various countries. The most effective were the presentation of findings at symposia and think-tank or task team meetings, and the dissemination of reports to key decision-makers involved in policy formulation processes.

*ii. Support of pilot projects, exposure of national and local decision-makers to these projects and dissemination of project reports*

One of the most successful mechanisms that influenced policy-makers was their exposure to pilot projects that could serve as models for policy considerations. Visits of key national and local decision- and policy-makers were arranged to enable them to observe the projects and speak to participants. Project reports and findings were distributed and discussed at specially arranged meetings or at public symposia.

The pilot projects also exposed local communities to the potential of ICTs for development. In many cases they experienced the effect of these projects on their own activities.

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<sup>2</sup> C Weiss. Policy research as advocacy: Pro and con. Knowledge & Policy, 4 (1/2): 37-56. Quoted in IDRC-Supported Research and its Influence on Public Policy: Knowledge Utilization and Public Policy Processes - A Literature Review. S Neilson, Evaluation Unit, IDRC, December 2001.



This created not only an awareness of the potential value of ICTs for development, but also encouraged advocacy for ICTs both at decision-maker and at community level.

*iii. Advocacy and awareness creation by National Acacia Advisory Committees, their Secretariats and other coordinating bodies*

In Mozambique, Senegal and Uganda, and to a much lesser extent in South Africa, the various Acacia coordinating and facilitating structures played a significant role in sensitizing other stakeholders to the potential importance of ICTs in national development. These bodies were normally constituted to include ICT champions from different sectors. These “champions” usually came from the academic, government and private sectors; in Senegal local bodies were represented.

Their enthusiasm was infectious and they often spent large amounts of time in private or public discussion on ICT issues. In several instances they were instrumental in interesting government decision-makers in ICTs by exposing them to the benefits of these technologies, and by giving them some basic training to familiarize them with the new technologies. Their presentations at forums and consultative meetings, and in policy think-tanks and task teams, as well as their participation in media events created awareness among other stakeholders. This added to the “percolation of ICT information” among decision-makers and the general public. Through their Acacia experiences and understanding of the pilot projects they could put new policy ideas on the table and enhance discussions on policy issues. Communities could improve their understanding of ICTs. The Secretariats in Mozambique and Uganda were also active in arranging networking and other events where information could be shared and issues debated. These included the Acacia Ministerial meetings.

*iv. Direct support of policy formulation processes*

The funding of the processes for the formulation of policies and strategies in ICTs led to direct as well as intermediate policy influence. It was indeed the most effective mechanism for direct policy influence, enabling either the modification or redesign of existing policies or the establishment of new policy regimes.

The policy processes themselves included a series of the other mechanisms which added to the policy influence opportunities.

- v. *Appointment of respected individuals on facilitating, planning and coordinating bodies, ensuring their participation in forums and in policy formulation processes*

Due to their expertise and high profiles, especially in Mozambique and Uganda, the National Acacia Advisory Committee members, Secretariats and Acacia project leaders were well positioned to participate in high-level and public consultative forums where ICTs were discussed. A number were also selected to participate in policy formulation think-tanks and task teams. This facilitated the dissemination of Acacia research and pilot project findings, as well as the discussion of ideas generated by the research studies and projects.

- vi. *The support and organization of consultative and transparent processes and meetings which bring people together across sectors*

The IDRC supported processes linked to the planning of the Acacia strategies, as well as the policy formulation processes, provided an excellent opportunity for the IDRC to influence policy. These processes were usually managed in a highly consultative and transparent fashion, creating ample opportunities for policy influence. Conferences, symposia, think-tank and task groups meetings were supported (and sometimes even organized) by the IDRC. This enabled stakeholders from many sectors and from different societal backgrounds to come together to discuss policy issues and share information and ideas. As these events were usually linked to specific policy steps or questions, they provided fertile ground for policy influence. They also provided opportunities to disseminate information generated by the Acacia program and to bring Acacia findings into different sectors where decision-makers could benefit from shared experiences.

- vii. *Information collection and dissemination*

It was the official task of the Acacia Secretariats and ELSA to collect and disseminate information about Acacia in an appropriate manner – locally, nationally and internationally. Several project participants were trained in the collection of monitoring data, and research findings were obtained from research studies. Dissemination vehicles included Websites, newsletters, media contributions and even television appearances (the latter not facilitated by Acacia). The most important dissemination instruments were briefings by project leaders and NAAC/S members at appropriate public forums and workshops. Meetings were sometimes specifically organized to disseminate the results of Acacia research studies and evaluation information.

It has not been possible to gauge the effectiveness of the policy influence of the various information dissemination methods. There were significant weaknesses in the dissemination of information and several informants noted that the impact could have been greater with better dissemination methods. Special policy briefs were not prepared and briefing meetings were held but sometimes not well attended.

In Senegal the “dense network of partners” through the various coordinating bodies enhanced the effectiveness of the dissemination methods.

*viii. Exposure of researchers and policy-makers to high level technical expertise provided by the IDRC through their staff, contractors, international consultants or the support of international visits*

On a number of occasions the IDRC provided opportunities for researchers and policy-makers to benefit from international expertise in the ICT policy field. Some of the IDRC staff/contractors were highly experienced and respected and were invited to participate in policy discussions and even in policy formulation processes. This was the case especially in Mozambique and South Africa.

Local researchers and policy-makers were also given the opportunity to interact and work with international technical and policy research experts. This was the result of IDRC supported visits to Canada by key officials and the commissioning of joint research projects between international and local consultants and researchers.

*ix. Capacity building through partnerships*

This was especially prominent in Senegal, where there were more organized coordination and partnership mechanisms to ensure maximum direct or indirect involvement by the major local and national role players in the Acacia activities. These partnerships were established as part of the Acacia coordinating and facilitating bodies in Senegal (the coordinating forum, the five sectoral working groups, the horizontal working group, the regional focal points and the Permanent Secretariat). These groups share information and play leadership roles in the implementation of the Acacia strategy. In the process their understanding of policy issues is increased.

x. *Training*

Training relevant to policy work was not a prominent part of the Acacia activities. Training took place in some pilot projects where staff had to learn to monitor and synthesize data as part of their action research activities, and to contribute to the ELSA studies. Perhaps more useful from a policy influence point of view were a few ad hoc training initiatives focused on strengthening the understanding of ICTs among decision-makers. An example is the training and awareness seminar held for members of the Assembly in Senegal.

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## 4. Contextual Factors

### 4.1 Introduction

The broader political, social and economic contexts within which the IDRC interventions have taken place should be understood in order to identify generic or context-specific factors that might facilitate (or constrain) similar initiatives in future. Should policy influence remain as objective on the IDRC agenda, it would be imperative for program staff to take cognizance of these factors.

Clearly this report does not contain an exhaustive list of contextual factors that would affect policy influence initiatives, but it does provide a good indication of the type of issues that should be considered.

Many of these factors will also be valid in other sectors, but several are due to the very specific nature of ICTs. These technologies are still quite novel, especially as applied to development, and their utility usually excites people who come into contact with it for the first time.

Deliberations on context in the case studies focused on the following key aspects:

- ❑ Whether a national “policy window” existed or had opened just before (or during) implementation of the IDRC interventions.
- ❑ Whether developments around the interventions themselves facilitated (or constrained) opportunities for policy influence.

While it is important to understand how all the contextual factors in a specific country facilitated or constrained the IDRC’s policy influence, this study placed more emphasis on those generic factors which facilitated policy influence in most of all four case study countries. Factors unique to a specific country are also indicated.

### 4.2 The opening of a policy window

This section provides a comparative summary of those key factors which contributed to the opening of a “policy window” that could facilitate opportunities for the policy influence during the period before implementation of Acacia in each of the targeted countries.

## 4.2.1 THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

MOZAMBIQUE	UGANDA	SOUTH AFRICA	SENEGAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A period of stability and growth after decades of devastation.</li> <li>▪ New national government committed to modernization and development, including in rural areas.</li> <li>▪ National government searching for effective new development mechanisms.</li> <li>▪ Growing awareness among key government officials of the importance of ICTs.</li> <li>▪ Strong government encouragement of donor investment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A period of stability and growth after decades of devastation.</li> <li>▪ New national government committed to modernization and development, including in rural areas.</li> <li>▪ National government searching for effective new development mechanisms.</li> <li>▪ Growing awareness among key government officials and the private sector of the importance of ICTs.</li> <li>▪ Strong government encouragement of donor investment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Peaceful transition to democracy after years of instability due to apartheid (1994)</li> <li>▪ Credible national government committed to development and addressing minority needs.</li> <li>▪ Government searching for effective new development mechanisms.</li> <li>▪ Key government officials and private sector aware of the importance of ICTs.</li> <li>▪ Government encouragement of donor investment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stable democracy and peaceful transition to new government (2000).</li> <li>▪ Credible national government committed to modernization and development.</li> <li>▪ National and local governments searching for effective new development mechanisms.</li> <li>▪ Growing awareness among key government officials of the importance of ICTs.</li> <li>▪ Government encouragement of donor investment.</li> <li>▪ Increasing responsibility of local governments searching for local opportunities in key development sectors.</li> </ul>

In all four countries political stability, a government committed to modernization and searching for effective new development mechanisms and encouraging donor investment facilitated opportunities for policy influence. All the governments were relatively new, with most having come to power during the past decade after long periods of turmoil and instability (with Senegal as exception). They were thus actively seeking solutions to the development needs of their people, using among others donor support to achieve their

objectives. Especially at national level, key government officials, including ministers and even the President, were aware (or being made aware) of the opportunities posed by ICTs for development. The system of greater decentralization to local government in Senegal provided an additional stimulus for a focus on ICTs for development in rural areas in important sectors such as health and education.

