Forum on the Future of Aid
Southern Voices for Change in the International Aid System

Influencing International Aid Policy

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Executive Summary

This paper has been prepared as background for the strategic planning process of the Forum on the Future of Aid (FFA) which takes place in Uganda in February 2008. FFA is a space for Southern research institutes and think tanks to exchange information, research and ideas in order to increase the impact of southern-led research on international aid policy and on the reform of the international aid architecture. The paper is based on the assumption that, while Southern organisations were unable to consistently access policy debates about the reform of the international aid architecture in the past, this situation has now changed; a number of relevant international fora have been developed or opened-up over the past three to five years. This paper presents evidence for this assumption and explores ways in which Southern researchers can increase the impact of their research in the light of this. The paper is presented in four sections.

The introduction briefly highlights recent changes to the international aid system. Section two describes the fora which Southern researchers could gain access to and use to contribute to and influence policy debates. Recognising the importance of both the national and international levels for determining the impact of aid policy on partner country development, the descriptions of the fora are split into two broad sections; the paper first briefly examines fora and processes in partner countries, before examining four key international fora where aid policy and the reform of the international aid architecture are discussed. These four are: the follow up UN Conference to Financing for Development; the UN ECOSOC Development Cooperation Forum; the OECD/DAC third high-level forum on aid effectiveness in Ghana; and the OECD/DAC Global Forum on Development. Under each forum, a brief description of the process is given, the key stakeholders and decision-makers are identified, and where possible any parallel civil society processes are noted. A summary of the key issues that the forum will cover is also given.

Section three of the paper then takes a step back by drawing on the large body of literature which explores how research can influence policy. This section highlights the messy nature of the policy making process before looking at the role of evidence in the policy process. It explores the nature of evidence and how it is viewed within the policy process, using this understanding to explore how researchers can think about the type of evidence they generate in order to increase its impact. It then highlights how important it is for researchers to build links not only with policy-makers, but also with other stakeholders.

This third section then briefly describes a theory of communication and proposes that Southern researchers should consider using research in order to influence the terms of the aid policy and architecture reform debates rather than focusing their energies on trying to influence specific aid policies. It highlights the importance of researchers developing a communications strategy at the beginning of any research project and suggests a number of questions to guide the development of such a strategy.

Finally, the third section proposes a matrix which researchers could use to help the process of identification of which international forum/fora are most important in terms of their strategic aims. This matrix consists of a series of questions and has been partially filled out in order to help stimulate discussion at the FFA strategic planning process.

Introduction

The international aid system consists of a complex collection of more than 230 international organisations, funds and programmes, including the UN system agencies and the global and regional financial institutions and at least 56 bilateral donors (IDA, 2007). Bilateral aid agencies contribute nearly 70% of the total aid disbursed, with multilateral agencies contributing the remaining 30%.

Complex and organic aid architecture: Even though the G8 and OECD/ DAC largely dictate policy, the international aid architecture is the result of historical contingency and political necessity rather than strategic planning; there is no central architect. The large donors do not coordinate inputs and processes and there is no consensus about the objectives and outputs of aid programmes. A number of negotiations about the replenishment of multilateral funds, including IDA, IFAD, and the AfDB's African Development Fund are happening as this paper is being written, but these are largely separate negotiations. Little attention is paid to the impact that these decisions will have on the aid system as a whole (Burall and Maxwell, 2006). This lack of agreed strategy for its development has led to a system which is complex to understand, and has significant overlap between the activities of a number of agencies – there are for example over 100 major organisations operating in the health sector. Yet there are also significant gaps in the system, with some areas and countries being significantly under funded, for example (ActionAid, 2005; de Renzio and Rogerson, 2005; Levin and Dollar, 2005; IDA, 2007). In addition, the creation of new international funding mechanisms has increased: as many have been created in the past 10 years as were formed over the last 50 (Kaul and Conceição, 2006). Indeed, the number of organisations, funds and programmes is

now higher than the number of developing countries they were established to provide aid for. Nearly half of all Official Development Assistance (ODA) which is channelled through multilateral organisations in 2005 was earmarked to some degree by sector or theme (IDA, 2007).

Increasing aid commitments: Not only is the aid system complex, but it is also undergoing a period of rapid and significant change. Commitments and disbursements are rising; from around $US60 billion a year throughout the 1990s to $US100 billion in 2005, and projected by the DAC to be $US130 billion by 2010. In addition, the system is becoming even more complex at both the national and international level.

Complexity in partner countries: This complex system of hundreds of aid organisations translates into a similar complexity at the national level; in the 2001 – 2005 period there were an average of 33 donors operating per partner country (IDA, 2007) in many highly aid dependent countries this number will be much higher. There are numerous examples demonstrating how this complex international system affects aid delivery at the country level (Burall et al., 2006). Donors, recipients and independent observers all agree that the system is too complicated and imposes high transaction costs on all parties (see, for example, Action Aid, 2005; Banerjee, 2006; Easterly, 2002; Knack and Rahman, 2003).

Reform of the aid system: Efforts to reform the system have been attempted in two ways. Firstly, donors and partner countries have tried to make the components of the current system work more effectively together. The primary mechanism for doing this is through operationalising the Paris Declaration (OECD/DAC, 2005). The primary focus in relation to implementing Paris has particularly been on promoting greater ownership by governments of the national development agenda, alignment by donors to these national development plans, and donors working more closely together, or harmonising their activities. The main pillars of the Paris Declaration are illustrated in Figure 1. At the recipient country level, governments are attempting to gain ownership, and are being supported to a greater or lesser extent by donors, through the agreement of National Development Plans (or Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers) and national aid policies. There is though significant debate about the extent to which the Paris Declaration and country-level instruments actually promote national ownership[1] (see for example OECD/DAC, 2007) and whether these are the best vehicles for making aid more effective.

The second type of reform attempt focuses on separate components of the system, though these have largely been limited to efforts to reform individual organisations that make-up the system. For example, the process of reform of the governance of the IMF has begun following the ad hoc increases in the quotas for China, Turkey, South Korea and Mexico in 2006. Reform of the governance of the World Bank is also on the agenda. The UN High-Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence published its report in 2006 (UN, 2006). It proposed a series of potentially far-reaching reforms to the UN system as a whole, rather than individual organisations within it, and work has begun to operationalise this at the country-level. None of these efforts begin to address the aid system as a whole though.

