

**Independent Review of the Panos Relay Programme -
*Relay's Efforts to Build the Capacity of the Media to
Report Research***

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June 2011

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of an independent review of the Panos Relay programme undertaken by a team from ITAD. The Panos Relay programme works to strengthen the capacity of the media to report on research, with focus countries including Uganda, Kenya, Malawi, Zambia and India

The purpose of the review is to extract, synthesise and share the rich pool of new knowledge that the Panos Relay team and their partners have developed. Lessons about building the capacity of the media to report on research are grouped into three main areas of learning:

- How to describe research uptake work; in a meaningful theory of change
- How to assess results in the real world
- What works best to promote use of research by the media

Working from the theory of change led to important learning on how impact occurs at the higher level of policy change; how to focus on monitoring the impact of project activities at a lower level; and, how to describe honestly the project and its position in the real world.

Theories of change

A key finding that emerged from the review is that it is essential to get the staff who are actually carrying out the work to define the theory of change of the program they are responsible for implementing. This allows them to express where they are confident about impact and also where they have doubts, and increases ownership. This exercise was empowering and motivating for staff who gained insights into the work they were doing and saw it in a new way.

In relation to monitoring, it was found to be a challenge for the project to define and assess the 'quality' of public debate and the quality and quantity of media coverage. The lesson emerging from this relates to the need for more sophisticated indicators and thus M&E system to better measure the changes effected by the project.

An Outcome Mapping approach would strengthen this type of project's M&E as it makes explicit the fact that the direct impacts of the program are in improving the networking and relationships of those who are involved in determining media coverage.

Results in the real world

The most extraordinary part of the Relay review is the range of answers received in response to the question - '*What happened after articles had appeared in the media as a result of some inputs by the Relay program?*' This showed that improved media coverage can, as predicted in the theory of change, result in a range of changes. These include: feedback from readers, further media coverage, take-up of stories in mainstream media, stimulation of lobby activity, and changes in the way government talks about an issue.

The Relay component working on conflict in NE India has a specific focus on big dams. This confines the project scope and brings benefits of better use of resources and more concerted efforts on a narrower focus; it appears chances of success may be greater where the scope is more tightly defined.

The review also found stories of direct impact; where there was not only an immediate reaction but also where the government went on to take action on the issues raised in the media coverage. It is very tempting to focus on the higher-level impacts and to claim them as project results. However this type of project has a complex, multi-faceted causality map, with many aspects of the change

process outside its ambit. Projects should avoid making hubristic claims of impact that are difficult to support, but focus on understanding, and managing and monitoring for those changes it can directly affect or closely influence.

Capacity building and research uptake activities

Overall, the Relay analysis as set out by staff in all the programs visited during this review appears correct and therefore the work in training journalists, putting journalists and researchers together, and providing funding for better research for articles seems to be appropriate to address the problems that are identified. This analysis appears correct across all Relay programs reviewed.

It is important to support repeated contacts between researchers and journalists and to try out different models of contact and interaction. Clearly more intense interaction requires a narrowing of scope of Relay activities unless additional resources can be allocated to the networking support.

Part of the divide between researchers and journalists is based on inaccurate stereotypes – this was found particularly in the African projects. This finding explains the underlying effectiveness of some Relay activities. Bringing researchers and journalists together can be effective as the stereotypes can be rapidly undone in workshops or meetings, and Relay has demonstrated that workshops putting researchers and journalists together can be very effective in changing relationships. This can lead to rapid changes in coverage of research issues, and some lasting changes in the relationships between researchers and journalists.

Below is a chart summarising the key learning points we think will be relevant and applicable –and of particular interest - to others supporting media strengthening in the research uptake field.

<i>Making more meaningful use of research by the media – Lessons from Relay</i>
<i>Design, Theory of Change and Measurement</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help / facilitate programme staff to describe how they see the logic of their work - get the staff who are actually carrying out the work to define the theory of change of the program. • Theories of change are more easily translated into action when they centre on people rather than processes - there needs to be a strong focus on people who are targeted by programme activities through capacity building or influencing work. • A challenge that requires more attention is to define and assess the ‘quality’ of public debate and the ‘quality’ and ‘quantity’ of media coverage – there is a need for more sophisticated indicators and M&E assessment tools. • An Outcome Mapping (OM) approach may help strengthen the M&E of the use of research by the media as it focuses monitoring on impact at the first level (the people that staff have contact with) – OM makes explicit the fact that the direct impacts of the programme are in improving the networking and relationships of those who are involved in determining media coverage.
<i>Results in the Real World</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media coverage delivers results in a wide range of ways - feedback from readers, further media coverage, take-up of stories in mainstream media, stimulation of lobby activity, and changes in the way government talks about an issue. • Delivering results is complex and often depends on many factors beyond the influence of the program – Examine the role of the project in the real world and assess the forces that work against your aims especially those where you can have little influence. • Allow staff to express doubts about the high level impacts of their work – respect these

doubts and explore the risks associated with achieving high level impacts.

- Chances of success may be greater where the scope is more tightly defined - accept more modest statements of intent and achievement as a narrower focus confines the project scope and brings benefits of better use of resources and more concerted efforts on a narrower focus

Capacity Building and Research Uptake Activities

- Encourage talk about real people: say - journalists, editors, researchers; don't say – research, media, media houses.
- Bringing researchers and journalists together can be effective as inaccurate stereotypes can be rapidly undone in workshops or meetings - Relay has demonstrated that workshops putting researchers and journalists together can be very effective in changing relationships.
- Maintain and invest in developing long-lasting relationships - Relay-funded Fellowships have been very successful in terms of getting better quality material into the press, and it is clear that the fellowships can remove an important barrier to good quality coverage.

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Acronyms

AAR	After Action Review
OM	Outcome Mapping
PEA	Political economy analysis
RED	Research and Evidence
RUT	Research Uptake Team
ToC	Theory of Change

1. Introduction

This report presents the findings of an independent review of the Panos Relay programme undertaken by a team from ITAD (www.itad.com), a firm specialising in the review and evaluation of knowledge services.

The report responds to a full review of the Relay programme 2005-2010 conducted by DFID in April 2010 which focused on strategic issues, resource management, performance management, and evidence of effective delivery. The DFID review found that Panos Relay has built up a rich pool of new knowledge on efforts to strengthen the capacity of the media to report research but that this knowledge could be better documented, analysed, and shared with other stakeholders, i.e. that greater value would be derived from Relay if its learning was captured and made more widely available. This recommendation led directly to Panos commissioning ITAD to conduct an appreciative and participatory review of the Relay programme. This was not designed to be a further exercise in summative evaluation, but rather help DFID and Relay in bringing out the knowledge about building the capacity of the media to communicate research.

The purpose of the report is to share this learning and analysis with peers, partners and donors (including the DFID Research Uptake Team), to inform their work and contribute to discussion around and understanding of media engagement and research uptake.

The report describes the findings from the review and also details work done with staff in examining their perceptions of the Relay theory of change (ToC), their understanding of the context in which the program works, and the forces that might prevent their success. The report also details how working through a sequence of participatory group learning exercises to describe their project led Relay staff to understand their work, and how to monitor it, in new ways.

It is intended that the findings will be interesting and useful to research organisations and donors, media training institutes, and others working on the uptake and use of research findings and those struggling with M&E of knowledge sharing projects.

2. Background and Context

Relay within DFID's Research and Evidence Division

The rationale underlying Relay is that research from the Global South can make a crucial contribution to development, particularly informing development policy, but too often findings are kept within the research community. Panos believes that the media can play a part in communicating this knowledge to a wider audience. However, in order to achieve this it is critical to better understand and strengthen the media's capacity to report research.

In supporting and better understanding the role of the media to report research, Panos Relay is directly contributing to the DFID Research and Evidence (RED) commitment to develop high quality relevant evidence in order to better engage and influence policy makers – a key strand of DFID RED focuses on different aspects of research uptake - www.dfid.gov.uk/R4D/AboutDFID.asp.

The Panos Relay Programme

The Relay programme is managed by Panos London in collaboration with Panos Institute partners Panos Eastern Africa, Panos Southern Africa, and Panos South Asia. Through the three Panos Institute partners, Relay has worked on improving media coverage of research since 2005, working in Uganda, Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, and India (particularly the Assam and the Northeast region) - <http://panos.org.uk/projects/relay/>

3. An Appreciative and Participatory Review Method

A three-person team from ITAD designed the review method with the Panos Relay Programme Manager in a one-day workshop. One of the ITAD team, an associate with expertise in participatory and appreciative evaluation techniques, conducted the fieldwork in the five countries that Relay is active - Uganda, Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, and India.

The approach was designed to be complementary to, and follow on from, the DFID Review. Whilst ensuring the approach was rigorous and evidence-based, it was designed to be light-touch, appreciative and participatory rather than a formal, summative assessment of Relay. That is, it was geared more towards the learning than the accountability dimension of evaluation and review practices.