#### 4.2.2 THE POLICY ENVIRONMENT

MOZAMBIQUE	UGANDA	SOUTH AFRICA	SENEGAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Broad policy framework focusing on development (Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty - PARPA) and understanding that ICTs underpin many of the activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Broad policy framework focusing on development (Poverty Eradication Action Plan PEAP) and the acknowledgement that ICTs is one of the areas for economic growth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Broad policy framework focusing on development (RDP), which stimulated the redesign of policy frameworks for transition to democracy, removing protective measures, shifting the focus from the rich minority to the poor majority and transforming rigid institutions to serve a democratic country.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Broad policy framework focusing on development (Ninth Economic and Social Development Plan), which includes ICTs as “necessity for development”.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Recognition among key decision-makers of need for coherent, integrated ICT policy to counter disparate, uncoordinated efforts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Recognition among key decision-makers of need for coherent, integrated ICT policy to counter disparate, uncoordinated efforts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Initial efforts among some decision-makers and role players to promote a coherent, integrated approach to ICT policy making.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Recognition among key decision-makers of need for coherent, integrated ICT policy to counter disparate, uncoordinated efforts. (However, sectoral initiatives remain).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ongoing reforms in the telecommunications sector (since 1992).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ongoing reforms in the telecommunications sector (since middle nineties).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ongoing reforms in the telecommunications sector (since 1992).</li> <li>▪ At later stage: New policy approaches of GEAR; the need to develop new policy areas (e.g. e-Commerce).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ongoing reforms in the telecommunications sector (since 1985).</li> <li>▪ Empowerment of local government to play increasing role in policy formulation.</li> </ul>

During the nineties each of the four countries focused their development activities within broad policy frameworks that could direct their engagement with new initiatives. Within these frameworks, ICTs were identified as a priority area underpinning many different sectors.

There was also general recognition among decision-makers in each of the countries that the many disparate ICT related initiatives that arose in each country since the beginning of the nineties had to be managed in a coherent fashion through the establishment of an overall policy framework. The countries succeeded to do this to varying degrees; the measure of success was influenced among others by the number of role players in the ICT arena, the measure to which key government Ministries were prepared to collaborate and the location in government of the ICT policy formulation processes. Only Mozambique and, to a lesser extent, Uganda were successful in establishing such an overall framework (Senegal has developed a framework which yet has to be considered by its government). In addition, reforms in the telecommunications sector were ongoing throughout the nineties, creating the need for innovative policies and approaches.

South Africa was somewhat exceptional in that it had two stages during which opportunities for policy influence became more widespread: The first during the transition to democracy in the early nineties, and the second after the change from the *Reconstruction and Development Program* to the *Growth, Employment and Reconstruction Plan*, which had a much stronger focus on economic development. New ministers took over several important portfolios. These changes led to a new phase of policy making activities. It also resulted in a change in management styles and in some cases led to less transparent policy making processes. At the same time novel developments in technology and business processes highlighted the need for new policies, for example in e-commerce, intellectual property rights and others.

In the case of Senegal, its unique approach of decentralization towards empowering local government to play an increasing role in public policy formulation helped to ensure a policy focus on ICTs for rural community development efforts. These could be strongly supported by the IDRC interventions.

#### 4.2.3 INDIVIDUAL AND INSTITUTIONAL EFFORTS

The strong advocacy by individual and institutional ICT champions, usually from the academic, private and government sectors, greatly assisted in creating a greater awareness of the potential of ICTs among decision-makers in each country. This enhanced the sympathy of the latter for policy formulation efforts in the field. The fact that ICT research



capacities were inadequate and that there was limited (if any) collaboration between role players from various sectors, further enhanced opportunities for policy influence. ICT initiatives were established in isolation from one another, resulting in a dire need for a nurturing, regulatory and integrative environment for ICT development.

At the same time there was an increasing awareness in various sectors of the role that ICTs could play in social and economic development. In Uganda and South Africa especially, private sector and other needs exerted pressure on policy-makers for the creation of a cohesive ICT policy environment. In Senegal and South Africa the need for policy formulation in this field was also advocated by civil society organizations. Due to its recent liberation struggle history in which civil society played a major role, labor organizations also exerted pressure by asking for favorable policies for ICT development.

MOZAMBIQUE	UGANDA	SOUTH AFRICA	SENEGAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Influential ICT champions from various sectors focus with success on advocacy, awareness creation, and demonstration of capacity and potential benefits of ICTs.</li> <li>▪ Inadequate institutional capacity for ICT (policy) research.</li> <li>▪ Inadequate institutional collaboration towards ICT growth and policy formulation for economic and social development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Influential ICT champions from various sectors focus with success on advocacy, awareness creation, and demonstration of capacity and potential benefits of ICTs.</li> <li>▪ Inadequate institutional capacity for ICT research.</li> <li>▪ Inadequate institutional collaboration towards ICT growth and policy formulation for economic and social development.</li> <li>▪ Pressure on policy-makers from growing private sector interest.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Influential ICT champions from various sectors focus with success on advocacy, awareness creation, and demonstration of capacity and potential benefits of ICTs.</li> <li>▪ Inadequate institutional capacity for ICT research.</li> <li>▪ Inadequate institutional collaboration towards ICT growth and policy formulation for economic and social development in spite of several early forums for this purpose.</li> <li>▪ Pressure on policy-makers from strong private sector as well as labor interests.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (Role of champions in Senegal unclear).</li> <li>▪ Inadequate institutional capacity for ICT research.</li> <li>▪ Inadequate institutional collaboration towards ICT growth and policy formulation for economic and social development.</li> <li>▪ Some pressure on policy-makers from private sector as well as civil society interests.</li> </ul>

#### 4.2.4 INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCE

The exposure of African leaders while attending international and regional events (usually organized by the international donor community) stimulated their interest in ICTs for development on the continent. The international donor community played a further major role by making available financial and technical support to interested countries.

South Africa and to a lesser extent Uganda were also driven by the realization that their effective positioning within this rapidly developing global information society would be essential for their international competitiveness.

MOZAMBIQUE	UGANDA	SOUTH AFRICA	SENEGAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Exposure of national leaders to international debates and trends in ICTs.</li> <li>▪ Financial support to and encouragement of national efforts in ICTs by donor community.</li> <li>▪ Availability of international technical support to enhance local research and policy formulation capacity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Exposure of national leaders to international debates and trends in ICTs.</li> <li>▪ Financial support to and encouragement of national efforts in ICTs by donor community.</li> <li>▪ Availability of international technical support to enhance local research and policy formulation capacity.</li> <li>▪ Realization of the need to position Uganda within rapid global developments as part of its greater focus on economic development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Exposure of national leaders to international debates and trends in ICTs.</li> <li>▪ Financial support to and encouragement of national efforts in ICTs by donor community.</li> <li>▪ Availability of international technical support to enhance local research and policy formulation capacity.</li> <li>▪ Need and expressed wish to position South Africa within rapid global developments in order to enhance its international competitiveness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Exposure of national leaders to international debates and trends in ICTs.</li> <li>▪ Financial support to and encouragement of national efforts in ICTs by donor community.</li> <li>▪ Availability of international technical support to enhance local research and policy formulation capacity.</li> </ul>

## 4.2.5 COMMON NATIONAL CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

<b>The Political Environment</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ A period of stability and growth after decades of devastation, with a general feeling of optimism among the population despite many obstacles.</li> <li>❑ Relatively new national government not threatened or self-serving, but committed to development and modernization, including in poor rural areas.</li> <li>❑ National government actively searching for effective development mechanisms.</li> <li>❑ Growing awareness among key government officials of the importance of ICTs.</li> <li>❑ Strong government encouragement of donor investment.</li> </ul>
<b>The Policy Environment</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Broad policy frameworks focusing on development and growing awareness among decision-makers that ICTs can underpin development activities.</li> <li>❑ Recognition among key decision-makers of need for coherent, integrated ICT related policies to counter disparate, uncoordinated efforts.</li> <li>❑ Ongoing reforms in the telecommunications sectors.</li> </ul>
<b>Individual and Institutional Efforts</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Influential ICT champions from various sectors focus with success on advocacy, awareness creation and demonstration of capacity as well as potential development benefits of ICTs, leading to a growing awareness of their importance.</li> <li>❑ Inadequate individual and institutional capacity in ICT (policy) research.</li> <li>❑ Inadequate institutional collaboration towards ICT growth and policy formulation for economic and social development.</li> <li>❑ Few ICT models for development.</li> </ul>
<b>International Influence</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ National decision-makers inspired by international debates and trends in ICTs.</li> <li>❑ Financial support for, and encouragement of, national efforts by donor community.</li> <li>❑ Availability of international technical support to enhance local research and policy formulation capacity.</li> </ul>

## 4.3 Intervention related contextual factors facilitating policy influence

In addition to the timely opening of a policy window in a national context (Section 4.2), there are a number of factors related to the IDRC interventions themselves which facilitated policy influence in each of the four case study countries. These factors present some key lessons that can inform future IDRC involvement in Africa.