The debates about reform of the aid architecture have mainly involved Northern donors and to a lesser extent Northern NGOs. The evidence that has informed and influenced policy has also largely been Northern. Southern CSOs, perspectives and research are rarely involved in these reform debates. In fact, there is very little written material
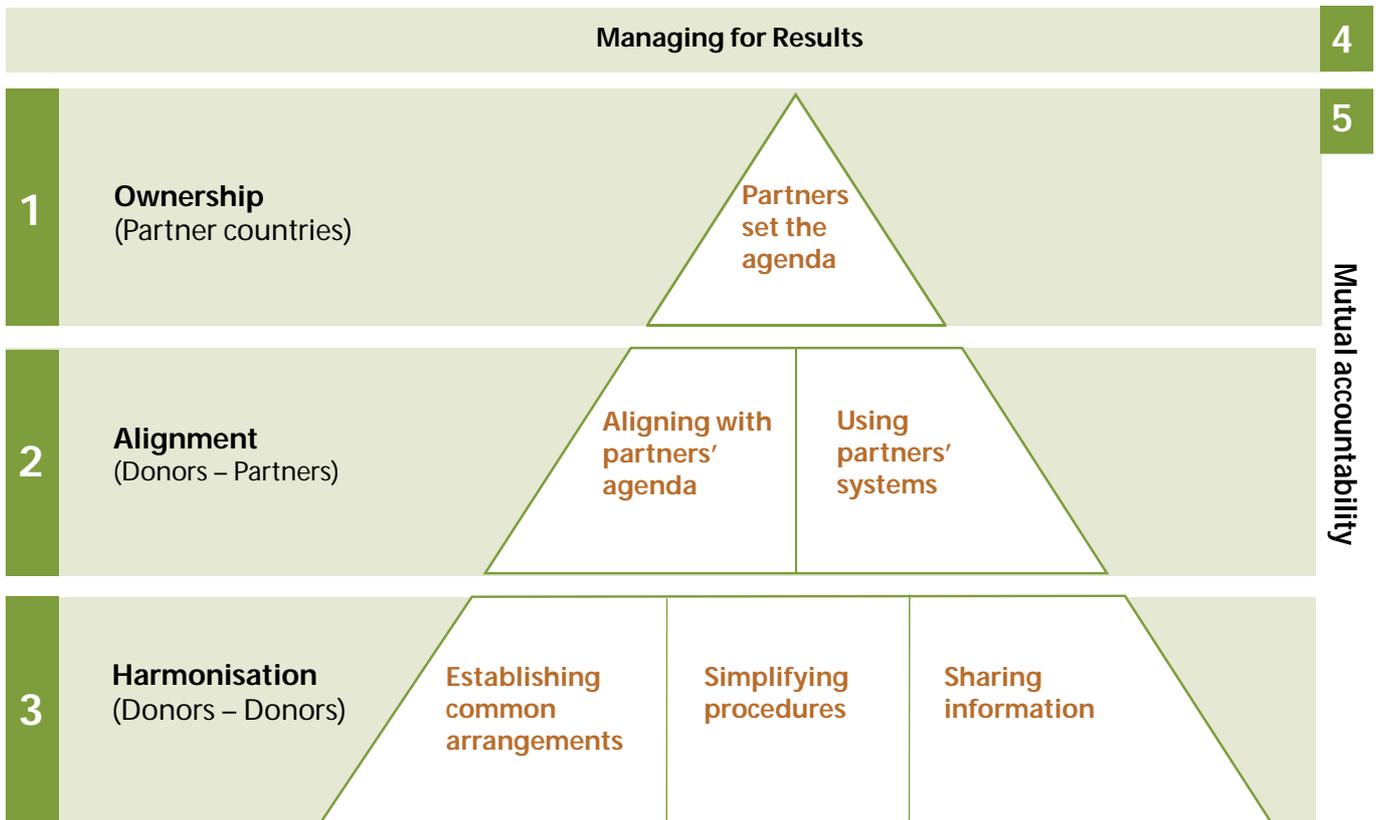

Figure 1. The Five Pillars of the Paris Declaration (OECD Working Party on Aid Effectiveness)

from the South (compared to that from the North) on the reform of the international aid architecture[2]. A number of reasons have been proposed including: a lack of appropriate fora to promote dialogue and information sharing among Southern CSOs; donor policy-making fora are inaccessible to Southern civil society and even governments; weak CSO capacity to engage in the debates, or to generate research and evidence; language barriers, inadequate funding; and high transaction costs (Rocha Menocal and Rogerson, 2006).

Structure and content of paper: this paper argues that, although it may have been the case even three or four years ago that there were few appropriate accessible fora in which Southern organisations could engage on the topic of the reform of the aid architecture, this is now beginning to change. While this will not alter the other constraints that may prevent engagement by Southern CSOs and researchers at the international level, it does at least provide an opportunity for greater influence. This paper is intended to inform a planning meeting of the Forum on the Future of Aid (FFA) (www.futureofaid.net). It briefly describes some of the key aid policy fora at the national and international levels. It highlights some of the key stakeholders at these two levels. It then draws on a large body of work looking at how organisations can best use the research and evidence they produce to exert greater influence on policy-making. The paper then concludes by drawing on the rest of the paper to propose, and begin to fill, a matrix of different issues Southern researchers might want to consider as they plan which forum or fora to focus their energy on in relation to promoting reform of the international aid architecture.

How is aid negotiated and who are the key actors?

Decisions concerning aid policy and programming are made in donor and aid recipient countries, and in both national and international policy spaces. This section identifies the main actors in the aid system and describes how aid is negotiated nationally and internationally, with the aim of helping research organisations to improve targeting of their outputs. The section is in two parts. The first part briefly describes how aid is negotiated in recipient countries. The second part describes the international aid arena.

Aid in partner countries

The key government and donor actors involved in making aid policy decisions in aid recipient countries are described below. The strategic donor-only and government-donor fora are then identified. Aid policies, instruments and coordination mechanisms, which together provide spaces and opportunities for civil society actors to influence aid policy are highlighted. Since contexts differ from country to country, this part provides only a very general overview. Some illustrative examples are provided.

Key actors

Government: While Ministries of Planning can take the lead, issues of aid and aid coordination in partner governments are generally dealt with by Ministries of Finance working with other key planning institutions. For instance in Tanzania, aid is coordinated by the Ministry of Finance, the President's Office, the Central Bank, the Accountant General and the Inter-Ministerial Technical Committee. Line Ministries, such

as those for Health and Education, also play an important role with respect to sectoral programmes. In Tanzania, key individuals in line-ministries are permanent secretaries, in many cases, delegation below this is limited (Harrison and Mulley, 2007).

Donors: For most donor agencies, day-to-day business in partner countries is carried out by country offices. For some bilateral agencies, this means the donor embassy, while others have separate representation. Bilateral agency headquarters in the donor country will also be involved in major decisions. Different donors delegate different levels of responsibility to the country level, so some country offices have more room to manoeuvre than others (Harrison and Mulley, 2007). For example, in Mozambique, half of the DAC donors have fairly centralised systems where country offices implement decisions made by headquarters, with little or no flexibility to change programmes or funding. Meanwhile, other country offices design and implement programmes, subject to headquarters' general approval (OECD, 2005).

Key National Fora

There are generally two types of national fora in which aid decision are made; donor-only, and donor-government fora. Often, in-country donors are represented in a Donor Group. For instance, in Kenya, the Donor Consultative Group (DCG) meets monthly and is chaired by the World Bank Country Director. Donors meet to share information and agree on some aspects of policy (Harrison and Mulley, 2007; Walt et al, 1999). At the highest level government-donor fora may include a Consultative Group (CG) which meets annually to mobilise resources, discuss development policy and review macroeconomic and sector developments. These meetings have increasingly been organised in-country to enable broader local participation from members of parliament, civil society, NGOs and the private sector (OECD, 2005). Both types of group, donor and donor-government, often have a number of working-level sub-groups focusing on particular issues which meet regularly (usually monthly) to discuss coordination issues (Harrison and Mulley, 2007).

Aid management policies, instruments and mechanisms

Aid policies: Most developing countries lack a formal external financing policy on aid, except on concessionality and priority sectors. This allows donors to maintain the leading role in driving the quality of aid flows. It also makes it very difficult for developing country governments to reject poor quality aid, or to reduce the number of in-country donors (33 on average). Nevertheless, a few countries have taken important steps to lead in designing their own aid strategies. Notable examples are the Tanzania Assistance Strategy (TAS) and the Uganda Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) Partnership Principles (Johnson and Martin, 2005).

National Development Plans: Following the introduction of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, (as a condition to qualify for the Highly Indebted Poor Countries initiative) and the Paris commitments, National Development Plans (NDPs) have emerged as key expressions of ownership and hence important vehicles through which donors deliver aid. NDPs have generally been led by Ministries of Finance, with line ministries, donors and increasingly civil society playing supporting roles. In Zambia, for instance, the development of the 2006–2010 Fifth National Development Plan (FNDP) saw

the establishment of a number of Sector Advisory Groups (SAGs) comprising donors and civil society and chaired by Permanent Secretaries from line ministries (Fraser, 2007).

Other key instruments and aid management mechanisms: Parallel to the development of NDPs, a number of partner countries have seen the development of Joint Assistance Strategies (JAS) which aim to help manage donor support of NDPs. JAS development processes have varied from country to country, but have generally been steered by a working group comprising government and donors. Other key aid management mechanisms that provide some policy space include: budget support; pooling; and basket arrangements. Often, joint steering committees are in charge of allocating and overseeing funds and setting standards.