The approach focused on engaging a range of Relay stakeholders (particularly Relay staff and direct beneficiaries) by employing a range of tools to uncover, share and examine their experiences and knowledge gained from involvement in the programme. The mixed-method approach was based on a largely positive use of USAID's After Action Review (AAR) technique, combined with document analysis, stakeholder interviews, and a range of participatory group learning exercises – with a strong orientation towards use of diagrams for concept exploration and explanation.

After Action Review

AAR (www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usaid/after_action_guide.pdf) was selected as an appropriate review method because it is designed to be 'light touch' and appreciative in nature. AAR sets out to learn from the successes and failures of a project or programme by directly engaging those people involved in implementing it. Feedback compares the actual results of a process with the intended outcome. By focusing on the desired outcome and by describing specific observations, teams can identify strengths and weaknesses and together decide how to improve performance in the future. This positive approach to generating new knowledge and learning was deemed particularly appropriate for the Relay programme when attempting to better understand the role of the media in communicating research and how this can ultimately support DFID in its efforts to strengthen knowledge services to influence behaviour and policy.

Participatory Group Learning Exercises

Within the framework provided by the AAR, a number of participatory group learning exercises were undertaken both with Panos London and Relay team members in the study countries, in a workshop format. The aim of these exercises was to examine:

- Relay staff perceptions of the project theory of change (ToC)
- Stakeholders' understanding of the context in which the programme works
- How Relay staff saw the issues of media coverage, and
- The forces that might prevent Relay success.

It was hoped that this approach would demonstrate the usefulness of a review process that allows stakeholders to explore and express their understanding and experience of their project activities in ways that are somewhat different from routine evaluation reporting. From these workshops the team hoped to develop new ways of describing the work of the Relay programme in each region as well as new ways of monitoring Relay impacts in the future. By asking staff and beneficiaries to explain their work in diagrams and other visual tools it was hoped that the review would produce a broader set of insights compared with routine project documents and reports. By using the same workshop exercises and comparing the findings from staff with those of Relay beneficiaries and

other external informants the review team hoped to confirm Relay analyses of the context and work of the programme.

The workshops followed a sequence in each of the countries visited, with similar learning points at similar stages. A summary of the workshop exercises is provided below:

Tool	Purpose
<i>Impact Flow Diagram</i> – from project activities to impacts	Exploring the implicit Theory of Change
<i>Force Field Analysis</i> – what forces influence the quality of media coverage	Analysis of the context in which Relay operates.
<i>Force Field Analysis</i> – what forces influence the quality of public debate	More analysis of the context in which Relay operates.
<i>Force Field Analysis</i> – what forces influence the quality of M&E	Exploring staff ideas on their current M&E work.
<i>Problem Tree</i> – the sources and causes of some of the forces in the Force Fields.	Sharing ideas on reasons for poor media coverage and poor quality public debate
<i>Solution Tree</i>	Checking the problem tree and examining where Relay operates.
<i>Two-Way ranking of solutions</i>	Preliminary assessments of risks and impacts of Relay work.
<i>Two-Way ranking of stakeholders</i>	Assessment of stakeholders in terms of their strength and support to Relay aims.
<i>Risk Assessment and mitigation</i>	Review of risks emerging from earlier exercises and identification of possible mitigation measures.

4. Review Findings

The findings from the review of Relay’s lessons about building the capacity of the media to report on research are grouped into three main areas of learning. They relate to:

- Design, theory of change, and management
- Results in the real world
- Capacity building and research uptake activities

Findings on the theory of change, set the scene for those findings that emerge on specific aspects of change and results with Relay, at both the higher level of influencing policy change – what happens when theories meet the real world, and the lower level of the project’s activities.

4.1 Relay’s Theory of Change

Theories of Change

A theory of change (ToC) expresses how a person, project or organisation conceptualises the relationships between actions and hoped-for results, recognising a set of assumptions about how the process in question (e.g. policy-making) works, and about the roles of other actors. It can be used to guide how activities can be managed to stimulate a process of change that leads to desired objectives. Theories of change are frequently documented as visual diagrams.

When theories of change are articulated, these roadmaps, that represent the core strategy and belief system of a project, can “clarify expectations internally and externally, and facilitate more

effective planning and evaluation”. Bringing to bear existing process theory, eg from political science and advocacy, into project strategies can “sharpen our thinking, provide new ways of looking at the policy world, and ultimately improve our theories of change”¹.

The Relay Theory of Change – The Challenge of Assessing Improved Media Coverage and Better Quality Public Debate

The Relay program has been working to improve the capacity of the media to report on research on development issues. The review team felt it is important to examine how the Relay programme is designed and understood both at the top-level – Panos London – as well as in each of the countries visited. The following table is a simplified presentation of staff descriptions of the Relay program and its theory of change:

Summary of Relay Theory of Change	
<i>Super-Goal / Ultimate Impact</i>	Improved livelihoods
<i>Goal / Impact</i>	Policy change – development action
<i>Outcome 2</i>	Better quality public debate
<i>Outcome 1</i>	Improved media coverage
<i>Outputs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved sharing of information. • Better relationships. • Journalists have improved skills.
<i>Activities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with journalists, researchers and editors. • Training. • Publications.

Relay activities vary between countries and also vary over time depending on the context in which the media operates and also on the focus of the research Relay is hoping the media will engage on. This is important because it shows how the different Relay teams adapt to different situations and test a range of different methods depending on local context.

The Relay Theory of Change - Influencing Policy Through Strengthening the Media’s Capacity to Report on Research

Aspects of a ToC can be articulated through an Outcome Tree (Figure 1, overleaf). Panos developed this simplified, draft of an Outcome Tree for Relay as part of their funding proposal in 2010, stating that ‘as the programme develops in this new phase, this will be a starting point for beginning to better understand and articulate how change happens based on learning and action research of Relay program on the ground and talking to DFID and partners...’

The Relay Outcome Tree suggests that there will be impact on policy and policy implementation - policy change can come about because of media coverage and policy change can have large impacts on poverty. However, policy change is not linear and not simple. **An understanding of this complexity and the attribution issues associated with it was shared with the review team by all Relay program teams.**

¹ Sarah Stachowiak (n.d.). *Pathways for Change. 6 Theories about How Policy Change Happens*. Organizational Research Services. Seattle, Washington.