### 4.3.1 FACTORS COMMON ACROSS THE COUNTRIES

- i. *Early entry of IDRC during opening of policy window, due to its willingness to support a potentially high risk area.*

The IDRC was one of the first organizations to support ICT activities in each of the four case study countries. At the time of its entry, investment in ICTs for development was considered a high risk area, with few ongoing projects and experiences from which lessons could be learnt. In South Africa the IDRC supported the ANC in exile even before a policy window had opened. This good timing provided pioneering opportunities for the IDRC and others who entered the ICT arena at an early stage.

- ii. *Highest level of government support for, and active promotion of, ICT policy processes.*

In Uganda and Mozambique (and during later years in South Africa) the countries' Presidents played a dominant role in promoting the concept of ICTs for development. In all four countries this idea was supported by key Ministers and other high level government officials. This meant that there was support at the highest government level for donor and national initiatives in ICTs.

- iii. *Government commitment to transparency, consultation and multi-sectoral stakeholder processes during policy formulation.*

This approach meant that there were many opportunities to influence policy from public forums. This greatly contributed to the IDRC's influence, as it funded and participated in many such events. In South Africa there was an interesting shift towards less transparency and consultation after the disappearance of the Government of National Unity, the implementation of the *Growth, Employment and Reconstruction* strategy, and the accompanying change of a number of Ministers. This is one of the reasons why the IDRC influence was less during the Acacia period than during the implementation of the NICP in the early nineties.

- iv. *A small group of well networked key decision-makers from different sectors, interacting at various forums and committees, enabling the fast transfer of ideas and experiences.*

This factor was especially prominent in Mozambique where there are fewer policy role players than in the other countries. It also proved to be an important factor in Uganda and during the early nineties in South Africa. Impressions and experiences during exposure to ICT projects could be shared and brought quickly into important decision-making forums. In Senegal the situation was somewhat different, with a number of decentralized and coordinating structures facilitating planning and the transfer of ideas.

- v. *Inclusion of ICT champions linked to government and other key sectors, in the Acacia NAACs, Secretariats and projects*

This IDRC approach meant that the National Acacia Advisory Committees, the Acacia Secretariats and the IDRC supported projects had a high profile in policy commissions and other bodies or forums where ICT policies were discussed. An exception is South Africa, where the NAAC was constituted to represent specific sectors rather than to involve influential ICT champions (albeit from different sectors); according to informants this approach did lessen the policy influence of the South African NAAC. However other factors also played a role, such as the many more stakeholders than were present in Mozambique and Uganda for example, and the focus on implementation rather than ICT policy formulation during recent years. Even in Senegal, with its focus on decentralized government and a number of Acacia focal points across the country supporting the Secretariat, the members of the various structures were selected among others because of their “capacity to exert direct or indirect influence on policies, or who are aware of the usefulness of ICTs for development.” According to nearly all key informants involved in Acacia, exposure to the program activities and discussions had a significant influence on them which then provided them in turn with the opportunity to convey their new-found knowledge to others.

- vi. *The complementary and interlinked nature of the IDRC supported projects*

At the time that Acacia (and in the case of South Africa, the NICP) came into existence, there were relatively few ICT for Development projects in Africa that could be used for policy lessons and development models. Early studies laid the groundwork for an integrated, multi-pronged top-down and bottom-up approach to the Acacia strategies in each country, with a view to encourage national strategies for adopting and integrating ICTs in support of development. In Senegal in particular, the Acacia strategy became part of the institutional framework for decentralization and empowerment of development players, aiming to counter

the haphazard decision-making taking place in the ICT field at the time. The various support foci presented a variety of policy influence mechanisms. Projects were supported that could inform policy processes through research and be used as demonstration for a variety of approaches to community development. Scientific arguments could be developed to enable policy-makers to make informed policy choices, establish national policies and provide opportunities for policy modifications in the next cycle.

- vii. *The intent and ability of Acacia representatives and researchers to link research, and the dissemination of research results, to opportunities to put these results to use.*

Researchers and IDRC staff usually included in their work, or in the subsequent dissemination of results, people and institutions that could make use of the results. They could therefore influence policies directly or indirectly. Efforts were also made to provide research feedback to those who were in a position to use the results. This provided further opportunities for policy influence.

- viii. *Exposure of decision-makers to pilot projects, action research results and research studies of immediate value for policy formulation.*

In the midst of a dearth of policy information, Acacia produced pilot projects and research results that could be used by decision-makers in policy formulation processes. Their exposure to the activities on the ground raised awareness at local and national level about directions in the use of ICTs for development. In spite of the lack of conventional, systematic approaches to policy research, the studies and projects could enhance debate using “research as ideas” as well as provide some factual information that could inform policy task teams and think-tanks.

- ix. *Respect for the IDRC’s facilitating approach, technical expertise and commitment.*

In all four countries the IDRC has been regarded more than most others as an international donor truly interested and committed to the development of the poor. It is respected in high government circles for its unobtrusive approach as well as for the technical expertise of many of its staff members and international consultants. Mutual respect led to close working relationships between the IDRC and government officials and an acknowledged trust by government decision-makers in the IDRC program officers and technical experts. This was most prominent in Mozambique and in South Africa.

- x. *The development of Acacia based on national needs and priorities.*

In all cases the Acacia strategies were compiled taking due cognizance of national development plans. The program planners also consulted widely and used input from key

decision-makers, representatives from community groups, civil society and open forums across many sectors of society. In Senegal the Acacia strategy implementation was also well in line with the sector approach to the country's development strategy, with priorities in for example education, employment and entrepreneurship, natural resource management, governance and health. This meant that there was no conflict with - and rather enhancement of - national and local plans for development.

## 4.4 Constraints impeding policy influence

There were relatively few constraints in the national context that impeded policy influence. The existence of a "policy window" in each of the countries during the time of IDRC involvement created a nurturing environment for policy influence. Constraints were mainly due to weaknesses in the execution of the interventions.

### 4.4.1 CONSTRAINTS IN THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

- i. *A plethora of ICT role players and agendas, with the IDRC-supported structures not well positioned within that arena.*

This is best illustrated by the Acacia program in South Africa. The NAAC and its Secretariat got lost among many other role players. This was among others due to the NAAC, its lack of focus on policy influence and the national emphasis on policy implementation rather than policy formulation. In contrast to its somewhat elevated position during the NICP period, at the time of Acacia it became "just another donor", without personal relationships and innovative approaches that could lead to a privileged position among key decision-makers. At the same time the different agendas of stakeholders in labor, government and the private sector made for a complex set of factors determining policy influence.

- ii. *Changes in national policy approaches and foci that can lead to (partial) closure of a policy window.*

During the 1990's, South Africa went through two phases of policy making. The first was spurred on by the need for the total revision of policies after the transition to democracy. The new government's commitment to the needs of the poor and disadvantaged ensured the implementation of transparent and inclusive policy processes. The IDRC was a primary player in this arena through its assistance to the ANC in exile before 1994, and its subsequent support of the National Telecommunications Policy Project. With the government's increasing confidence and the shift in government focus from the

*Reconstruction and Development Program* to the *Growth, Employment and Reconstruction* strategy in 1997, processes of policy formulation changed, allowing less opportunity for influence by potential role players.

iii. *Institutional instability or change, especially at government level.*

Linked to 4.4.2.i is the influence of institutional instability or change, especially among government bodies responsible for policy and the implementation of ICT. This became apparent in South Africa and Senegal. It is interesting that in both countries efforts to establish a coherent, overarching ICT policy failed or were delayed. While this is due to a number of reasons, there is no doubt that institutional instability and change played some role. In both countries the appointment or election of new decision-makers in key departments had a negative effect on the effectiveness of policy formulation processes.

iv. *Lack of interest in ICT related interventions among key decision-makers.*

According to informants it was difficult in Senegal to get key Ministers to participate in IDRC supported events and interventions. The situation in Senegal differed in this respect from the other case study countries, although in recent years a similar situation developed in South Africa.

v. *A lack of government focus on cooperation and the creation of synergy between policies, exacerbated by competition and “turf wars” between government departments.*

This situation arose during recent years in South Africa (and to a lesser extent in Uganda), where various government departments either competed to be the leading party in relevant ICT policy formulation processes or were not interested in cooperating for the sake of coherence in the policy formulation process.