Capacity: Many partner country governments and CSOs will require capacity building to improve their influence within country level aid fora. Government aid mobilisation departments need to extend their mandates beyond compliance with donor policies and procedures, to critically evaluate the quality of aid. In some cases, this will require training, systems development, and research. In others this will require institutional reforms to improve coordination of aid management across government agencies. In addition, CSOs will require training in aid evaluation, and assistance in making effective contributions to national policy (Johnson and Martin, 2005).

The International Aid Arena

Although aid is usually delivered in partner countries, many of the decisions around aid policy and programming are made in developed countries and in international spaces. In addition, the structure of the aid architecture determines to a large extent the way that aid is delivered at country level. This section explores two facets of the international aid arena. It first examines the institutional arrangements or governance structures of the key aid delivery agencies, both bilateral and multilateral which disburse large sums of aid and then highlights the main strategic fora where decisions around aid are being made. Although US based philanthropic foundations are emerging as significant actors in the aid architecture, they are not discussed here due to the private nature of their governance structures and thus limited space for influence.

Aid delivery Agencies

Bilateral agencies[3]

Bilateral agencies contribute nearly 70% of aid disbursed. Since governance structures will vary from donor to donor, a broad overview is given here. Given its influence, the function of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) is also summarised.

- *Key agencies*: DAC member country aid budgets vary considerably but fall into four broad categories: there are seven relatively small donors managing annual aid budgets of less than US$ 300 million;[4] nine medium-sized donors managing aid bu•dgets of between US$ 500 million and 1,500 million;[5] four larger donors managing aid budgets of between US$ 2 billion and 4 billion (France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom); and two large donors managing aid budgets of more than US$ 9 billion, Japan and the United States (OECD, 2005)

- *Aid allocations:* DAC member countries make important decisions about the distribution of their bilateral assistance as well as voluntary multilateral contributions. How these decisions are made is complex. Decision-making may be guided by legislation underpinning the aid programme or an over-arching policy statement. For some DAC member countries, the choice of main partners often reflects strong historical and political ties with certain countries or groups of countries or is linked to their geographic proximity to the donor country. Actual budgets are often determined by national legislatures based on proposals made by the government. These budgets are normally flexible enough to cater to evolving circumstances such as humanitarian crises. However, in some countries, legislatures are more prescriptive on geographic allocations, aid levels for particular countries or regions or specific uses.[6] In most DAC member countries, radical changes to aid distribution patterns are rare. Nevertheless, many DAC member countries are assessing their engagement with particular multilateral agencies and in partner countries more critically than in the past (OECD, 2005).

- *Structure and systems of aid agencies*: ministries of Foreign Affairs are involved to a lesser or greater degree in all DAC member countries' aid systems. In some countries, an aid department or division may exist within the ministry of foreign affairs, or there may be a government aid agency with a large degree of autonomy. Links between aid programmes and broader foreign relations come out more clearly in partner countries where the ambassador and other Foreign Service diplomats may play important roles. Many DAC member aid agencies adopt a structure which gives a key role to geographic and multilateral departments, but back their activities up with sectoral and technical support. This reflects shifts in some DAC members' country programming from project assistance to more programme aid, and activities planned and provided on a sectoral basis (OECD, 2005).

  Other ministries too, may contribute to aid expenditures. For example, the ministries of finance in many DAC member countries manage core contributions to, and lead on policy dialogue within, multilateral development banks such as the World Bank (for instance during the World Bank and IMF Annual Meetings). Contributions to the more specialised UN agencies, such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) may come from the Ministry of Health, but may be backed up by both development and technical specialists within the development agency or ministry of foreign affairs (OECD, 2005).

- *The OECD/DAC*: the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) plays a key role in coordinating development policy amongst major bilateral donors. The DAC undertakes four principal types of activities: it provides policy guidance; it conducts periodic peer reviews of members' aid policies and programmes; it provides a forum for information exchange and building policy consensus; and it publishes statistics and reports on aid flows to development countries. The Committee holds an annual High-Level Meeting. This usually takes place in April and involves aid ministers and/or heads of aid agencies from OECD governments together with senior officials from the World Bank, the IMF and UNDP.[7]

Multilateral Agencies

Multilateral agencies contribute the remaining 30% of aid disbursed. Due to the relatively large sums of aid they disburse to low income countries, this section focuses on the World Bank and the IMF (which are both actors and fora), UN agencies and the Global Fund against AIDS TB and Malaria (GFATM). The latter is an example of a vertical global fund, numbers of which have also increased in recent years.[8]

- *The Bretton Woods Institutions:* the IBRD and IDA between them committed $24.7 billion to the developing world in 2007 (World Bank, 2007; OECD Statistics, 2007). The IMF committed SDR 401.2 m in concessional lending in 2006/07 (IMF, 2007). Consequently, taken together the BWI are the largest and, arguably, the world's most influential public development institutions. The highest decision making bodies in each of the BWIs is the Board of Governors. Governors are usually the minister of finance or the governor of the central bank. The BWIs receive advice from the Development Committee, which is a joint committee of the World Bank and IMF. The Committee's members, usually Ministers of Finance, are appointed by countries represented on the Bank's or the Fund's Board of Executive Directors.[9]

- *United Nations Agencies:* eight UN agencies[10] between them disbursed $3.4bn to developing countries in 2006 (OECD Statistics, 2007). Since the UNDP is the UN's global development network and the UN's largest provider of grants for development, a brief note of its governance structure is summarised here. The UN General Assembly and the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) provide policy guidance to the UNDP (as well as UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR and the WFP amongst others). The executive body of the UNDP is the Executive Board, which is made up of representatives from 36 countries who serve on a rotating basis. Through its bureau, consisting of representatives from five regional groups, the Board oversees and supports the activities of the UNDP. The Executive Board secretariat facilitates the work of the Board by reviewing and editing all documentation for submission to the Board. The Executive Board operates under the authority of the ECOSOC, which elects UN member states to the Board, except for the Western European and other States Group, which has determined its own internal rotation policy. Names of those on the board were hard to find, but at the time of writing, the President of the Board was the Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs, while the vice presidents included members of various permanent missions to the UN as well as the Bangladeshi Economics Minister, providing clues as to who board members may be.[11]

- *Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria:* since 2002, the Global Fund has committed US$ 10 billion in 136 countries. Ultimately disbursements of the Global Fund are under the supervision of independent Board. The Board is chaired by a senior partner of McKinsey and Company in the US, and includes ministers of foreign affairs and development cooperation from donor countries, ministers of health from partner countries, representatives from non-governmental organizations such as the Zambia National AIDS Network, the private sector (including businesses and foundations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) and affected communities. Members without voting rights include the World Health Organization (WHO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV&AIDS (UNAIDS) and the World Bank. The latter also holds the GFATM's money in trust. The Board meets at least twice annually and is responsible for overall governance of the organization, including approval of grants.[12]

Key International Fora for Influencing Aid Policy

Until recently, substantive debates about international aid policy occurred primarily at the OECD/DAC and in the ministries of donor countries. Southern contribution to this policy debate has been by invitation only, rather than being automatic and ongoing. The debates happen behind closed doors and the points for influence are limited. In addition, unlike the issue of the reform of the global trade system for example, there is a perception that there is no global policy process into which Southern organisations can feed. However, there have been a number of recent developments at the international level which offer the opportunity for greater Southern engagement in the policy debate.

Four key fora are discussed here. The first two are parallel UN events which are primarily coordinated through ECOSOC: the follow up UN Conference to Financing for Development; and the UN ECOSOC Development Cooperation Forum. The last two fora are OECD/DAC events: the OECD/DAC third high-level forum on aid effectiveness in Accra, 2008; and the OECD/DAC Global Forum on Development. These fora have been selected for discussion as they appear to offer the best chance of long term engagement of non-state actors with policy-makers and relate to the aid system as a whole, rather than to specific elements. Other possible opportunities for aid policy engagement such as the current reform proposals at the World Bank and the IMF, the World Bank's Strategic Partnership with Africa (SPA) or the replenishment rounds at IDA or the AfDB, fail to meet these criteria. Enhanced participation by partner country governments and civil society organisations in these fora will go some way to ensuring that the aid system works more in line with their interests.