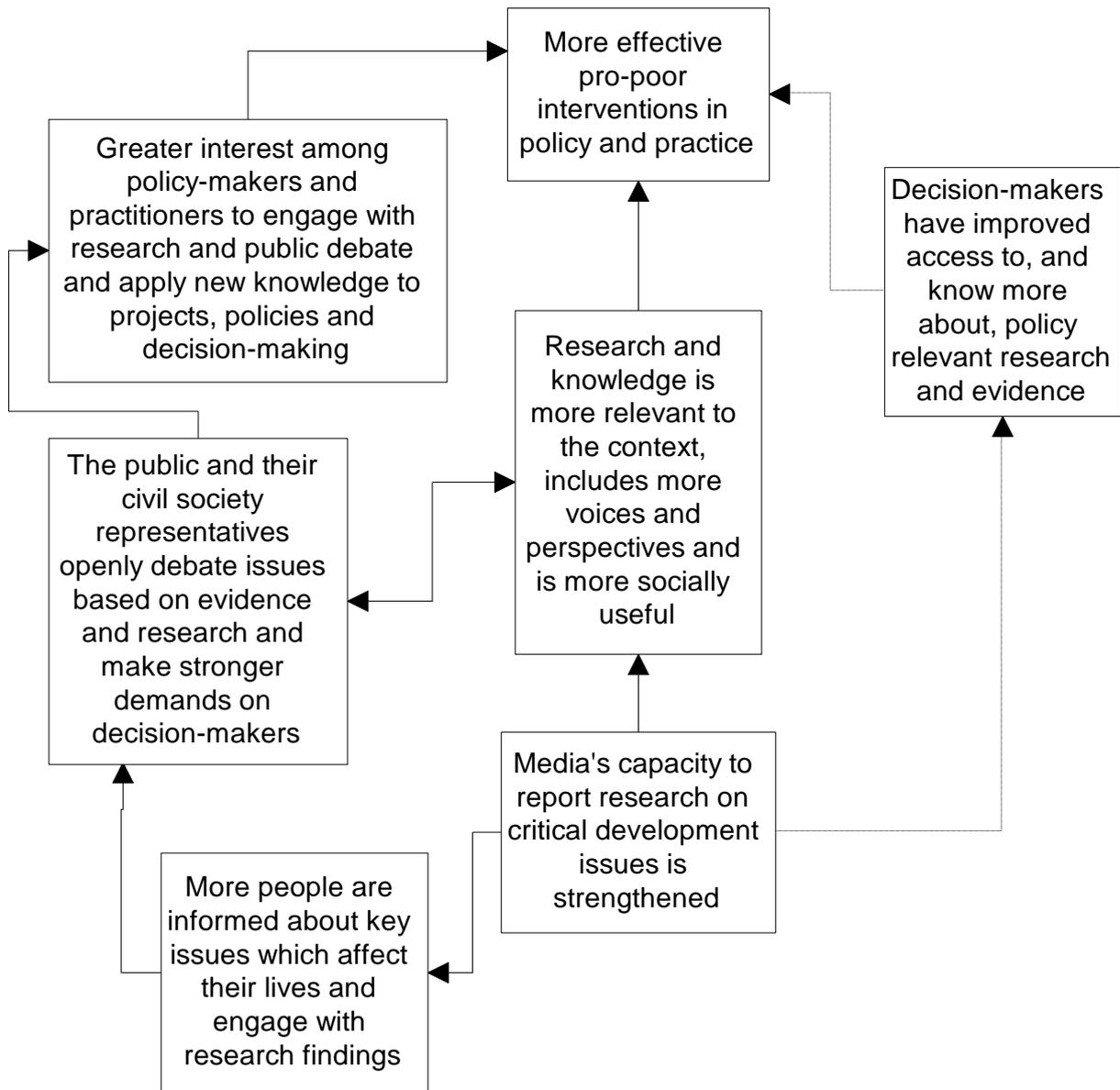


Figure 1. Relay Outcome Tree

There is a burgeoning number of studies and models of policy processes. Early work, by Caplan², describes a ‘two communities’ model which helpfully focuses attention on how information and influence passes between these largely separate research and policy ‘communities’. Sutton³ suggests that there are twenty-three conditions that lead to the making of policy. The ODI RAPID framework⁴ elaborates on the complexity of non-linear policy processes by proposing three constituencies: *Policy Process*, *Evidence* and *Links*. From group discussions and interviews with Relay staff it seems that Relay is working mostly in the sphere of *Links* and at the interfaces between the three constituencies.

² Caplan N. (1979). *The Two Communities Theory and Knowledge Utilization*. American Behavioral Scientist, Vol. 22, No. 3, 459-470.

³ Rebecca Sutton, *The Policy Process: An Overview* ODI Working Paper 118, August 1999

⁴ <http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid/tools/Documents/Framework.pdf>

The work by Isabel Vogel on an overarching ToC for the DFID Research Uptake Team⁵ (RUT) was very helpful for early thinking about the work of Relay and its desired objectives. Vogel describes a complex sequence of changes based on spheres of influence and passing through five layers of results. She makes the important point that the ToC should be worked through several iterations and should ultimately be based on people and changes in their behaviour. The RUT ToC studied for this review had adopted the Outcome Mapping term Boundary Partners but had not developed definitions of the key groups of partners. **The generic Relay outcome tree is not tightly focused on people so much as processes and where people are mentioned they are not identified as boundary partners.**

The staff Theory of Change

In this section we look at how the Relay staff describe their work when asked to put it into an impact flow diagram. This effectively requires them to explain their theory of change. Harry Jones (2011) argues persuasively⁶ for the importance of a clearly articulated theory of change and linking the description of the “causal chain” or “pathway” to the higher aims of the project before attempting to define the most appropriate M&E.

Through a facilitation process, Relay staff in different offices were asked to develop their theory of change from first principles simply from stating what their activities are and then carrying out an Impact Flow diagram exercise. An example is shown in the Figure 2 below. It is clear that **Relay staff want to achieve the higher level aims expressed in the ToC, but are also aware that the mechanisms for attaining them are uncertain.** The theory is probably too deterministic for a situation so full of uncertainties but it is easy to understand why staff choose to describe their work in this way.

⁵ A Working Theory of Change for the DFID Research Uptake Team (unpub, nd.)

⁶ Harry Jones, (2011) *A guide to monitoring and evaluating policy influence*, ODI Background Note, February 2011. www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/5252.pdf

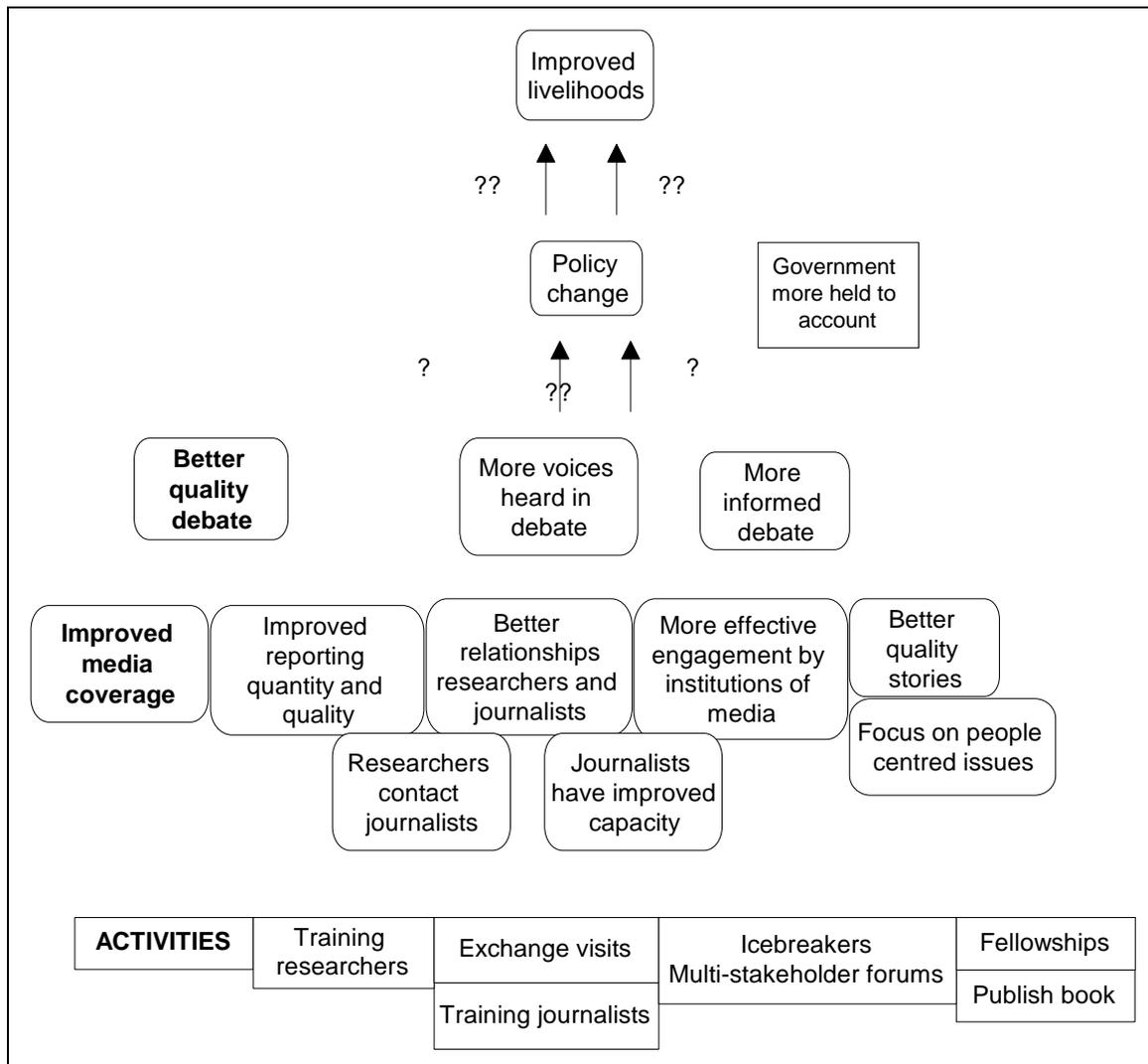


Figure 2. Example of Panos Eastern Africa Relay Staff Theory of Change

The ToC exercise revealed some important findings. Although the generic Relay ToC and the staff ToC are similar, the differences are crucial and raise important questions for the management and monitoring of work in this area. **The most important differences between the theories of change include the uncertainty over conditions that lead to the higher level impacts and the greater focus on the individuals who are targeted by the project activities.**

A key finding that emerged from the review is that it is essential to get the staff who are actually carrying out the work to define the ToC of the program they are responsible for implementing. This allows them to express where they are confident about impact and also where they have doubts. The question marks in Figure 2 are genuine expressions of uncertainty and allow an exploration of the conditions under which project work can lead to the higher level achievements.

Clarity about the conditions for success perceived by the Relay teams are likely to lead to better planning, more honest and effective reporting, and a tighter focus on what is assessed in the program's M&E.