#### **4.4.2 POLICY INFLUENCE CONSTRAINTS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE INTERVENTIONS**

i. *Uncertainties and weakened management processes caused by changes in leadership and the closure of the IDRC Regional Office for Southern Africa.*

Key informants in each of the four countries believe that this was one of the most important reasons for some of the inefficiencies or lack of results in aspects of Acacia. The resulting instability and uncertainty delayed or paralyzed some of the decision-making and project execution processes.

ii. *(Overarching) policy formulation processes not located in a neutral place.*



Linked to 4.4.1.v. is the location of national ICT policy formulation processes. In Mozambique the process was located, due to its overarching and integrative nature, in the office of the Prime Minister, while in Uganda and South Africa the responsibility was situated in a specific department. This caused tensions and in the case of South Africa prevented coherent and credible policy development with recognized input from a variety of sectors.

*iii. The late implementation of ELSA.*

ELSA was conceptualized to be the research arm of Acacia which would analyze and synthesize the knowledge and lessons drawn from the Acacia interventions. When its implementation was significantly delayed, the systematic data gathering and interpretation processes in the projects were stymied. ELSA would have been one of the main instruments for policy influence had it been implemented systematically and timely.

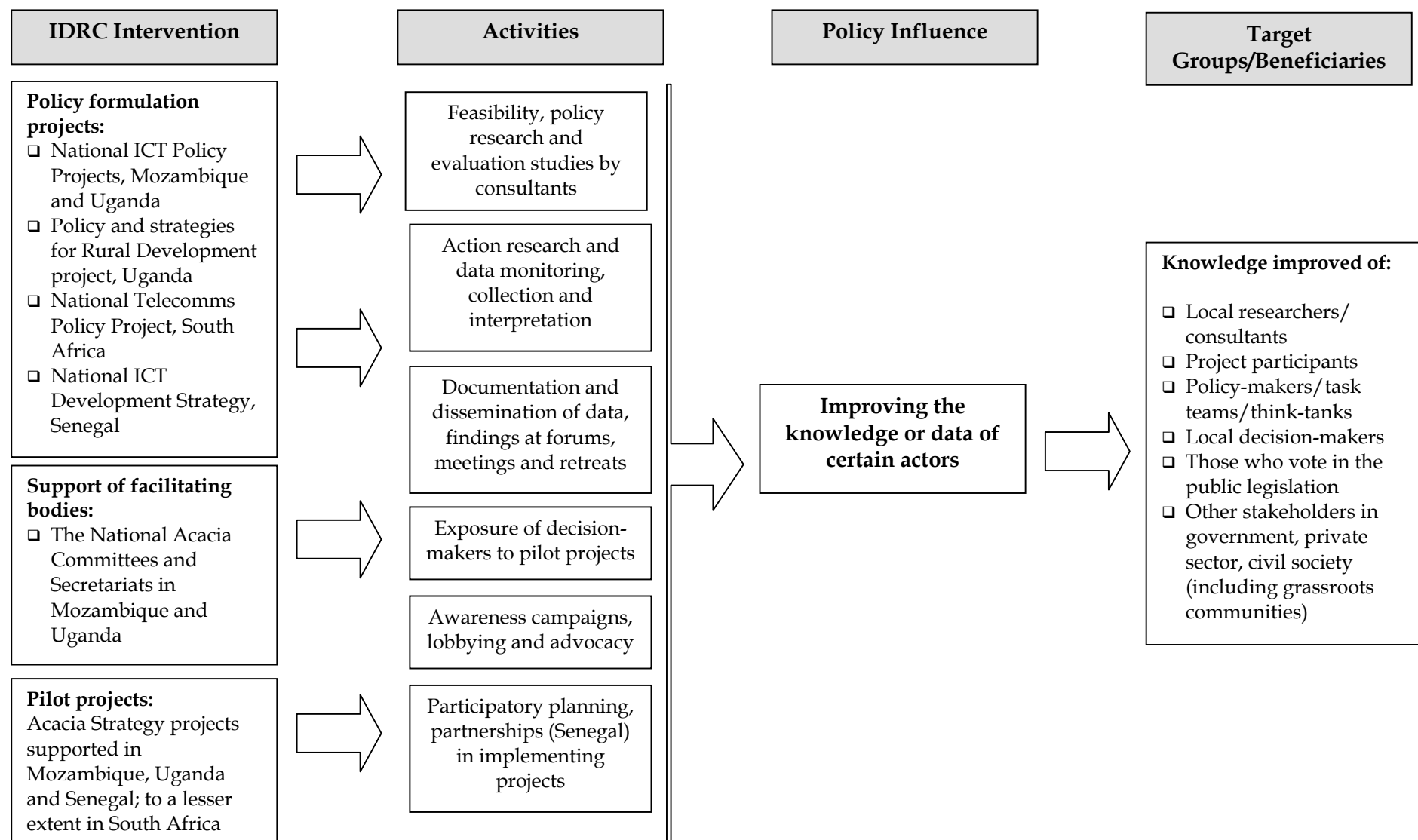
*iv. Interventions were not planned and executed in a manner that could provide a sufficiently clear understanding of gender and ICTs.*

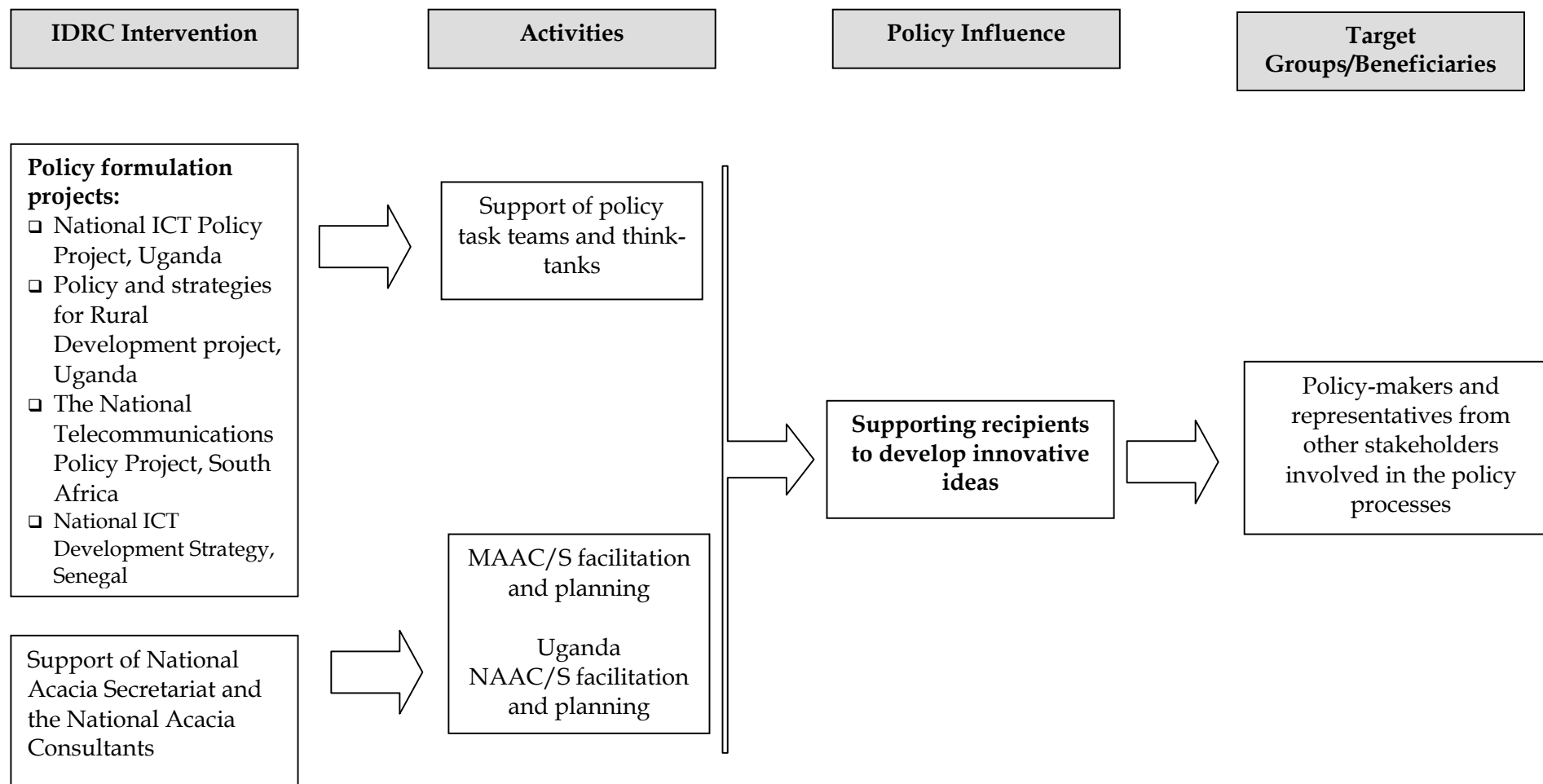
Gender was not adequately built into the IDRC interventions to enable in-depth research and a clear understanding of this important aspect of ICTs and development. It was therefore impossible to influence ICT policies, or those aimed at women, by integrating this new dimension.