- *The Follow-up Process to Financing for Development:* the UN International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD) in 2002 in Monterrey, Mexico aimed to agree how the financial resources required for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) could be raised. The 'Monterrey Consensus' was supported by 50 heads of state and contained decisions on: mobilising domestic financial resources, mobilising international resources, international trade, international development cooperation, external debt and the coherence of the international monetary, financial and trading systems. The important, but somewhat weakly mandated, follow-up process has two main recurring elements.[13] These are an annual ECOSOC high-level meeting and the biennial General Assembly High-Level Dialogue (HLD). In addition there is a third element, a Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development will take place from 29 November to 2 December 2008 to review progress in implementing the Monterrey Consensus. These are all briefly described below.
  - Annual ECOSOC high-level meetings: These meetings take place immediately after the Spring

Meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and involve the Bretton Woods Institutions, the WTO and UNCTAD.[14] These meetings aim to facilitate dialogue among ministers of finance returning from the Washington meetings (from both donor and partner countries), on the one hand, and ministers of aid and foreign affairs (from donor countries), on the other. Civil society and private sector representatives have also participated in these meetings. The last ECOSOC high-level meeting took place in April 2007.[15]

- Biennial General Assembly High-Level Dialogues: These dialogues are the second element of the FfD follow-up process. They serve as the intergovernmental focal point for the general follow-up to the Conference and related issues. The most recent High Level Dialogue (HLD) took place in October 2007. The HLD is a ministerial-level forum, with the participation of all relevant stakeholders in the Financing for Development process (including ministers of aid agencies from donor countries and ministers of finance and/or planning ministries from partner countries).[16] It aims to assess the state of implementation of the Monterrey Consensus. The 2007 HLD addressed six main areas, which emerged at the first International Conference on Financing for Development in 2002 (see above). The summary report of the ECOSOC high-level meeting is a key input to the HLD. Both follow up meetings have often led to the adoption of resolutions and decisions (or legislative mandates) during UN substantive sessions.[17]

- Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development:[18] Although issues such as commitments to increase aid from donor countries, debt cancellation and the emergence of new donors such as China and India, are bound to dominate debates prior to the 2008 Doha conference and shape the agenda, at the time of writing the conference agenda had not been decided upon. In the UN resolution on the FfD follow up conference, governments avoided commitments and defined the purpose of the conference in general terms.

"[…] *the review conference should assess progress made, reaffirm goals and commitments, share best practices and lessons learned, and identify obstacles and constraints encountered, actions and initiatives to overcome them, and important measures for further implementation, as well as new challenges and emerging issues."* (UN GA, 2007)

Some of the key questions to be raised in the run up to the FfD follow-up Conference in Doha include 1) which Monterrey achievements most need international political protection against roll back and further support for implementation? 2) which Monterrey-based initiatives are most realisable but need a political push? and 3) which new issues of concern are coming up and most deserve active lobby work toward specific solutions? In addition, the NGO committee has produced a list of potential topics for international discussion in Financing for Development.[19]

Stakeholder involvement: According to the UN Draft resolution, the follow up conference 'will be held at the highest possible political level, including the participation of heads of state or government, ministers and special representatives'. The conference will include plenary meetings and six interactive multi-stakeholder round tables on the themes based on the six major thematic areas of the Monterrey Consensus. Registration to the conference is open to all NGOs that are accredited with ECOSOC; to the Conference or its follow-up process (UN, 2007).

Although governments have requested that the UN consult with member states and all stakeholders in an open, inclusive and transparent manner, a reliable official plan for the preparatory process was, at the time of writing, still lacking. Nevertheless the UN resolution (2007) called on UN regional commissions to hold regional consultations during the first half of 2008 to provide inputs to the preparation of the Review Conference. Further, the resolution called for informal review sessions on the six thematic areas of the Monterrey Consensus lasting 11 days and one day for informal hearings with civil society and the business sectors between January and June 2008.

The International Facilitating Group on Financing for Development (IFG) represents the largest NGO community monitoring the Financing for Development agenda and has organised NGO inputs to the ECOSOC high-level meetings and General Assembly HLDs.[20]

Another key facilitator is the NGO committee on FfD, which aims to strengthen NGO relationships with the FfD office of the UN Secretariat and aims to integrate FfD issues into the work of ECOSOC and UN commissions. Unofficially, international CSOs have hosted international seminars for civil society on development financing before HLDs with the intention of feeding key outputs into the HLD.

- *The UN Biennial Development Corporation Forum*: the 2005 UN World Summit mandated the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to convene a biennial high-level Development Cooperation Forum (DCF). This will review international aid trends; promote better coordination amongst aid donors; strengthen the UN's normative and operational work; and provide policy recommendations to enhance aid effectiveness and is intended to complement the issues being discussed through the ECOSOC FfD process. Unlike the OECD, the DCF has broader political legitimacy, involving all UN Member States and a wide range of stakeholders[21] involved in aid delivery. The DCF process hence is able to harness a wide range of inputs for a deepened and broader dialogue around the international aid agenda. The DCF should enable ECOSOC to strengthen its political oversight and monitoring of resource commitments and the quality of aid delivery. The first DCF will take place in July 2008.

The preparations for the 2008 DCF are guided by a legislative mandate expressed at the DCF launch (in July 2007). There will be two high level symposia, leading up to a high level forum in July 2008. The high-level forum will be held every two years thereafter. The symposia are

modelled on the OECD Global Forum on Development. They will follow Chatham House Rules and there will be no UN outcome document; just a synthesis document instead. The first symposium took place in April 2007 and the second takes place in Cairo in January 2008. The analytical preparations, supported by United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), focus on the challenges faced by developing and developed countries in operationalising aid programmes and policies at the country level. The preparations seek to identify major constraints to national ownership in driving effective and coordinated aid management policy.[22]

Key policy messages from the high level symposia will feed into the analytical report of the Secretary-General which will facilitate discussions at the first DCF. The deliberations at the DCF in July 2008 will also make a strategic contribution to the Follow-up Conference on Financing for Development. In the intervening year, where there is no high-level forum, a summary report of the two symposia and the high level forum will be sent to ECOSOC. The Under-Secretary General of UNDESA has established an informal Advisory Group comprising 19 members from a wide range of organisations. It aims to coordinate and focus the dialogue with key stakeholders on the objectives and agenda of the preparatory process.[23]

There have been tensions about what the relative roles of DCF versus FfD within the UN system, but it now appears this has been resolved with the DCF focussing on the aid relationship while the FfD will focus on broader financing.

- *The Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness: t*he OECD Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF-3) follows two previous HLFs the first in Rome in 2003 and the second in Paris in 2005. HLF-3 will be held in Accra, Ghana between 2nd and 4th September. It primarily aims to review progress in implementing the Paris Declaration. The HLF-3 will have three key elements to it: 1) the Marketplace, for different actors to showcase good practices and lessons from promoting aid effectiveness 2) eight roundtable meetings, for in-depth discussion on key issues to facilitate policy work (see OECD, 2007: Annex B for draft workstreams for roundtable discussions); and 3) a ministerial-level meeting, expected to conclude the HLF 3 with an endorsement of a ministerial statement.[24] It is expected that the Ministerial Meeting will be attended by heads of aid agencies or ministries of foreign affairs from donor countries and heads of ministries of finance from partner countries.[25] Participation in the HLF-3 will be by invitation only.

Overall responsibility for the organisation of the HLF-3 (as well as monitoring the Paris Declaration) rests with the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness. This is an international forum in which equal numbers of bilateral donors and partner countries are represented, with participation from all the multilateral banks, the OECD, and the UN. Under the umbrella of the Working Party, the Steering Committee, chaired by the Chair of the Working Party with the World Bank and the Government of Ghana (GoG) as vice-chairs, meets on a quarterly basis to provide advice on the content of the Forum. The Core Group, comprised of the World Bank, the Government of Ghana and OECD, is undertaking much of the preparatory work, including overseeing the planning of preparatory events.