Measuring Change

The tabular presentation of the program's theory of change as an objective hierarchy (above) reveals where significant difficulties can emerge in terms of defining indicators for monitoring Relay

outcome and outputs. At the level of outputs there are difficulties with developing indicators for assessing media coverage and in assessing the quality of public debate. The DFID guidance on the use of the Revised Logical Framework gives the following as an example of developing indicators.

DFID Guidance on Monitoring the Media		
<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Baseline</i>	<i>Target</i>
Volume and quality of media reporting on gender violence	X (e.g., no of column inches, no. of reports, at start of project [date])	Significant improvement (measured as a numerical change in column inches and/or reports)

However, the quantitative baseline and target indicators provided above are not convincing to Relay staff whose experience indicated that:

- Quantity is not the only (often not the most important) measure – quality can matter more;
- Appearance in different media can have very different impacts: a mass circulation organ is different from a niche publication; a front-page headline on Monday is clearly not the same as an article in the weekend pull-out section etc.
- At certain times (e.g. a week before an election) it would not be possible to get a front-page story say on mega dams, for example. Hence the need also to be aware of media context at the time and the external events influencing the media.

Media houses themselves do not seem to be much help in developing appropriate and reliable indicators, as they tend to do very little monitoring of the impact of different articles. Panos has developed some helpful descriptions of media coverage which state that coverage is better when it contains more of the following qualities:

- Is informed by research, or at least, good evidence;
- Presents multiple views especially the views of those who are directly affected, and;
- Contains an explanation of the context, making links to other issues and, ideally, raising questions.

Better public debate is the other high level objective of Relay. However, **it was found that this it is also a challenge for the program to define and assess the ‘quality’ of public debate.** Interviews with Relay staff indicated that public debate means any discussion in the public domain regardless of the participants, but the interrelated issues of quality, quantity and interpretation of impact apply here as they apply in assessments of media coverage. The lesson emerging from this relate to **the need for more sophisticated indicators and thus M&E system to better measure the changes effected by the program.**

4.2 Results in the real world

This section examines the factors affecting achievement of higher level program objectives in the real world – i.e. how the theory(s) of change play out for the media in the real world of policy and politics.

The larger context

It was important for the review team to understand and examine the differing contexts in which the Relay programs operate and engage. The review team employed problem tree exercises to explore how media coverage relates to improving policy as well as identify the key issues that limit the ability

of people in power to respond to information coming from research⁷. This also clarified how the Relay program fits within its specific context and the risks associated with its being successful in that context.

As Figure 3 below demonstrates, participants in Relay Southern Africa are aware of the weakness of the term “decision maker” which is why it appears in inverted commas. Nevertheless the message is clear - **improved media coverage is only one aspect of policy influence**.

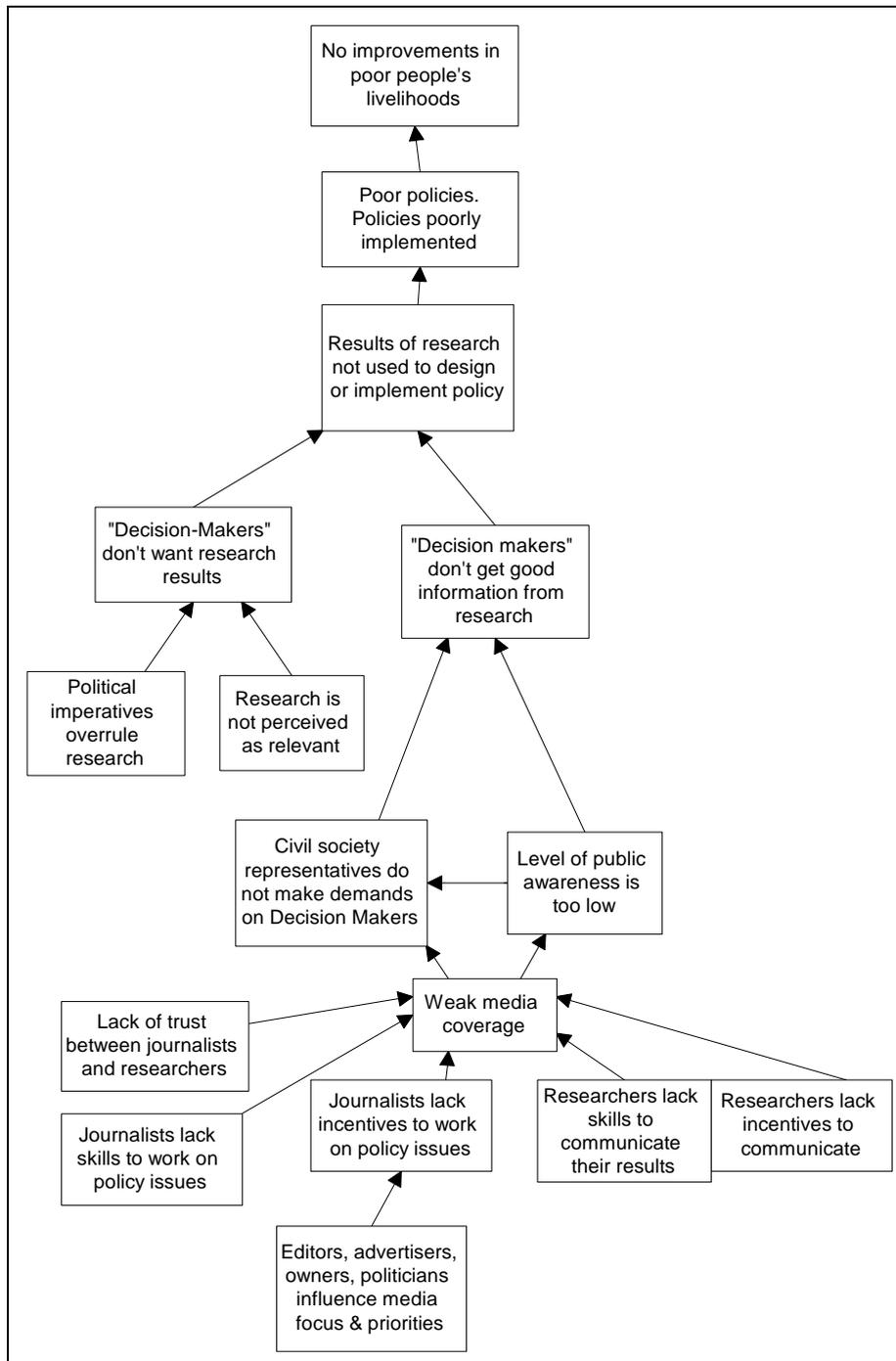


Figure 3. Influencing Policy Problem Tree from Southern Africa

⁷ This is well discussed, for example, in: Haas, Peter, *When does power listen to truth?* Journal of European Public Policy Volume 11, Issue 4, 2004, pp 569 - 592 .

The review team conducted similar exercises with each geographic Relay team so that their efforts could be seen in context and the necessary conditions for success can be properly assessed. The problem trees cover issues both around improving media coverage and on improving public debate. There is considerable overlap between them. **An important aspect of the problem trees on improving public debate is the number of parts of the roots that the Relay program cannot or does not influence.** These areas are those which would normally feature in the Assumptions column of the logframe. In this example below (Figure 4) from the Relay program in NE India, staff added highlights (shown as italic and bold in the diagram) to where the program intervenes and where it does not. The commercial root on the left of the problem tree in the Figure can also be seen to be largely unaffected by the program.