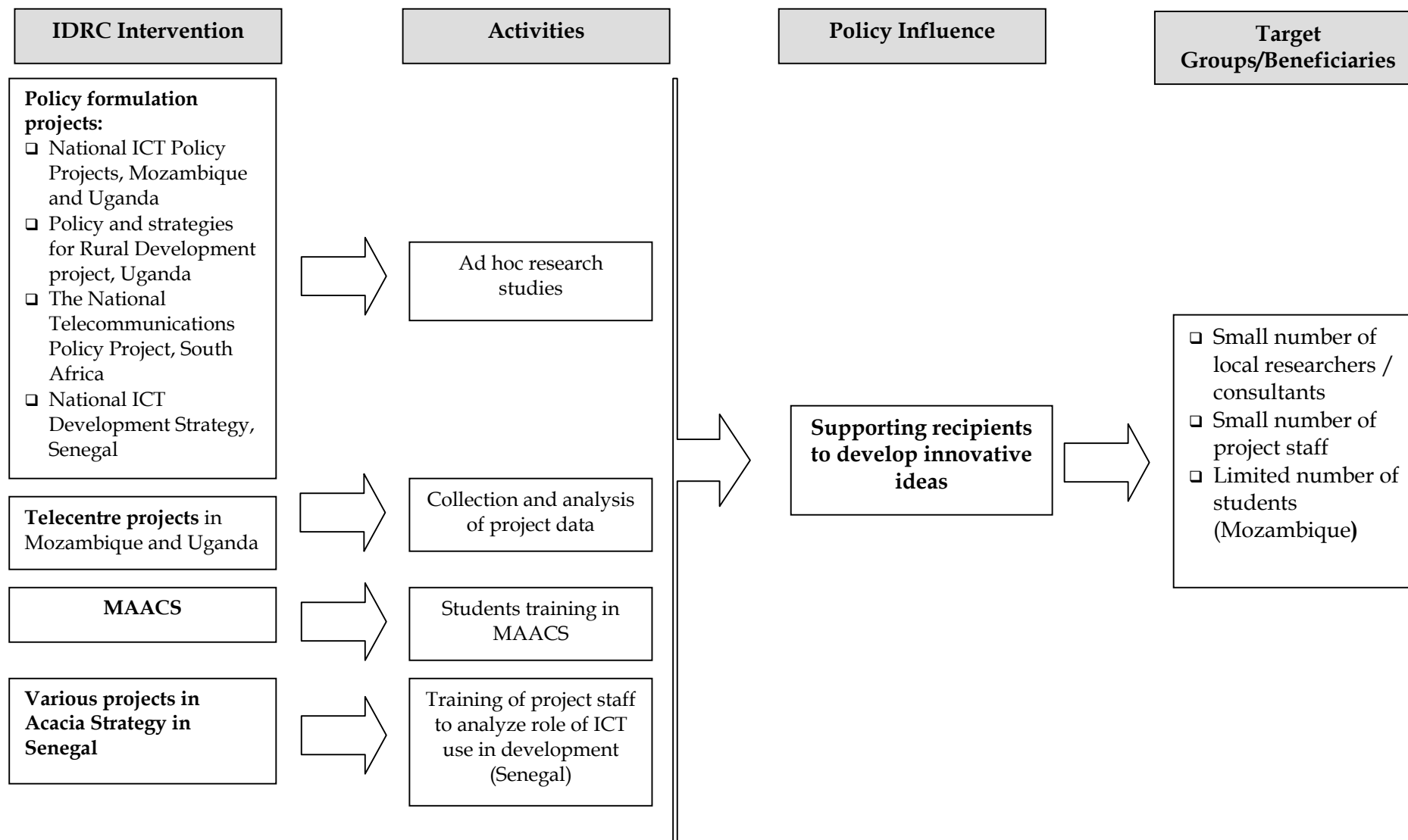
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## **ADDENDUM I:**