Four rounds of mini-consultation meetings with partner countries were carried out from June to September 2007 in Mauritius, Ghana, Honduras and the Philippines. These meetings identified important issues for HLF 3. Key messages from consultations were that there is varying progress across countries, they are keen to continue engagement in the process and there is strong interest to learn from one another's experience. Participants suggested a number of themes for discussion at the HLF-3 including monitoring and implementation of the Paris commitments, aid predictability, harmonisation and alignment action plans, experiences with budget support, untying aid and strengthening ownership (OECD, 2007). These consultations are expected to be followed-up by broader regional consultations in 2008 in order to start to build consensus around key aid effectiveness issues amongst a broader range of actors.[26]

In addition to the official HLF process, there are two parallel spaces for CSOs: the official process, led by the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness (AG-CSO), which was established by the Working Party; and CSOs own parallel process led by the International Civil Society Steering Group (ISG).[27] The AG-CSO is a multi-stakeholder group consisting of 12 members, including three members each from developing country partner governments and donors, and civil society organizations (CSOs) from developed and developing countries. It aims to improve recognition and the voice of CSOs as development actors and in aid effectiveness debates; enrich the aid effectiveness agenda and facilitate the sharing of good practice (AG-CSO, 2007a). The ISG aims to improve the capacity of CSOs to engage in the official process, and ensure that key issues such as gender equality, human rights and solidarity amongst others are seriously addressed during the HLF-3.[28] Some members of the AG-CSO, such as IBON and CONCORD are also responsible for the organisation of the parallel process.

The AG-CSO scheduled five regional multi-stakeholder consultations (two in Africa, two in Asia and one in Latin America) between September and November 2007 and two CSO-only consultations in Brussels and Johannesburg to receive input on the official process.[29] Complementary consultations are being organized at the national level in a number of countries. Except for the Northern Consultation, each of the regional consultations were split into two sections: a CSOs-only section discussing proposed priorities and advocacy for the HLF-3, supported by the ISG; and a multi-stakeholder section, with Southern CSOs, government representations, donors and Northern CSOs, discussing CSO's role in aid effectiveness, supported by the AG-CSO (Mulley, email communication, 29th November 2007). The ISG has so far engaged with the Working Party and its Steering Committee on two occasions, both in November 2007, to discuss issues of concern to CSOs for the HLF-3.

In its Issues Paper to guide consultations, the AG-CSO (2007) considers five sets of relationships:

- Between CSOs and their primary constituents (the people they serve or represent)
- Between and among CSOs at country level and beyond
- Between Northern and Southern CSOs specifically
- Between CSOs and governments
- Between donors and CSOs.

The AG-CSO will bring together approximately 150 to 200 CSOs from the South and the North as well as representatives from donor and Southern governments for an International Forum in Ottawa, Canada from 3-6 February 2008, to consider the results of the consultations. The International Forum, being organised by the CCIC (a member of the Advisory Group) will offer analysis and advice to the Advisory Group. The AG-CSO will produce a synthesis report of its consultations and provide advice on how to incorporate aid effectiveness issues relating to the role of civil society and development in the HLF-3 and beyond (AG-CSO, 2007).

- OECD/DAC Global Development Forum: the OECD Global Forum on Development (GFD) was created in mid-2006 to improve the co-ordination, visibility and impact of the OECD's development-related work, and to improve dialogue between OECD member and non-member economies. The Global Forum process, which consists of a series of events including informal experts' workshops, policy workshops and annual plenary meetings, has devoted its first three-year cycle to 'development finance'. Four major themes for discussion, emerged from a preliminary workshop in 2006: 1) how can the present aid system be understood better, 2) How can the extent of developing countries ownership of their aid policies and commitments be improved, 3) how can aid instruments be designed to respond to diverse development scenarios and 4) what are the options for reform of the international aid architecture.

Each year, a different theme is addressed around a series of events. Forum participants include policy makers from OECD and developing countries, research institutions and think tanks, international organisations, regional development banks, technical development agencies, foundations, private sector and civil society organisations. However, participation in Forum events is by invitation only. The OECD holds a high level plenary meeting every year to discuss the outcomes of the previous year's workshops around the year's theme. This then feeds into the annual high level meeting of the DAC.[30]

The first forum was held in April 2007 on the 'Evolving Landscape of Development Finance: Managing Complexity'. Around 200 participants were invited.[31] Key elements of the discussion included the emergence of new actors and emerging economies as providers of development finance and assistance; the institutional coherence and evaluation of the multilateral development finance system; and the major challenges for development policy makers in shaping a more effective development finance system. [32]

The Global Forum for Development's current theme is Operationalising Ownership ending in a plenary in April 2008, which will also provide inputs to the HLF-3 process. Additionally, the OECD Development Centre has formed the Development Finance Network (DEFINE), composed of Northern and Southern research institutes to feed into this process.[33] ODI sits on the steering committee of DEFINE and there is potential for FFA partners and members to engage in the network as well as directly with the Global Forum.

Using Research to Influence Policy-Makers and International Negotiations

'*The relationship between research and policy is often tenuous and quite often fraught*'. (Stone et al, 2001)

After identifying the key fora in which international aid policy is developed and the most important stakeholders to influence, the next question is how to use evidence to influence both the decisions taken by, and the understanding of, key policy-makers? This section will examine what the literature has to say about the policy process in order to highlight some of the implications for influencing global aid policy. Most of this literature draws on studies carried-out to examine how research is used within national policy processes. A key assumption made in this section therefore is that the conclusions which are drawn in this body of research are also relevant to international policy-making. This paper takes a narrow view looking at how research institutes and think tanks might use research to influence international aid policy. It is not going to look at how broader institutional stakeholder groups or grassroots organisations, for example, might advocate and campaign to make their views and demands heard.

The Role of Evidence in the Policy Process

The policy process can be difficult to understand, and evidence often plays only a small role. The rational, linear model of policy-making that sees it as a sequence from problem definition, through analysis of alternatives, to decision, implementation and review is too simplistic. Instead, the policy process is a messy, two way and dynamic process. It is a process which is contingent on what has
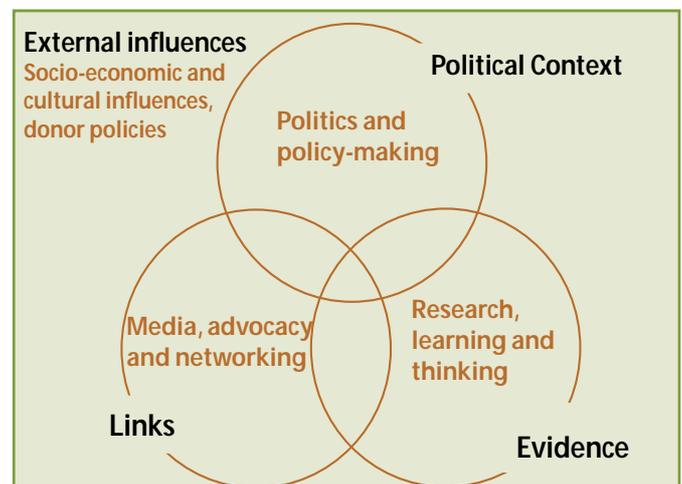

Figure 2. The RAPID framework for understanding what influences uptake of resarch by policy-makers (ODI, 2004)

happened before and is subject to, and shaped by, the context in which it is happening (Weiss, 1977; Sutton, 1999; Stone et al, 2001; Court and Young, 2003; ODI, 2004).

Drawing on the literature and further research, ODI has developed a framework to help researchers understand the dimensions of what they must do to influence policy-making at the national level. This framework provides a number of important insights for thinking about how to influence international policy-making. The framework has three overlapping dimensions: the political context; the evidence; and the links between the research and policy communities. These dimensions sit within a fourth, the external influences or context, see Figure 1. The level of overlap between the different dimensions will vary depending on the context (ODI, 2004). In the following section we explore the first two dimensions, political context and evidence, in some detail and use the third to move into a discussion about factors that researchers should take into account as they develop communication strategies. We do not discuss the fourth dimension as this is less relevant to international policy making.