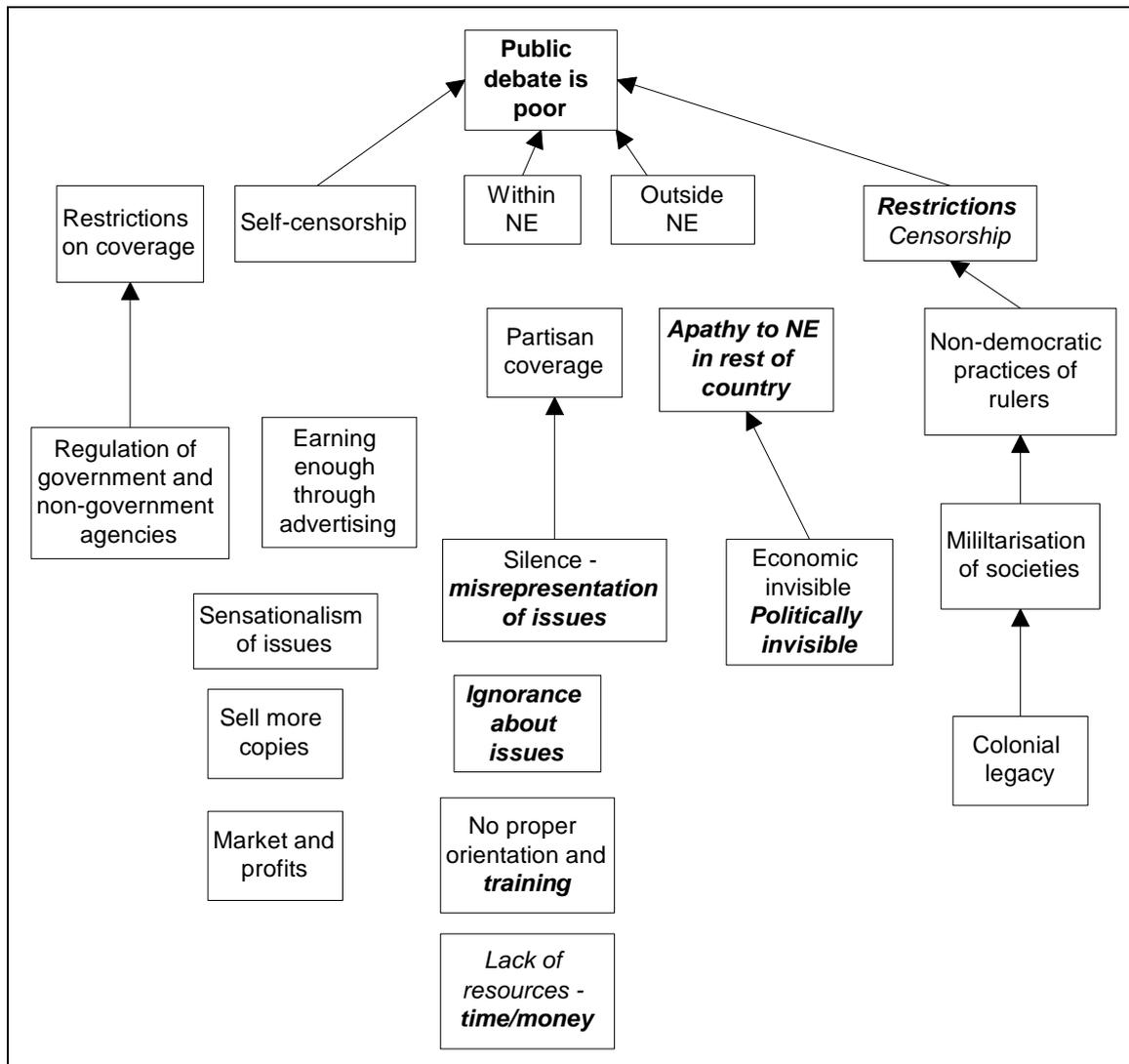


Figure 4. Public Debate Problem Tree from NE India

Similarly the political situation in the right-hand root is not directly impacted directly by Relay activities. **These are important issues that are beyond the scope of Relay activities but could make the Relay work ineffective. Consequently they need to be considered as part of the risks and assumptions in achieving impact.** The conflict in NE India makes these considerations particularly important in the project’s risk analysis – in sharper relief than in other projects which aim to influence policy through communication of knowledge and information.

In addition to the Problem Tree exercise, another exercise that demonstrates the position of the Relay program in the 'real world' is Stakeholder Mapping, based on the power and relative supportive position of the different stakeholders. Stakeholder Mapping helped Relay staff to focus on necessary relationships to bring about change as well as possible activities to improve the position or power to influence the process of stakeholders.

The most dramatic illustration of this exercise comes from the Relay South Asia program which is focused on the issue of big dams. In the stakeholder mapping diagram overleaf (Figure 5), the Relay staff have highlighted the stakeholders with which they have direct contact. Two phenomena are important:

1. The most powerful stakeholders are opposed to the objectives of the Relay program and those who are most supportive are also among the weakest;
2. The Relay program has no contacts with the most powerful antagonists and tends to have contacts with the less powerful.

These are observations that are typical of development projects which are working against large forces that are perceived to work against the interests of poor people. This does however not need to remain as the program's external risk context. Good political economy analysis (PEA) can identify options for working with the policy and governance grain, working with groups of less powerful actors (who have greater collective strength than as individuals), and finding areas of traction and mutual interest that offer entry points.

All these exercises (ToC, Force Field analysis, Problem Tree analysis, and Stakeholder Mapping) reveal important lessons for others working in policy influencing. The exercises drive home the fact that interventions (like a Relay program) tend to be small and the forces operating against the achievement of their aims tend to be complex and powerful. Of course, most Relay staff are aware of this and some say that this is precisely why they want to work on the issues. However, a key lesson from the review is that this type of reflective exercise can lead to a new appreciation of the program, its challenges and its opportunities, and create a motivation to adapt and refine the M&E approach and methods. In each workshop, Panos staff were clearly positive about the new descriptions of the Relay project and motivated towards the new monitoring methods that had been developed.

Focus and Scope

The examination of the complex and, in some ways, hostile environment in which the Relay programs work reinforces the importance of focus. All the programs examined had had relatively broad approaches and staff might have argued for the flexibility to take up emergent and topical issues of interest to the media at short notice, allowed by a broad brief. However the new programs that were starting at the time of this review had a sharper focus. The results of the review suggest that greater focus is important and useful. The new programs have a much greater opportunity of linking different initiatives and increasing impact. The Eastern Africa program has a focus on Tax and Governance that might not appear tight enough to promote good targeting. However, the targeting has been supported by links to an existing network that had formed around this area of concern. In fact, there is a focus brought about by the interest in tax questions, and network members have so far not been distracted by the plethora of issues that could be considered under the heading of governance. South Asia has not been so tightly focused partly because there are so many issues emerging under their chosen headlines of conflict, land and natural resources. The conflict situation also makes it more difficult to plan longer term activities which may have led to a tendency to carry out initiatives that were immediately possible rather than wait to see if other work became possible. However, the specific focus on big dams in the current phase provides a narrower

scope and is likely to bring the benefits of better use of resources on more concerted efforts and with a greater potential to support each other, but it appears **chances of success may be greater where the scope is more tightly defined.**