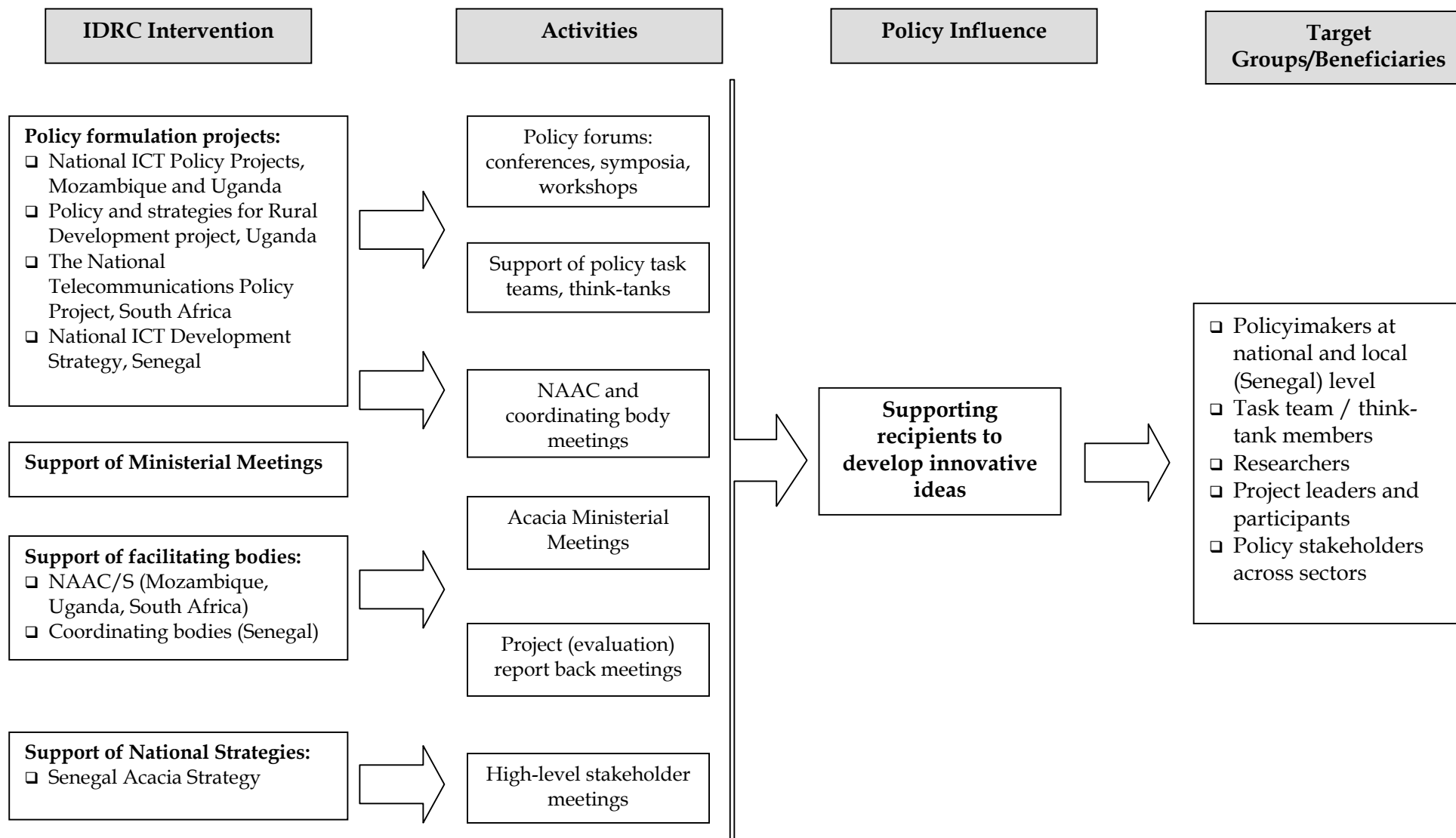
### **TYPES OF POLICY INFLUENCE**

**Figure I.1: Improving the knowledge or data of certain actors**

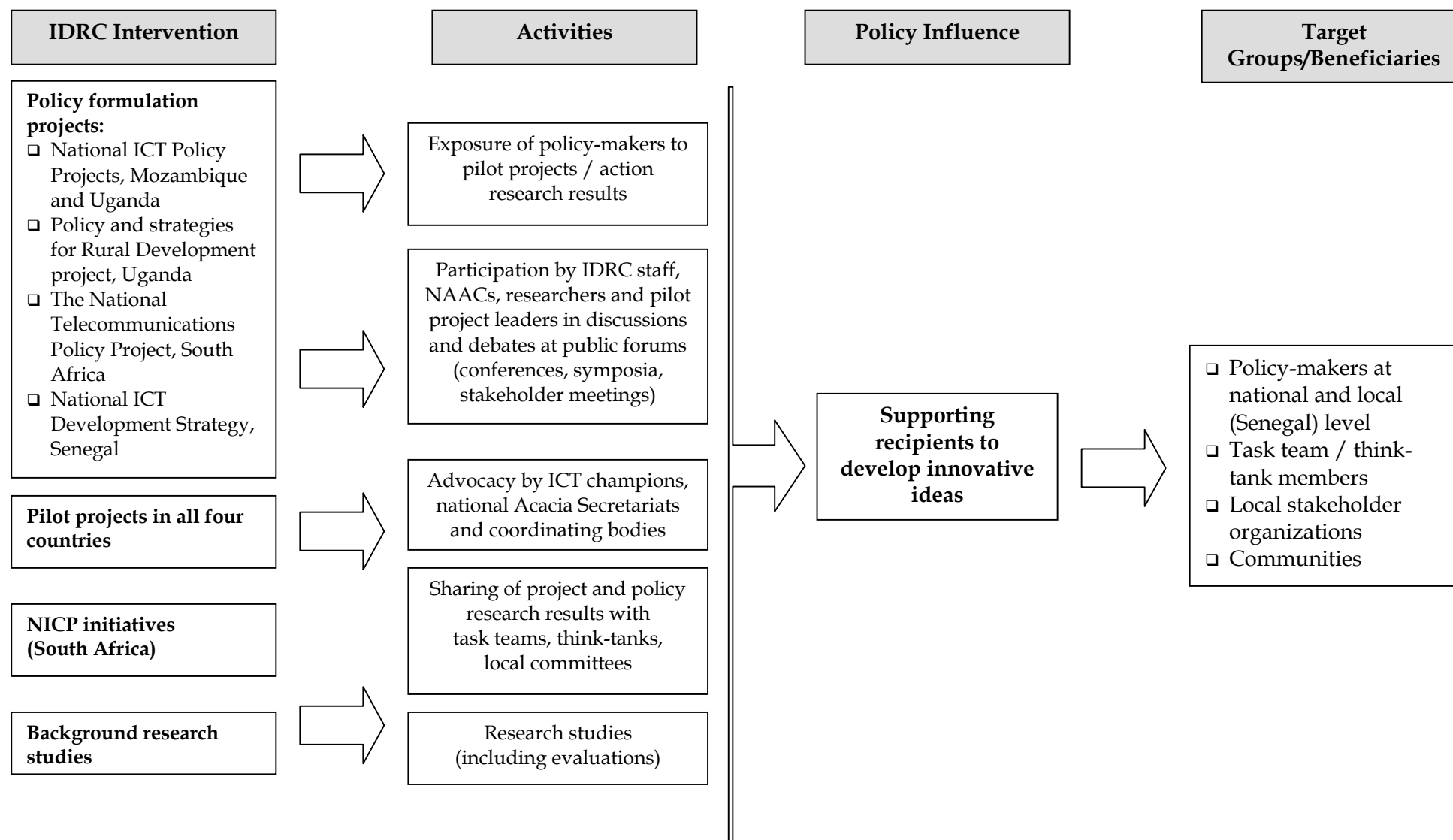
**Figure I.2: Supporting recipients to develop innovative ideas**

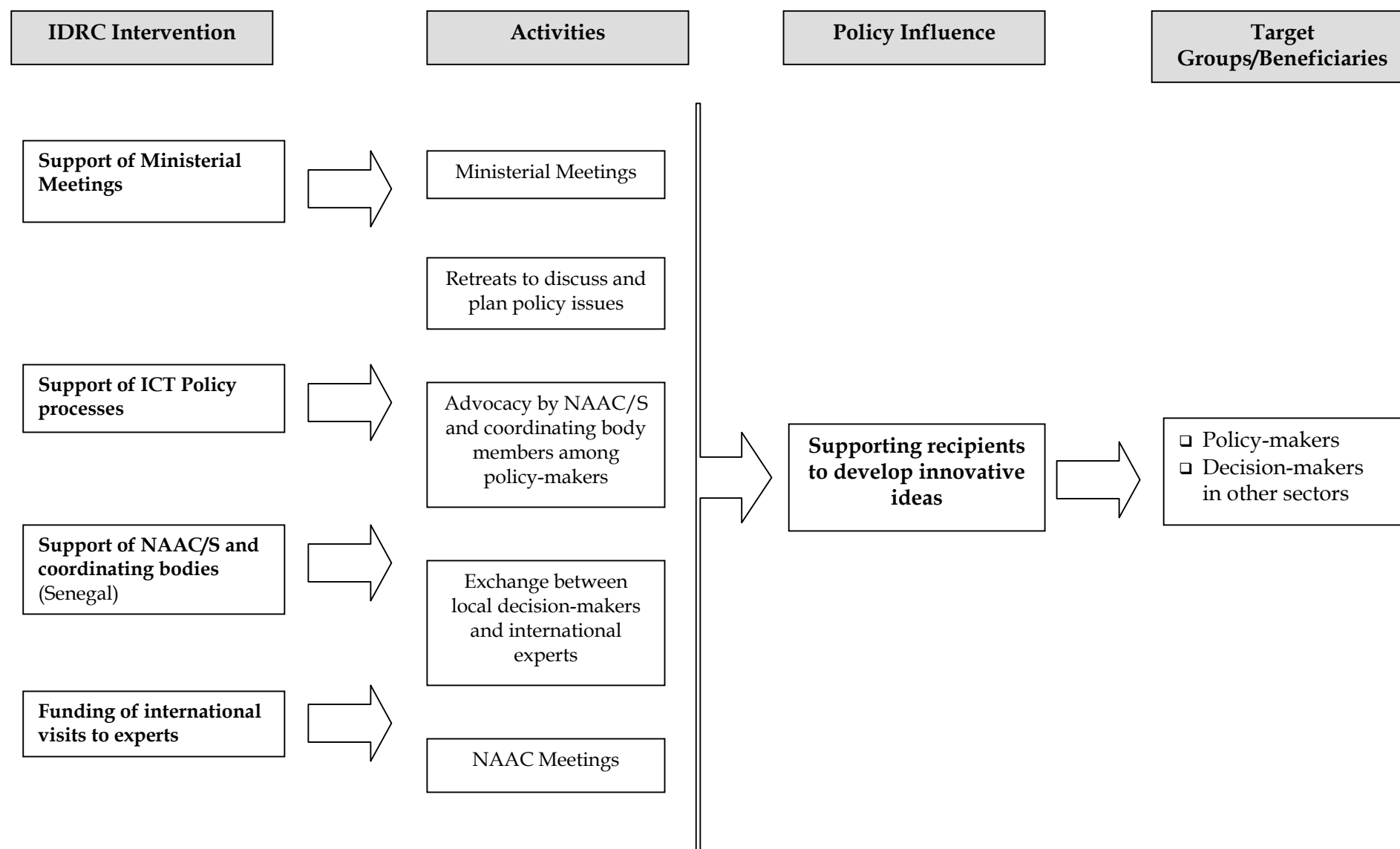
**Figure I.3: Developing new talent for research and analysis**

