Building capacity for policy research

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Framework for thinking about policy research capacity

The 'supply' of policy research
 The 'demand' for policy research
 "Intermediation"

 fancy term for the institutions or mechanisms for bringing together supply and demand)

The 'supply' of policy research

Human capital

- How would you measure it?
- number of researchers, their formal qualifications, and current engagement in research activities
- Focus is on individuals, not institutions (they appear below)
 - this is what AERC has always focused on

The 'demand' for policy research

Awareness of the need for policy research But whose awareness? Government or others? Large scale, retrospective IDRC study by Carden and others suggests this is the key factor in research uptake

What interventions are possible?

Supply
Demand
Intermediation
Others

Supply

Strengthening existing or creating new programs of formal training
 Grants programs involving individual researchers in 'learning research by doing'
 Policy analysis units within government itself
 Making better use of scholars from the Diaspora

Programmes of formal training

TRAPCA, AERC collaborative MA MPP programmes – new DFID initiative based in Nairobi This is my bet for the most promising intervention over the next 5 to 20 years Why don't more of these exist already? Why does trade attract so much capacity building?

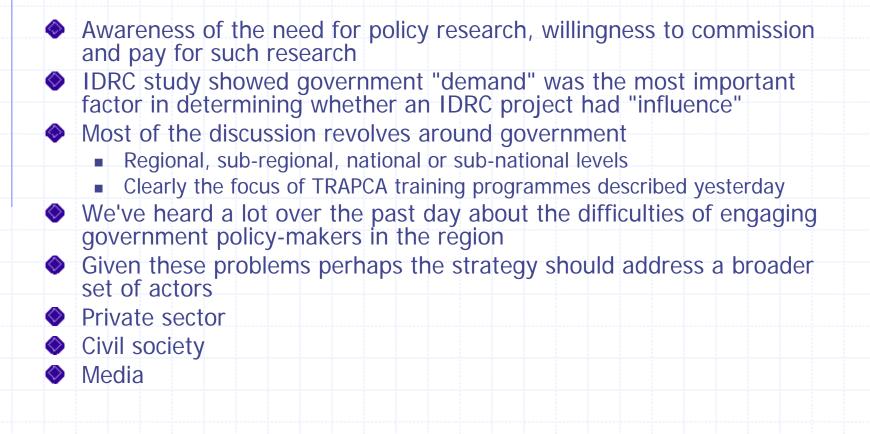
Involving individual researchers in 'learning research by doing'

AERC thematic workshops SADRN, SATRN Focuses more on junior researchers – harder to tell senior established researchers how to do research Requires time, intensive mentoring if it is going to be successful Doesn't necessarily yield research of interest to policy-makers, as AERC experience shows

Policy analysis units within government itself

- "Islands of excellence"
- You can view this as either a form of supply (policy analysis units do the policy relevant research themselves) or as an increase in demand (the unit contracts out research to think tanks)
- Hard to make these work within an underfunded and underperforming civil service
- Issues of pay, who is appointed, subsequent career paths
- Most donors have shied away from this, except as part of a large civil service restructuring

The 'demand' for policy research



Intermediation

Institutional strengthening of existing policy research institutes IDRC support for TIPS Think Tank Initiative This strategy carries a risk – what if there is no demand for policy research Not the case with TIPS back in 1996

Things that haven't been tried

Partnerships

Entrepreneurship

Partnerships could be horizontal or vertical

- 'Horizontal partnerships' involving collaboration between policy research institutes in different countries
 - Might work, but matching interests and capacities between institutions is difficult
- Improve intermediation through 'vertical partnerships'
 - between policy research institutes (either based in universities or free standing) and users of research in government, the private sector or civil society
 - Build trust, longer term relationships?

Supporting leadership and innovation

Policy entrepreneurs leading research institutes

Academic entrepreneurs capable of improving the quality of graduate education