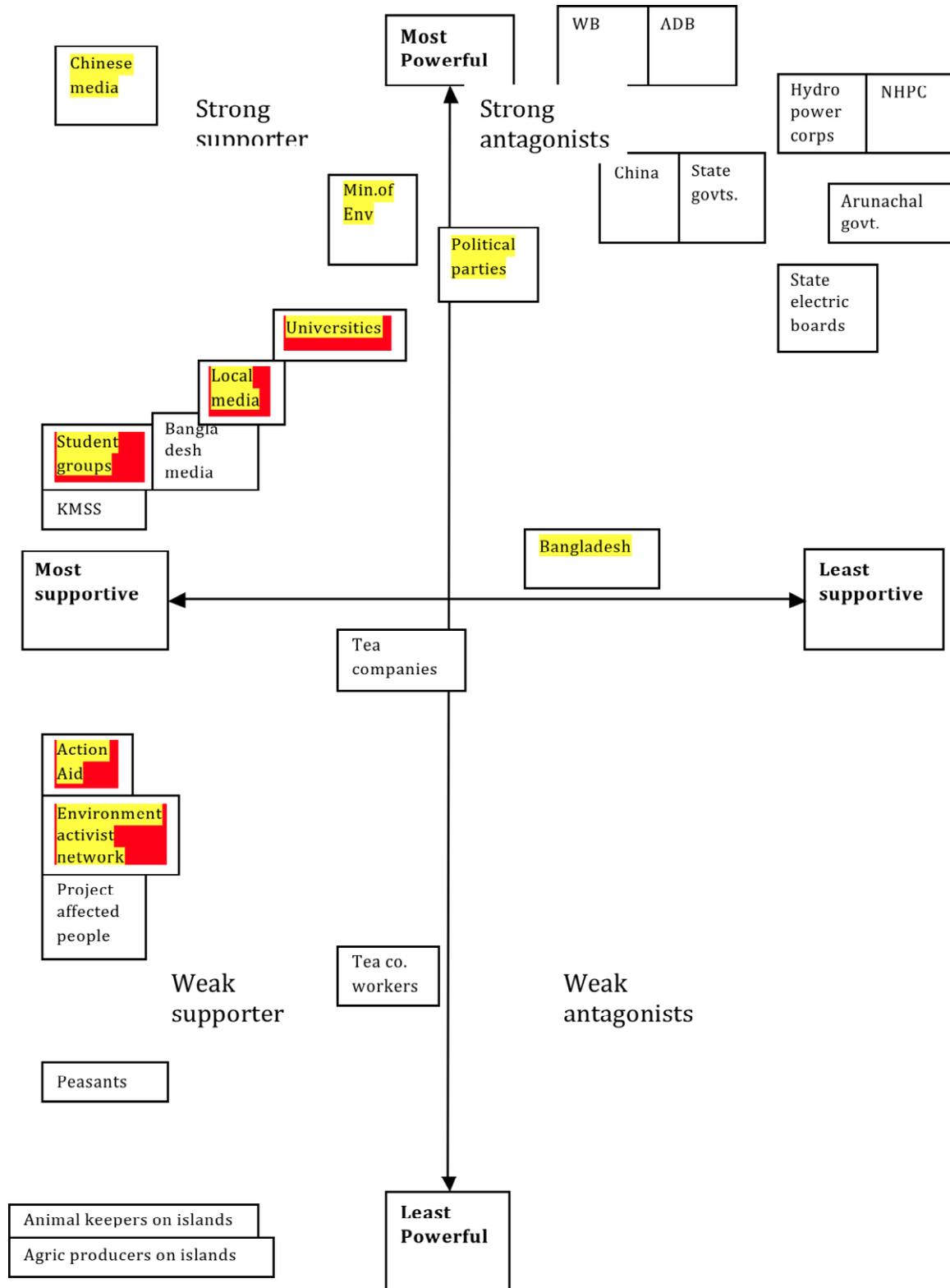


Figure 5. Stakeholder Mapping from NE India

What happens as a result of better media coverage

The most extraordinary part of the Relay review is the range of answers received in response to the question - ‘*What happened after articles had appeared in the media as a result of some inputs by the Relay program?*’ It is important to stress that almost all Relay initiatives have led to improved media coverage. Sometimes this is in terms of the improved quality of stories and sometimes in terms of new stories which might not otherwise have been published at all. Some of the media coverage seems not to have had any discernable impact. This is largely to be expected since monitoring is relatively difficult and the interviewees can not be expected to know how their articles were received across a wide audience.

Some articles elicited **reactions from readers** and the authors are aware of letters to the editor and, in some cases, the numbers of readers who responded appears significant. There does not seem to be a well known metric for letters to the editor in terms of assessing impact. If ten readers write to the editor, what does it imply about those who were affected by the article but did not respond in a detectable way?

For example, as a result of Panos South Asia’s Relay program, journalist Prasanta Rajguru said he published a full page spread with a photo on military interventions in Imphal in Manipur, and received 116 letters to the editor in response. This was a very unusually high response, and ten letters were published. Journalists Pulin Kalita published five articles on conflict and indigenous people and also remembered there were letters to the editor as a result of this piece with “a few” published. Similar feedback was received from journalists in East Africa and Southern Africa.

Some media coverage led to further commissions and **further coverage**. This has been important both in terms of the impact on the original readership and in terms of broadening the readership. Repeated coverage seems to have greater impact and there is considerable store set by having a media “campaign” in which the same issues are treated over a period of time.

For example, the radio programs on HIV/AIDS and TB produced in Zambia, tell an interesting story of a cascade of coverage. Relay supported the production of three programs which were taken up by the Zambia AIDS Related Tuberculosis (ZAMBART) Project who then commissioned a series of eleven subsequent radio programs. These programs have been repeated on national radio and rebroadcast on local FM stations in the 18 months since the first commission. The radio program makers have since been approached by health professionals to produce programs on other issues.

The case of Free Primary Education in Kenya is different in that initial publication was relatively small but the issues were then **taken up by most of the mainstream media**. The publication of the initial research was timed to coincide with when applications for school places were being made. This made the cover more embarrassing to the government as it happened at a critical time, and this in turn made the story more attractive to the national media, which increased its coverage further. Since the funding was coming partly from the aid budget it was also interesting to international media.

The review collected a range of stories that led to an **immediate government reaction** which could possibly also be seen as improving public debate. In some cases, five or six examples across all three programs, the reaction takes the form of a minister or high-ranking representative being obliged to make a statement to a national or state body. For example, researcher Gita Bhanali of the North Eastern Social Research Centre (NESRC) said that following the release of *Ishan* (a publication of PSA’s Relay programme translating research into Assamese, this issue on dams) a question was raised in the Assam assembly for the first time. The Indian Environment Minister then held a public

hearing, and made a statement about dams needing an environmental impact assessment. Though in most cases it was not possible to identify any evidence of further action or follow up.

The review found other examples of impact in which the media coverage supports or **encourages action by lobbying or advocacy groups**. A Relay fellowship receiver reported on contamination by a state mining interest in Kabwe, Zambia. Citizens for Better Environment led a campaign that has resulted in a number of court cases.

Informants the team spoke to also talked of the impact on government that manifests in **changes in language** and approach. Often the change in language is detectable before there is government action. The review was told of the impact shown when Ugandan government ministers starting to talk in terms of ‘inequality’; a term that they had not previously embraced. Relay beneficiaries also mentioned a change in language in Kenya around slums when the phrase “slum upgrading” became common. This replaced a more negative approach characterised by slum clearance and a refusal to provide services to the “illegal” inhabitants. Similarly, we heard that after media coverage of research, possibly supported by the presence of the MDGs, the government has added the phrase “reproductive health” to its vocabulary and has recently (2010) added a budget line under this rubric.

The review also collected impact stories in which not only was there **an immediate reaction** but where **the government went on to take action** on the issues raised in the media coverage.

- For example, the Ugandan Ministry of Lands was restructured and the minister successfully prosecuted for abuse of office after coverage of land tenure issues in the north of Uganda by a Relay fellowship recipient. The president has tried (and may have been successful by now) in removing the crime of abuse of office from national law.

There are more examples of government reactions to media coverage and some other examples of other agencies taking action apparently in response to coverage. What is important is the fact that a wide range of impacts and reactions have been observed. When these are examined they cover all the activities necessary to bring about change to government structure, policy and implementation of policy.

Of course, no coverage achieves all these results, and it is also true that much coverage fails to have an effect at policy process stages that are needed if there is to be important change. Nevertheless, the case for the Relay program’s approach is clearly justified by the range of results that can be observed across the theories of change. These multiple changes that can be effected by better media coverage – increased exposure of an issue and action and reaction to it, are all steps that can lead to high level impact. The processes by which this occurs are varied and interrelated (as the teams’ theories of change illustrate), and direct attribution of impact to better media coverage is difficult. However, the role of better media coverage is evident, and is thus support the rationale for Relay.

It is very tempting to focus on the higher level impacts and to claim them as Relay program results. The nature of project funding creates an environment where attribution to higher level of the results chain is encouraged, as donors apply pressure for demonstrations of impact and proof of value for money. **As the findings of this review demonstrate, the Relay causality map is multi-faceted, with many aspects of the change process outside the programme’s ambit. The programme should avoid making hubristic claims of impact that are difficult to support, but focus on understanding, and managing and monitoring for those changes it can directly affect or closely influence.**

4.3 Capacity building and research uptake activities

Analysis of media coverage is correct

To help interpret the findings from the Theory of Change exercises, the review worked on the problem statements in the lower levels of the impact chain. The review team employed Force Field Analyses (Figure 6) to ask respondents how they saw the forces that affect high quality media coverage. The idea is that there are forces working for and against good media coverage. Participant interviewees were asked to brainstorm any ideas they had for forces working for and against this objective. The table below lists some of the forces collected from interviews in Southern Africa (Table 1). A similar set of reasons was collected through the process in the other Relay programs.

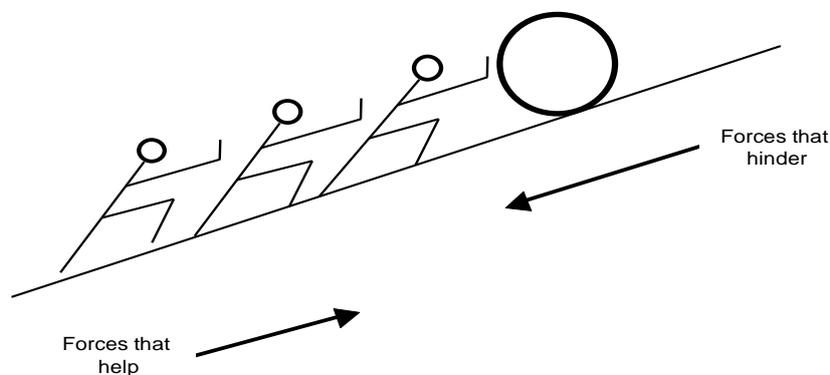


Figure 6. Force Field schematic

Table 1. Force Field of Good Media Coverage in Southern Africa

Help →	←Hinder
Journalists creative Good rapport journalists and scientists Good training for journalists Well-packaged stories	Media reactive, not in depth. Journalists not trained in science Lack of specialist journalists Journalists impatient; deadlines Lack of staff in media houses Lack of resources for good investigative journalism.
Researchers' involvement	Govt. researchers cannot speak to the press. Researchers afraid. Lack of respect for journalists Researchers want to protect their IP. Use jargon. Researchers unwilling to release information (if not final answer)
Editors involved in workshops.	Editors not informed Editors don't see the story