**Figure I.4: Providing opportunities for new learning within their jurisdiction and with colleagues elsewhere**

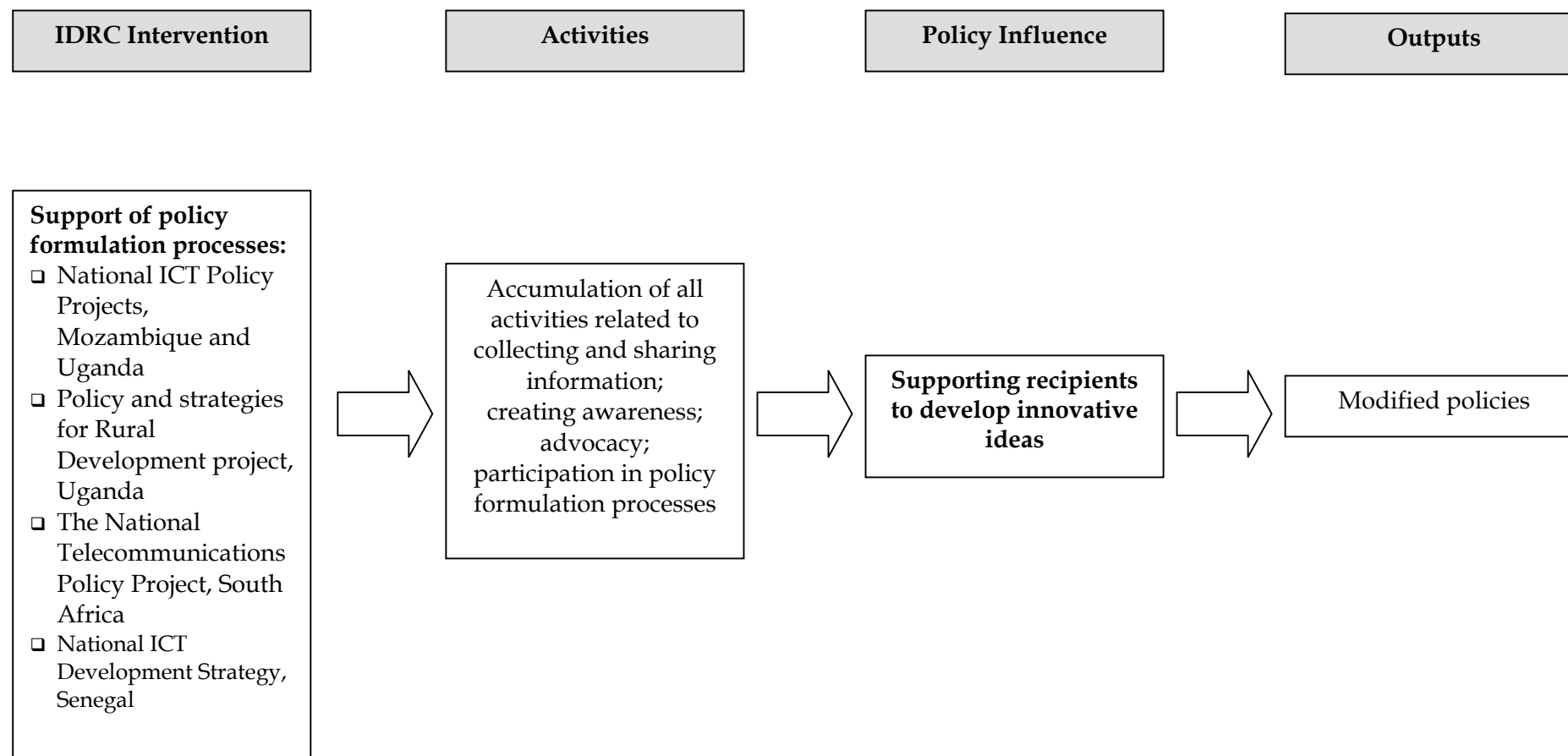


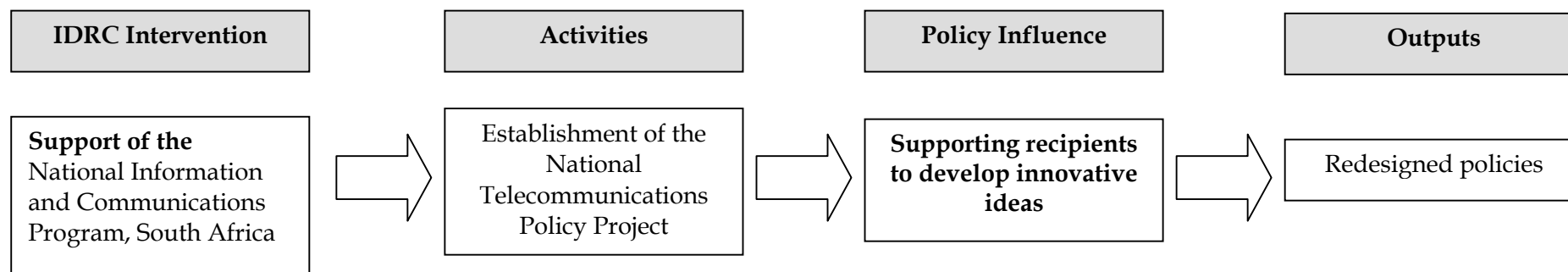
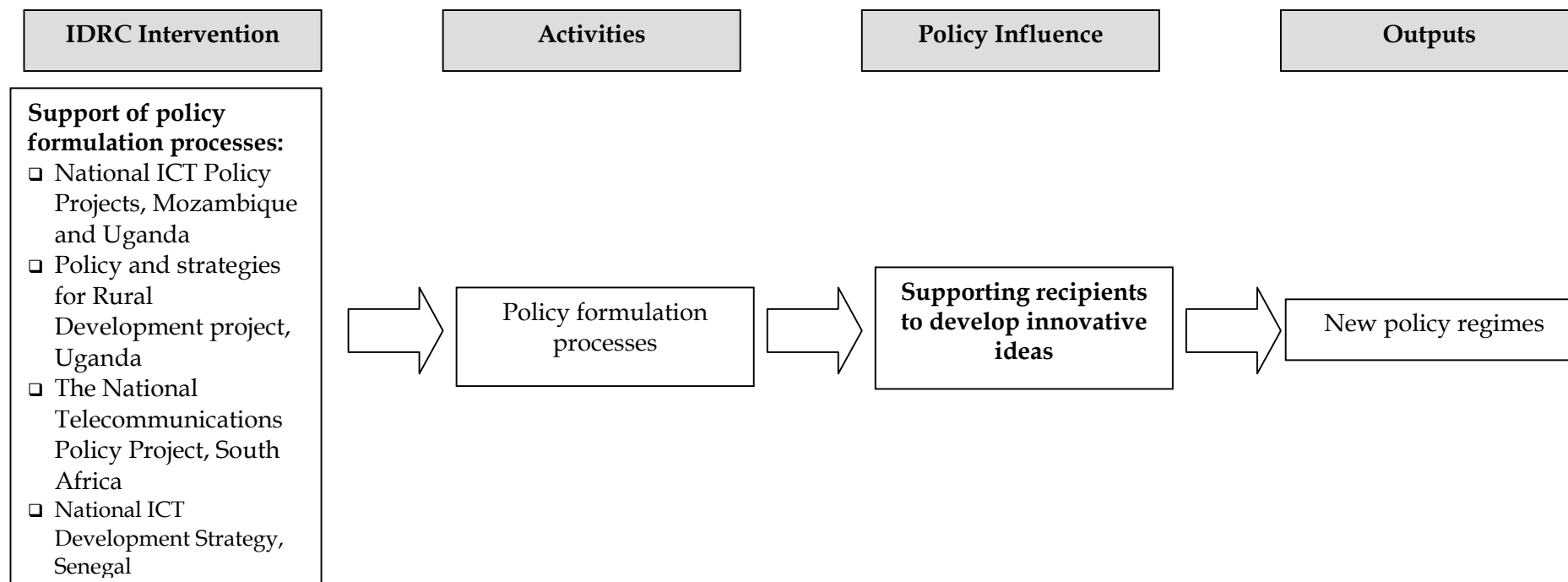
**Figure I.5: Introducing new concepts to frame debates, putting new ideas on the agenda, or stimulating public debate**



**Figure I.6: Stimulating quiet debate among decision-makers**



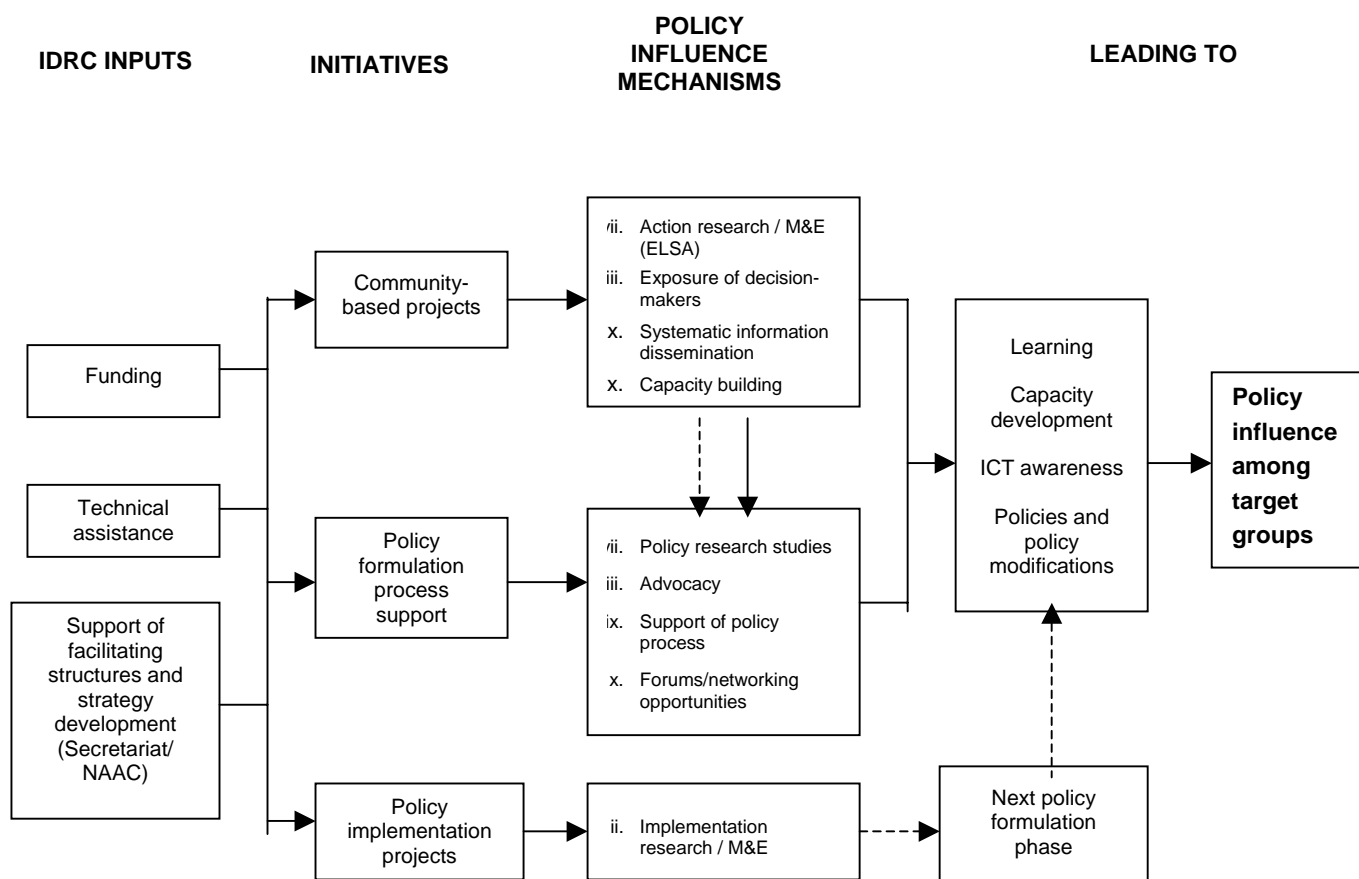
**Figure I.7: Modification of existing programs or policies**