The Political Context

The development of policy is a political process which is influenced by a number of factors, including the level of political contestation, institutional pressures and vested interests, and the attitudes and incentives amongst officials, their room for negotiation, the history surrounding the issues and power relations between the different actors, as well as evidence and research (ODI, 2004). The extent of the influence of each of these factors will depend on the context.

In the international sphere the issue of attitudes and incentives of the officials is an important factor to bear in mind. Different government departments are responsible for decision-making and the negotiating positions adopted at the fora described above. There is no simple description of responsibilities in the international sphere but to generalise, Northern governments will normally make their development agency responsible for the OECD/DAC (though often Treasuries will be a significant channel for funding too), their Foreign Affairs ministry responsible for negotiations at the UN and their Treasury for the IFIs. In contrast, Southern governments are more likely to make their Finance ministries responsible for the OECD and IFIs (though a number will use the Ministry of Planning, and either way will often do this through secondments from other ministries), while Foreign Affairs will be the lead at the UN in negotiations carried out through ECOSOC, but may make different ministries responsible at specific summits. These different ministries in both the North and South will have different sets of relationships, varied attitudes to different types of evidence as well as having different objectives. Understanding this context should help guide the way research is communicated in the different fora. It is important to note that this picture will be constantly changing and researchers will need to ensure that they stay up-to-date with the latest information for key governments. As civil servants are likely to change less frequently, focusing attention on building relationships at that level might be a sensible way forwards.

Room for negotiation and power relations are particularly important for Southern governments as they are constrained in the way they can negotiate. Understanding these constraints is critical if effective engagement with the policy-making process is to occur. For example, and drawing on what happens in international trade negotiations, the European Union helped the African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries to get the 'ACP' waiver recognised at the WTO, but required them to support the EU in the opening up of new issues to be discussed (Brock and McGee, 2004). The same will be true in the realm of international aid policy-making too.

Another important consideration is that it can often be a challenge gaining access to the policy-making process at all levels, but particularly the international one. In the international trade arena for example, there are a range of factors which affect participation. These include the non-transparency of the process itself, insufficient time for those who wish to participate to form positions as well as uncertainty about the representativeness of those given lead roles in the participation process (Jawara and Kwa, 2003). These same factors appear to be in play in the international aid arena also. Drawing again on the experience of those attempting to influence international trade policy, one conclusion to draw from this is that it is important to pick an arena where the political context is such that research is more likely to be picked-up and used. So for example, while the WTO has many faults, it is a place where Southern governments can work together and this can have knock-on effects on other trade arenas where Southern collaboration can be harder (Brock and McGee, 2004).

It is also important to note that the issues of aid, trade and development are increasingly linked at the international and regional level through greater coherence between the IFIs and the WTO. This increases the number of arenas in which those wanting to exert policy influence must engage (Brock and McGee, 2004) and emphasises the need to be strategic in the choices made about where to engage.

The Evidence

Policy-makers often don't see research findings as central to their decision-making processes. Indeed some have gone so far as to suggest that evidence, by itself, is only tangential to the process of decision-making (Pettifor, 2003).There is a distinction therefore between 'evidence based' and 'evidence backed' policy-making. The former can be defined as the integration of experience, judgement and expertise with the best available external evidence; evidence informs policy-making. The latter makes highly selective use of the evidence; evidence bolsters the policy conclusion (Davies, 2004; Shaxson, 2005). Even if policy-makers attempt to make best use of the evidence base, the non-linearity of the policy-making process means that all of the evidence used cannot be robust all of the time (Shaxson, 2005).

Research and research findings are only one type of evidence. The UK Cabinet Office works with a very broad definition of evidence, 'expert knowledge; published research; existing research; stakeholder consultations, previous policy evaluations, the internet, outcomes from consultations; costings of policy options; output from economic and statistical modelling'(quoted in Nutley et al, 2002).

It is generally accepted that only evidence that is considered 'robust' will be used in the policy process. A number of papers try to answer the question of what robust means. These papers highlight the need for evidence to

be credible, meaning that it needs to have: used accepted methodologies; adopted strong clear lines of argument; been rigorous in the way data collected and analysed; and have clearly presented conclusions (ODI, 2004; Shaxson, 2005). There are four other elements which also affect whether evidence is perceived to be robust. These are:

- How generalisable is the evidence? Can evidence collected in one situation be used in a different context or to answer a different question?
- Is it reliable? For policy-makers this is narrower than whether a study can be replicated. Instead, can it be used for monitoring and evaluation?
- Is it objective? How many and what type of assumptions have been made? What value has been placed on the different elements of the evidence going to make up the conclusions drawn in the research?
- Can the evidence itself be confirmed, refuted or explained by information from other studies? (Shaxson, 2005).

In addition to 'robustness', other factors relating to the evidence also affect the uptake of research, that:

- The research is timely;
- The results support existing ideologies, are convenient and uncontentious to the powerful;
- Policy-makers believe in evidence as an important counterbalance to expert opinion, and act accordingly;
- The findings have strong advocates;
- Research users are partners in the generation of the evidence;
- The results are robust in implementation;
- Implementation is reversible if needs be (Nutley, 2002).

The Links between the Research and Policy Communities

The third dimension in the RAPID framework highlighted above emphasises the importance of links between researchers and policy-makers for ensuring the uptake of research and evidence into policy. The nature of these links, and the working relationships between the different policy teams and their advisors will shape the way the evidence is used (ODI, 2004; Shaxson, 2005).

It is important to note though that ministers and civil servants should not be the only audience with which researchers try to build and maintain links; intermediary institutions, such as the media, campaigning groups and other research institutions, in both the North and the South, are also channels which have the potential to influence policy-makers (Nutley, 2003; ODI, 2004). The need for networks is particularly important for smaller organisations to ensure that their research reaches policy-makers at the international level. Smaller organisations, such as research organisations, might have access to specific sources of information or ideas not generally available. Acting as information brokers can be an important way to build-up networks and access other information which might not otherwise be available (Brock and McGee, 2004).

As research organisations begin to identify the targets for their research, one final element to bear in mind is how best to communicate with different audiences. The final two parts of this section of the paper briefly present a theory of communication before pulling together a number of issues to consider as a communication's strategy is developed.

Theories of Communication

A distinction is drawn between two different modes of communicating for policy change. In the first mode, researchers communicate for direct policy change. This has been termed 'single loop learning'. Here the underlying concepts are not challenged. This is distinct from the second mode, 'double loop learning', where researchers introduce new concepts incrementally through the presentation of new research and attempt to alter the language used by policy-makers. By introducing new concepts the research can alter the perceptions and understandings of policy-makers and in this way can have a significant influence over the way issues are framed and understood. Research probably has a longer term impact when communicated in this mode (Weiss, 1977; Nutley et al, 2002). As the third dimension of the RAPID framework suggests, investing in networks is one way to build 'double loop learning' (Hovland, 2003; ODI, 2004). Given the particularly diffuse nature of international aid policy-making, we would argue that one of the primary objectives of Southern researchers should be to introduce new concepts and hence change the understanding of international aid policy-makers; in other words to engage in 'double loop learning'. If this is true then it will have a significant impact on the strategies adopted by research institutes as they consider how to use research and evidence to influence policy-makers.