It is interesting to note that the composite force field from NE India raises the same issues as the Southern Africa example (Table 2). In fact, **the interview results from staff and other informants seem to confirm that the initial problem analyses of the Relay program were correct.**

Table 2. A force field from NE India on Media Coverage

Help →	← Hinder
Personal profile. Editors support if a good story. A good network. Knowing how to pitch it – understanding how to present it and show the importance. (know how to sell it and maintain integrity) Having contacts	Research-based articles is a very young idea in Assam Editor does not give time or support Lack of skilled journalists Lack of training. Few staff – people don’t get time, all done very fast. Reporters can’t go to grassroots (weak financially). Security – presence of many military very difficult to visit places, need local help to visit

In the countries where the Relay programs operate, it is generally true that journalists lack the relevant skills and media houses do not provide resources to improve research coverage. Likewise, researchers often do not provide material in a format or style that journalist can understand and use. Participants interviewed perceive the poor relationships between researchers and journalists are one of the key factors limiting good coverage. Part of this problem is real - journalists and researchers work in different ways, for different incentives, to different timescales, and probably tend to be different personality types. However, **part of the divide between researchers and journalists is based on inaccurate stereotypes. This finding partially explains the effectiveness of some Relay activities. Bringing researchers and journalists together can be effective as the stereotypes can be rapidly undone in workshops or meetings. This is particularly effective in the African countries visited where there appear to be greater divides between researchers and journalists. In NE India there are stronger overlaps between the professions and Relay does less work to break down misconceptions and misapprehensions, though plays a key convening role in bringing these actors together to discuss issues and collaborate on stories.**

Overall, the review found that **Relay has demonstrated that workshops putting researchers and journalists together can be very effective in changing relationships.** This has led in some cases to rapid changes in coverage of research issues and some of the relationships are lasting and can provide sustainable changes.

Deeper analyses

In order to push the analyses more deeply and examine the sources and causes of the reasons why media coverage is poor, the review team developed Problem Trees with Relay staff and other informants. The diagram below (Figure 7) is a composite tree developed from a range of interviews in Southern Africa. It shows the three main roots to the problem of poor media coverage related to the three key groups: journalists, researchers and editors.

The right-hand root shows the problems associated with journalists not using research in their articles have as their source a lack of skills and resources to pursue good research-based stories. The editors’ root in the centre of the tree includes the important observation that editors do not want or do not need articles based on good research. The sources of the editors’ root are seen to be in the ownership of media houses by commercial or political interests. On the left-hand root, researchers are seen to be poor at providing information that would be useful to the media, partly because it is not part of their skill set, and partly because they genuinely fear that their work will be misrepresented by the media.

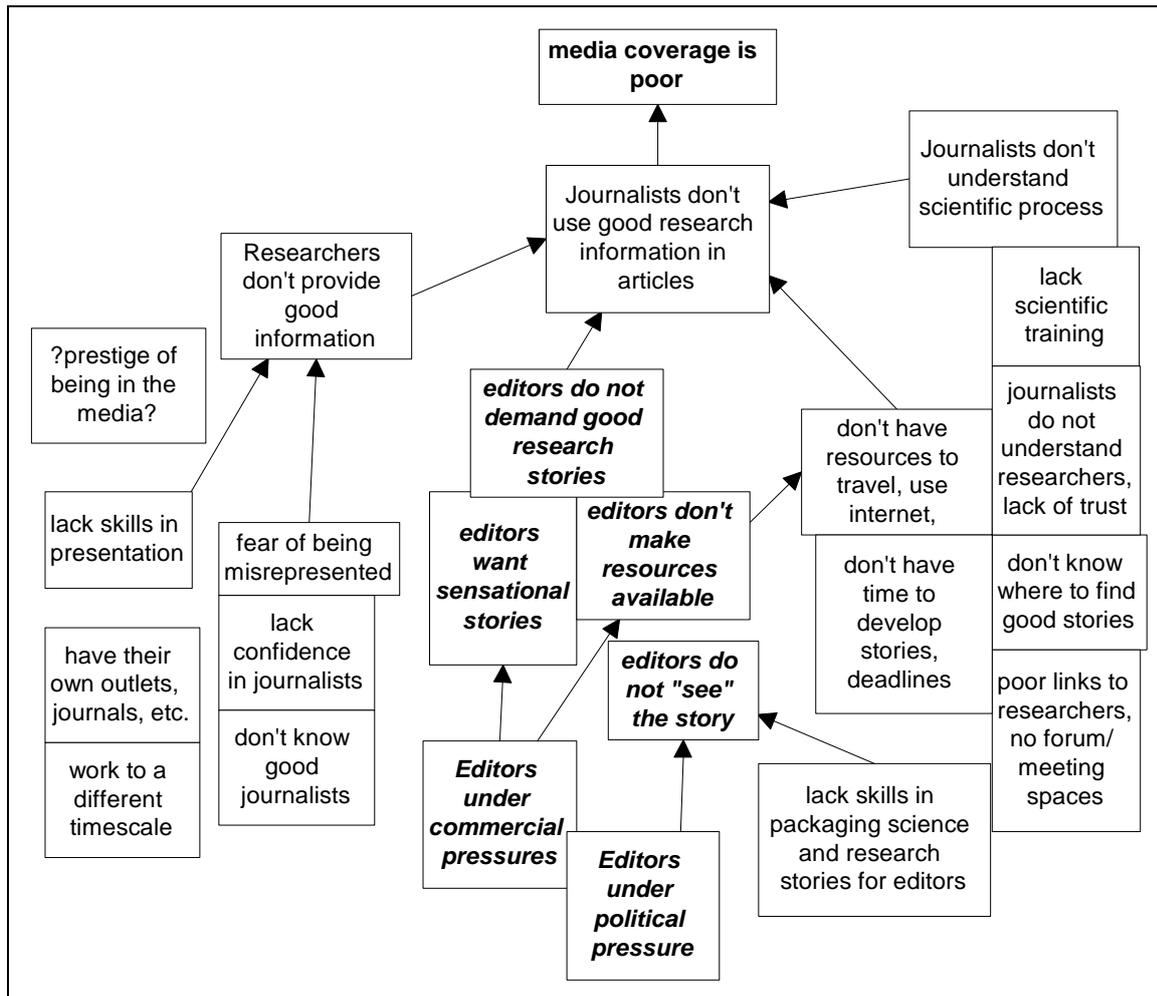


Figure 7. Media Coverage Problem Tree from Southern Africa

One unresolved issue to emerge from the Relay stakeholder interviews was the question of whether or not researchers want their work to appear in the media. It seems likely that there are some researchers who can be called “purist”, who only want to publish in scientific journals and, consequently do not see the media as an acceptable route to publication. Other researchers are clearly keen to see their work in the media, partly perhaps for the prestige and partly, they say, because of a desire to see the results of their work having a greater impact. Generally, it seems clear that **many researchers are happy to work on getting their findings to a wider readership.**

Overall, the Relay analysis as set out by staff in all the different programs visited during this review appears correct and therefore the work in training journalists, putting journalists and researchers together and providing funding for better research for articles seems to be appropriate to address the problems that are identified. Based on the evidence collected, this analysis appears correct across all Relay programs reviewed.

The fact that the analyses are correct is more than a simple confirmation of good work done by the Relay program in its design phase. It also demonstrates the complexity of the situation and the importance of going to this deeper level of analysis in order to design good project work and meaningful monitoring. This should be shown in the reporting of ongoing work in the Relay programs, for example making greater reference to the theory of change in progress and process

reporting, and using the reflective exercise of reporting as opportunities to continue to challenge the theory of change.

Relay does improve media coverage

The Relay programs are interesting for the range of methods they have tried to improve media coverage. There have been variations over time in all the programs and the programs differ from each other in context, focus and activities. These are good signs as they suggest a real interest in experimenting and in adapting to local conditions. Experimentation is a logical reaction to work in areas of uncertainty⁸. Unfortunately experimentation is often seen as high risk and avoided.

Relay-funded Fellowships have been very successful in terms of getting better quality material into the press. The fellowships are designed for each journalist who benefits and can include support of editorial mentoring arrangements for journalists; pairing of a journalist with a researcher; and/or, financial means to carry out research. In these cases, the beneficiary receives sufficient funds to travel and research a good story which removes the immediate need to publish which many informants confirmed is a big disincentive to producing good material. Some of the most important higher level impacts have come from journalists who have received fellowships.

Note that lack of resources is cited in Force Field and Problem Tree exercises as obstructing good reporting so the fellowships are responding to this constraint and their success points to the correctness of those analyses.