**Figure I.8: Fundamental redesign of programs or policies****Figure I.9: Creation of a new policy regime**

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## **ADDENDUM II:**

# **THE ACACIA PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND POLICY INFLUENCE MECHANISMS**

**Fig II.1 ACACIA IN MOZAMBIQUE**

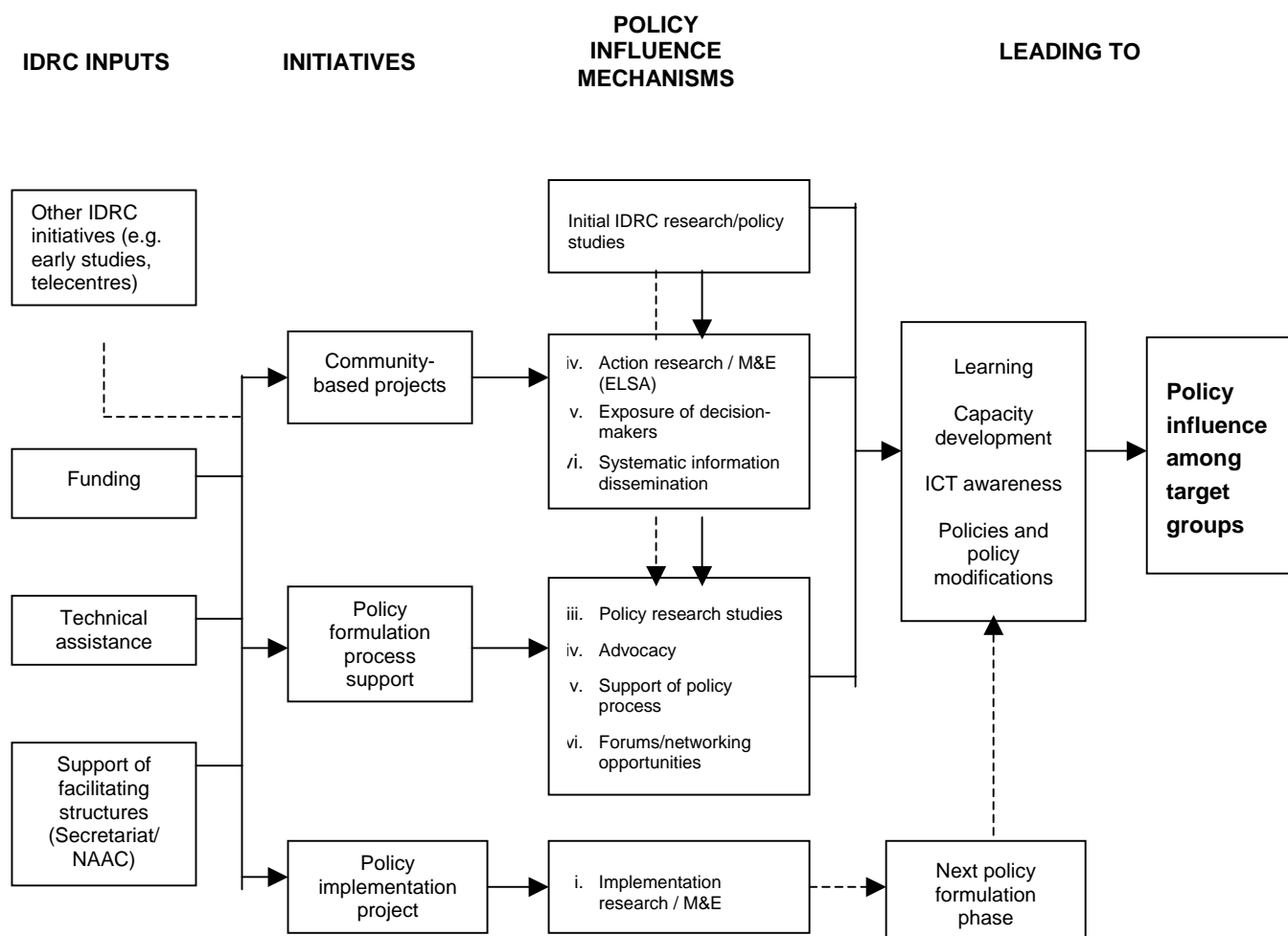
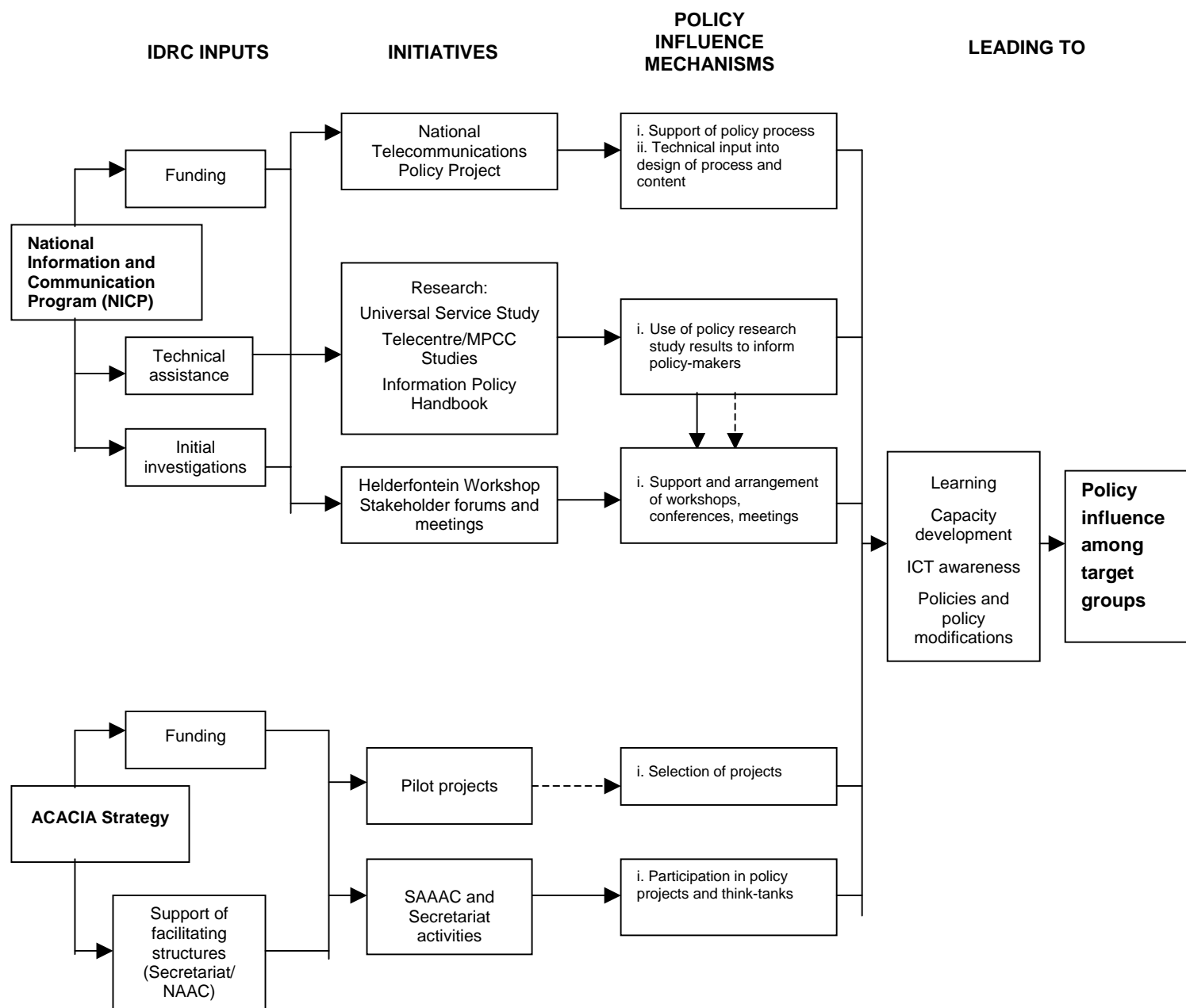
**Fig II.2 ACACIA IN UGANDA**

Fig II.3 IDRC ICT SUPPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA



**Fig II.4 ACACIA IN SENEGAL**