The Importance of a Communication Strategy

Not only is the policy-making process complex and difficult to track (as highlighted above) but evidence, even if specifically generated to impact on policy, can often fail to influence policy-makers. This can be because it is not produced at the right time, because it is presented in the wrong way, or because it fails to take account of the political realities at the time. Policy-makers also find research inaccessible (Saywell and Cotton, 1999; WEDC, 2000; Stone et al, 2001; Hoveland, 2003; NAO, 2003). The key conclusion we draw from the analysis presented above is that researchers must do much more than just improve the evidence-base if they want to influence policy. They cannot just passively disseminate their research results in the hope that they will be picked-up by policy-makers; they must understand the policy process and implement a number of different strategies to ensure that policy-makers do take the evidence into account. The resources which researchers have are always very limited, particularly for communications, yet the number of fora in which they could try to exert influence is relatively large. Time and again the literature we surveyed emphasised the importance of planning a communication and dissemination strategy before beginning the research. Developing such a strategy will help researchers to make informed choices to maximise their chances of influencing policy (Saywell and Cotton, 1999; WEDC, 2000; Stone et al, 2001; Hoveland, 2003; NAO, 2003; ODI, 2004).

Regardless of the mode of communication that they choose, researchers need to communicate at different stages of the research process. These stages include; defining the questions; developing the project proposal; conducting the study; and finally, where researchers normally focus, on communicating the results (Porter and Prysor-Jones, 1997). It is also important to remember that the policy-making process goes beyond the written policy; how the policy is implemented will have a significant impact on the

outcome. Researchers should remember this when they are targeting the different stages of the process (Court and Young, 2003; Taylor, 2005). Specific actions that researchers can take include involving users in defining the questions, establishing relationships of trust, clarifying which decisions the research aims to influence, choosing appropriate research methods (see the discussion about credible evidence above), involving users in the data collection and analysis and formulating clear recommendations (Porter and Prysor-Jones, 1997). These different stages of the research process will probably have different audiences and it is important to produce different outputs for these different audiences; a homogenous output will not be effective (Saywell and Cotton, 1999).

Once they have decided which stage(s) in the policy process they will intervene, researchers must consider how they will communicate their research. Each stage of the research may require a different method. Box 1 describes a number of different ways that researchers can communicate, and hence intervene, in the policy process. Researchers will need to think explicitly about how they are trying to influence policy-makers as they make choices about the ways they will communicate their research to them. It is also important to be persistent in presenting and representing research findings. Findings must be adapted for different perspectives and policy opportunities (Taylor, 2005).

There are a number of other points to consider while developing a communication strategy.

A number of papers highlight that in many contexts the messenger is often as important as the content of the research. This highlights the need to have a credible source presenting the research and its findings. The best messenger will be different at different points of the policy-making cycle and for different audiences (WEDC, 2000; Nutley, 2002; Maxwell, 2003).[34]

To summarise, there are a number of questions which it is helpful to bear in mind while considering how to maximise the impact of your research (adapted from WEDC, 2000).

- Consider the policy-makers – what do they and their advisors need to know? Is the information relevant in terms of their understanding and the political context? Are they ready to change or does the research need to help to change their understanding? What is the appropriate format for your research? How can you ensure that policy-makers and their advisors are aware of your research? Which other communities have influence on them? If the policy-makers are not asking questions you believe are relevant, or are using evidence and research you don't believe to be credible, how can you change their understanding of the problem?
- Consider the source – as highlighted above, the importance of the source is often greater than the

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Box 1. Methods of communication

Researchers can communicate in a number of different ways. Each of the methods will intervene in the policy process in a different way and will rely on a different theory of change, not all will be relevant to every context. These methods include:

Dissemination – presenting research findings in a tailored form, both written and oral, with no additional attempt to promote uptake. The primary aim is to inform users and persuade them of the value of the research. It requires users to be active consumers and motivated to change their behaviour.

Education – requires more active participation by professionals than for dissemination. Can be didactic lectures or more interactive sessions. Often linked to wider learning or professional development. The underlying mechanism is learning; users don't develop specific skills. The method of delivery depends on the theory of learning adopted. Relevance to learners and closeness to intended outcomes are important to success.

Social influence – these are interventions that influence people around policy-makers in order to influence them. The mechanism is social influence; changing norms and values in order to change behaviour. It could include the lobbying of policy-makers by different interest groups. Opportunities to discuss evidence with peers provides the chance for social influence. Diffusion of innovations is seen as a social process in which subjective evaluations are sought from peers. The theory is that where information resonates with existing norms and values it is more likely to change behaviour.

Collaboration between researchers and users – the mechanism is communication; improving the flow of information and ideas between researchers and users with the aim of breaking-down barriers. The theory behind this method assumes that new knowledge is filtered, shaped and reconstructed through pre-existing understandings and experiences. Users adapt findings in terms of local policy and practice. It views knowledge as socially constructed; shared meaning develops through processes of social interaction. This method helps meld tacit and explicit knowledge.

Incentives – such interventions provide a form of encouragement or reward for activites to enhance research impact. The mechanism is motivation through reward. These may be financial, or through a gain in professional status. The theory is that behaviour can be altered by changing internal and external stimuli.

Reinforcement – presents information about behaviour to individuals or groups, before, during or after the behaviour. Audit, feedback and reminders are the main approaches and the mechanism is reinforcement through information. Audit and feedback mechanisms are required for self-regulating systems and are built into the theory about single loop learning.

Facilitation – through support and enabling research-based policy and practice. This is done through providing different types of assistance to help implement research impact interventions and help to develop evidence based policy and practice. May include training in new skills. Mechanism is facilitating the removal of barriers to action. The theory is change management emphasising importance of enabling strategies.

It is of course possible to use a combination of two or more of these communication methods in order to enhance the impact of research.

(adapted from Walter et al, 2003)

Table 1. Matrix to help to guide decisions about which international aid policy fora to engage with.

Forum / Factor to consider	UN Financing for Development	UN Development Cooperation Forum	OECD HLF–3	OECD Global Forum on Development
Which important decisions and/ or debates are being discussed?	1) mobilising domestic financial resources 2) mobilising international resources, 3) international trade, 4) international development cooperation, 5) external debt and 6) the coherence of the international monetary, financial and trading systems	Key messages from Vienna (country level experiences in coordinating and managing development cooperation) – national ownership, participation and accountability. Cairo will explore South-south and triangular development cooperation and aid effectiveness	Ownership, alignment, harmonisation, results orientation and mutual accountability, civil society roles in aid effectiveness, international aid architecture, fragile states	understanding the aid system, operationalising ownership, designing appropriate aid instruments and options for reform of international aid architecture
How influential is it in terms of the decisions it takes?	Unclear the extent to which the decisions it takes impact directly	Too early to tell, unlikely to be very influential	Within the narrow confines of the aid effectiveness debate as bounded by the Paris Declaration, very influential	Not directly, though feeds into the OECD/DAC annual high-level meeting
How influential is it in terms of influencing the wider debate?	Monterrey 2002 was arguably very influential, particularly in terms of the debate about aid quantity	Too early to tell, potentially very influential	Very influential	Some influence, difficult to tell this early in the process
What constitutes credible evidence in this forum? Can you produce this type?				
Is the forum credible enough to allow you to engage your wider networks in it?	Yes, significant Northern and Southern governmental and CSO engagement with the FfD process	Unclear, potentially not but too early to tell. Arguably worth focusing on this to increase its credibility given its universal nature compared to the OECD/DAC processes	Yes, significant Northern and Southern governmental and CSO engagement	Draws high-level participation from North and South, credibility affected by being invite only and connected to the governance structures of the exclusive OECD/DAC
How transparent is it about its decision-making process, future events etc?	Getting clearer	Not transparent	Not transparent	Not transparent
Which governments participate by right?	All UN member governments	All UN member governments	OECD/DAC By invitation	OECD/DAC By invitation
How much contact and influence do you (CSOs) have with them?	National context specific +??	National context specific +??	National context specific +??	National context specific +??
How open is it to participation by non-governmental actors?	Need to register with ECOSOC, Monterrey conference or follow up process. IFG and NGO committee facilitate NGO participation	Multi-stakeholder forum including civil society	Official and unofficial	By invitation only
Who are the key decision-makers?	Heads of member states and governments	UN member government representatives	OECD and its members	OECD and its members
How strong/close? are our networks to these decision-makers?				
Which other stakeholders participate and how strong are our links to these?	Business, parliamentarians, local authorities, institutional stakeholders	UN system organizations, World Bank, IMF, OECD, regional development banks as well as the private sector	Institutional stakeholders	policy makers from OECD and developing countries, research institutions and think tanks, international organisations, regional development banks, technical development agencies, foundations, and private sector
Can we strengthen any of these links?				
Can we strengthen any of these links?				

information disseminated. How can you maximise the credibility of the source? What it its relationship to other trusted sources? Is it sensitive to the concerns of the policy-makers? Is it oriented towards dissemination? Can intermediaries be used to establish relationships with policy-makers?

- Consider the content – is the research credible in terms of methodology and outcomes? Is it comprehensive or does it leave unanswered questions for policy-makers? Is it comprehensible to policy-makers, again does it take into account their level of understanding and their beliefs and needs? Does it use appropriate language and is it jargon free? Is the information necessary, accurate and reliable? Does it relate to key issues? Can it be presented better in summarised form? Do you highlight a limited number of (credible) policy options?
- Consider the medium – is the method chosen for communication accessible to policy-makers, are there alternatives? Is it cost-effective? Is personal interaction possible rather than just sending a report or other dissemination document?

Considering these questions is only part of ensuring that research has maximum impact. Drawing on the first dimension of the RAPID framework (see Figure 2), identifying which fora are going to be best to ensure that the research is most likely to be taken up is also important. Doing so will help prevent wasting of energy and resources.

It is not at all clear from the information publicly available which of the fora offer the best opportunities for influence by Southern researchers. In concluding this paper, a matrix is proposed, see Table 1, which could be used to guide decisions about which of these fora to engage with. This matrix is a first attempt to try to think through the factors which will be important while thinking strategically about engaging in international aid policy. It has been partially filled, but the gaps indicate where it appears that significant information is still lacking. We hope though that it will prove useful for at least guiding some of the discussion at the next FFA meeting and feed into a larger discussion about developing a strategy for the forum.

Conclusion

This paper proposes that the current aid system is currently changing significantly, not only in terms of the increasing amounts of money which are likely to flow through the system, but also because of the range of new donors and funding vehicles which are joining the system. This change is making the system more complex, and could potentially reduce the effectiveness of the aid that flows through it, but it also offers significant opportunities for reform of the system. We describe another aspect of the changing system, that a number of decision-making fora have recently opened up which offer the chance for greater participation by Southern organisations, particularly research institutes and think tanks. The paper proposes a greater focus on effective communication to increase the influence of Southern conceived and generated research and evidence. A number of factors are suggested that researchers should bear in mind as they plan and carry-out their research in order to maximise its influence. This paper proposes that, alongside their other strategies, researchers prepare a communications strategy to help to target their limited resources and capacity

more effectively. Developing an effective communications strategy will require researchers to identify the forum or fora which will provide the most likely avenue to have Southern research taken up in order to influence policy. The paper develops a draft matrix of questions which Southern researchers might want to consider as they develop their strategic plan and identify their priority sites for intervention in the debate.

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Endnotes

1 The term 'ownership' is itself significantly debated as the sister papers to this one show.
2 See Morton, 2005 for a substantial review of some of the Southern literature on this topic.
3 The focus here is on DAC member countries
4 Austria, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, New Zealand and Portugal
5 Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland
6 National Aid budgets may also be supplemented by funds from other sources, including sub national authorities (such as regions, districts, provinces and municipalities), debt forgiveness, and the international capital markets (OECD, 2005: 42)
7 see http://www.oecd.org/document/38/0,3343,en_2649_33721_2508454_1_1_1_1,00.html for more information. Accessed 8th January 2008
8 Other global funds include GAVI (formerly the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation) and GEF (Global Environment Facility)
9 (World Bank, http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/0,,contentMDK:20040580~menuPK:1696997~pagePK:51123644~piPK:329829~theSitePK:29708,00.html and IMF, http://www.imf.org/external/about.htm, both accessed 8th January 2008)
10 These include the UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNRWA, UNTA and the WFP
11 UNDP, http://www.undp.org/execbrd/, accessed on 8th January 2008
12 The Global Fund Against AID, TB and Malaria, http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/about/board/, accessed on 8th January 2008
13 It has been argued that the follow-up process is weak largely because of the extreme reluctance of some large developed countries to give a high profile to finance work at the UN (Choike, 2007, see http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/32.html)
14 See http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/IntergovernmentalFollow-Up/CivilSoc&BussSec/CivilSociety/cs_economic_and_social_council.htm for more information on civil society involvement in these events
15 Its theme was 'Coherence, coordination and cooperation as a follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development – on the road to the review conference at Doha in 2008'.The special focus of the event was good governance; developing countries' participation in international economic decision-making; effective use of trade and investment policies; and aid effectiveness and innovative means of financing for development (See http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/meetings/2007/bwi2007/index.html)
16 See http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/hld/HLD2003/1003-level-of-participation.htm for 2003 HLD level of participation in ministerial round tables
17 For more information see www.un.org/esa/ffd
18 See http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/N06/606/08/PDF/N0660608.pdf?OpenElement for the draft resolution and http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ for the UN

FfD follow up conference website
19 See NGO Committee on Financing for Development, 2007 at http://www.ngosonffd.org/FfD%20NGO%20Topics.doc
20 See http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/indexCivilSoc&BussSec.htm for members of the IFG
21 Including bilateral development agencies, UN system organizations, World Bank, IMF, OECD, regional development banks as well as civil society and the private sector
22 For more information about the DCF and the outcomes from the symposia see www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunct/develop
23 Members must promote active involvement of influential stakeholders, experts, think tanks and networks in different regions in the preparations for the DCF. They must also assist with positioning the DCF by suggesting how to foster coherence between policy agenda of the Forum and other related fora; ensure analytical standards; promote ownership of the Forum's objectives amongst its key stakeholders; and raise awareness of the Forum's purpose and agenda among different stakeholders and networks.(This paragraph draws from http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunct/advisory.shtml)
24 At the September Steering Group Meeting, consensus was reached on establishing four out of the nine roundtables on core issues reflecting Paris principles: 1) democratic ownership, capacities, and national leadership; 2) use, support and improvement of country systems (alignment); 3) rationalisation of donor practices in country (harmonisation); and 4) management for results and mutual accountability. In addition it was agreed that there needs to be a specific multi-stakeholder roundtable on civil society. It was also proposed that the ministerial segment comprise of three segments: a) assessing progress in meeting Paris commitments; b) addressing critical new challenges and; c) endorsing the ministerial statement (OECD, 2007)
25 See http://www1.worldbank.org/harmonization/romehlf/Documents/Participants.pdf for participant list for the HLF-1 in Rome in 2003
26 The last three paragraphs draw from OECD, http://www.oecd.org/document/47/0,3343,en_2649_3236398_39448751_1_1_1_1,00.html
27 (see Betteraid, www.betteraid.org)
28 Betteraid, http://betteraid.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5&Itemid=6, accessed 8th January 2008
29 See Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC), 2007 for a full consultation schedule
30 OECD, http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/43/7/37107521.pdf
31 See http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/63/5/38496043.pdf for full list of participants
32 See http://www.oecd.org/document/1/0,3343,en_21571361_37824719_38088449_1_1_1_1,00.html for documents reviewing the event
33 See http://www.oecd.org/dev/meetings/define for more information
34 Maxwell has identified four styles of 'policy entrepreneur'

which he stylises as follows. First, drawing on the literature emphasising the importance of a strong narrative for influencing development policy, is the researcher as 'story-teller'. Second, drawing on the third dimension of the RAPID framework, is the researcher as 'networker'; the person who has access to, and is trusted by, a number of different communities in and around policy-makers. Third, drawing on the literature about 'street-level bureaucrats, is the researcher as 'engineer'. This highlights the significant gap that can often exist between developing the policy and implementing it, researchers who influence this last stage can have a significant impact. Finally, recognising the inherently political nature of the role of evidence in policy-making, is the researcher as 'fixer' which implies that the researcher needs to understand the politics of the process well and know when to present the research, in what form and to whom (Maxwell, 2003).