However, the fellowships seem to produce a variable quantity of output. Some beneficiaries produce a large number of articles, usually where they are in repeated contact with support from other journalists, an editor or a researcher. Some produce only one article that is published although some of these have had important impacts. The review team only met one person who had received a fellowship and failed to get anything published. It is clear that the **fellowships can remove an important barrier to good quality coverage.**

The initial objective of “**icebreaker**” **workshops** is to allow journalists and researchers to get to know each other and dispel some of the stereotypical impressions that exist of the different groups. Some Relay staff report that the first sessions are quite difficult as prejudices are explored. In all cases the workshops are seen as very useful and some have led directly to changes in behaviour between journalists and researchers. Researchers in Kenya, for example, explained how they had changed their reactions to contact from the media because they now understood the pressures the journalists were under. Similarly a researcher in Malawi explained that journalists now tend to give her more notice and more time to reply to their questions.

Icebreaker workshops seem to be much more effective if they continue into a **training workshop** between journalists and researchers. Researchers say they learn a lot from a market place exercise in which they have to present some aspect of their work very concisely to journalists who give them feedback on their presentation. Journalists are possibly less forgiving than the researchers but also say that it has been useful to understand the position of researchers, especially their unwillingness to talk when they feel that their research findings are not yet complete.

Better workshops seem to include numbers of both journalists and researchers. In some workshops there is only one journalist acting as a trainer for researchers. The main advantage of larger mixed workshops is where they act to launch **mentoring** relationships between a researcher

⁸ *I am baffled by why companies don't do more experiments.* Dan Ariely on Irrationality In The Workplace. McKinsey Quarterly, McKinsey&Company, February 2011.

and a journalist. Some of these relationships are supported by fellowship funding and last for several months. These lead to the publication of a number of different articles on different topics but all supported by information from the researcher. These relationships also lead to other contacts being made between journalists and researchers.

Most people involved in these workshops and exchanges have added participants from the other professional group to their lists of contacts. Importantly most journalists say that they now know researchers they could call if they wanted to check on a story or if they were looking for a story.

Relay-organised exchange visits have taken several forms. One visit of researchers to a media house was apparently high in impact on the visitors who spoke of it being an “eye-opener” and appeared to have been genuinely shocked to see the ways of working in practice.

These Relay activities demonstrate that improved relationships between researchers and journalists can be created and promoted and that the relationships lead to better media coverage.

It is clear that all these activities require facilitation and repeated support. In all cases, the review team encountered people who spoke highly of their experiences working with the other professional group but who had fallen out of touch. This seems to be true of all networking experiences and forms part of the first-hand learning of Panos Relay staff in these projects. **It is important to support repeated contacts between researchers and journalists and to try out different models of contact and interaction.** Clearly more intense interaction will require a narrowing of scope of Relay activities unless additional resources can be allocated to the networking support.

Information work

Relay has also worked directly on the question of getting information to journalists. In NE India, Panos produced several issues of a high quality publication containing translations of research on specific issues into Assamese. The publication, *Ishan*, is highly praised by readers who like the format and the focus on specific issues. Different issues have been used as the basis for articles in the media. There seems little doubt that the issue on large dams has been most effective and this is likely to be because of the other work promoting better coverage of the questions about dams.

Relay has also used seminars to get information directly to journalists. This appears to have been more effective when linked to other information sharing initiatives. These initiatives are useful experiments and have had some impacts but cannot be seen as being as sustainable as the creation of links between people who can continue to exchange learning after the inputs from Relay have ended.

Making media coverage of research count

What do people really want to read? - The review discussed with many observers why it is that media prefer to cover sensationalist stories when there are so many key issues that need to be addressed. Do readers really want celebrity gossip rather than stories on the health of their children? The review has not reached any convincing answers here although the question probably applies across the whole world. Some editors told us that development stories could sell, but that they cost more time and resources to get right, and required better journalists to produce them. It is clear that editors believe that sensationalist stories will sell copies. Panos Relay has collected some observations on radio programs that listeners do prefer serious coverage of important issues but this may not apply to print media.

What do editors really look for in a “good” story? - Editors claim to know what to publish and what to spike. The review team discussed the things that help a story to get published which are found to

include: a high status person or an event; something critical of government; a scandal; an exciting story; leaked documents; sensational findings; and, where journalists are creative and manage to cultivate interest among readers. It is interesting that editors claim to know what “their” readers want to read although none of the media houses visited in the review carries out any active monitoring of readers’ views. Again this is not unique to countries in which Relay works. However, it is important to know what target editors are looking for when trying to place articles.

Power relations - Who decides what gets into the media? Is there a balance between media searching for stories and researchers seeking to provide good content? In fact, it seems that researchers are always the supplicant trying to get their stories in the media among the many competing stories and the judgement of the editors.

There are ways to address the uneven power relations in getting research into the media. **The most direct approach is for research institutions to have their own press office or communications staff who can manage relationships with the media and plant press releases and develop and maintain journalist contacts in attempts to get better coverage. There seems to be evidence that this is effective.** The effectiveness of communications professionals working for research interests confirms the Relay problem analysis as the communications or press officers create a bridge across the gulf between researchers and journalists. Supporting communications strategies has been part of Relay work but direct support to communications staff might be another experiment to explore.

There are alternative routes into the media or directly to improving public debate and Relay has experimented with a range of artistic initiatives. This may make sense where the mainstream media is resistant to direct approaches from alternative stories.

5. Relay in the Future

Applying an Outcome Mapping-based M&E Approach

The impact stories referred to above (section 4) make the point that the Relay approach is justified since the initial steps do lead to better coverage in a manner which is sufficiently reliable even where there are questions of sustainability of impacts. The review has also seen that better coverage can lead to impacts all the way to significant high level government changes. A key point is that it is extremely hard to predict when and where these high level impacts will occur. It makes sense therefore to put efforts in M&E into the initial changes at the output and outcome levels that make it more likely that higher level impacts will occur. That is, to look at the Relay work as preparing the context in which it becomes increasingly likely that there will be impacts without being able to predict, and therefore impossible to take responsibility for, exactly what topic nor at what time the impact will occur.

One motivation for the review was the observation that Relay program M&E had been weak. This is not entirely surprising when a conventional approach has been adopted in the area complex area of information, media coverage and policy influencing.

Outcome Mapping (OM) seems specifically helpful in the context of monitoring the effects strengthening the media’s capacity to report research because the approach explicitly acknowledges the complexity observed in the impacts of the Relay program. The statement that ‘*multiple, non linear events lead to change*⁹’ describes the evidence generated by the review - of improved media

⁹ http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-9330-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

coverage in which some impacts occur as a result of a curious sequence of events and some occur much more directly. The key point is that some of the necessary events could not be predicted.

The review did not look into the theory of OM nor even introduce it by name to Relay staff but asked them to identify the people they have direct contact with (their Boundary Partners) and then focus on desirable behaviour changes that could be assessed. In this way the project design is retained as described in the logframe but using an approach to monitoring that comes from another programming approach.

The team exploited what appears to be the simplicity and honesty of OM in accepting that project staff could properly take responsibility for working towards the kinds of behaviour changes that would contribute to making the higher level impacts more likely. It seemed clear that the real task of Relay is to facilitate behaviour changes among journalists and researchers so that media coverage improves. These changes are at the first output level of the Impact Flow Diagram. The ability to focus on relatively simple observations of behaviour change makes M&E appear achievable and rewarding in contrast perhaps to the tasks of monitoring the more complex issues of the quality of media coverage and public debate.

Refining the Relay Theory of Change

The OM approach provides simplicity and directness in terms of the proposed Relay monitoring but perhaps offers a theory of change less easy to describe. This involves making explicit the fact that **the direct impacts of the program are in improving the networking and relationships of those who are involved in determining media coverage**. All this work raises the likelihood of media coverage improving. The review team have tended to talk of improving and reinforcing the activities that occur within a “cloud” of interactions that affect the quality of media coverage. This is shown in Figure 8 overleaf. The reason for the ‘cloud’ concept is that it is not possible to predict precisely which of the initiatives will lead to direct changes and which will lead further to impact. However, the team is sure that there will be changes and there will be impacts and these will need monitoring as part of the program reporting. Outcome mapping provides a device for doing this by elaborating what other actors’ roles are in the process.

A focus on the activities within the “cloud” is good for project management as it requires the selection of activities that will improve the conditions in which impact becomes more likely. It also brings more attention to the question of sustainability. If the project is justified by what happens in the cloud then its activities must lead to more sustainable changes so that impacts remain more likely for as long as possible after the end of the project.

This takes the attention away from what action is most likely to cause impact and on to what actions are most likely to lead to increased capacity and skills and more sustainable networking and links. As the review has identified, networking and mentoring work requires repeat engagements and the Panos Relay can justify investing in this area when it is released from chasing immediate higher level impacts.

However, there are some dangers in being among the first to adopt this monitoring approach, which is more honest about what a project can achieve (i.e. not over-claiming impact attribution). To claim that one is going to help journalists learn may not seem as attractive to donors as competing claims from other agencies to be able to achieve higher level impacts.

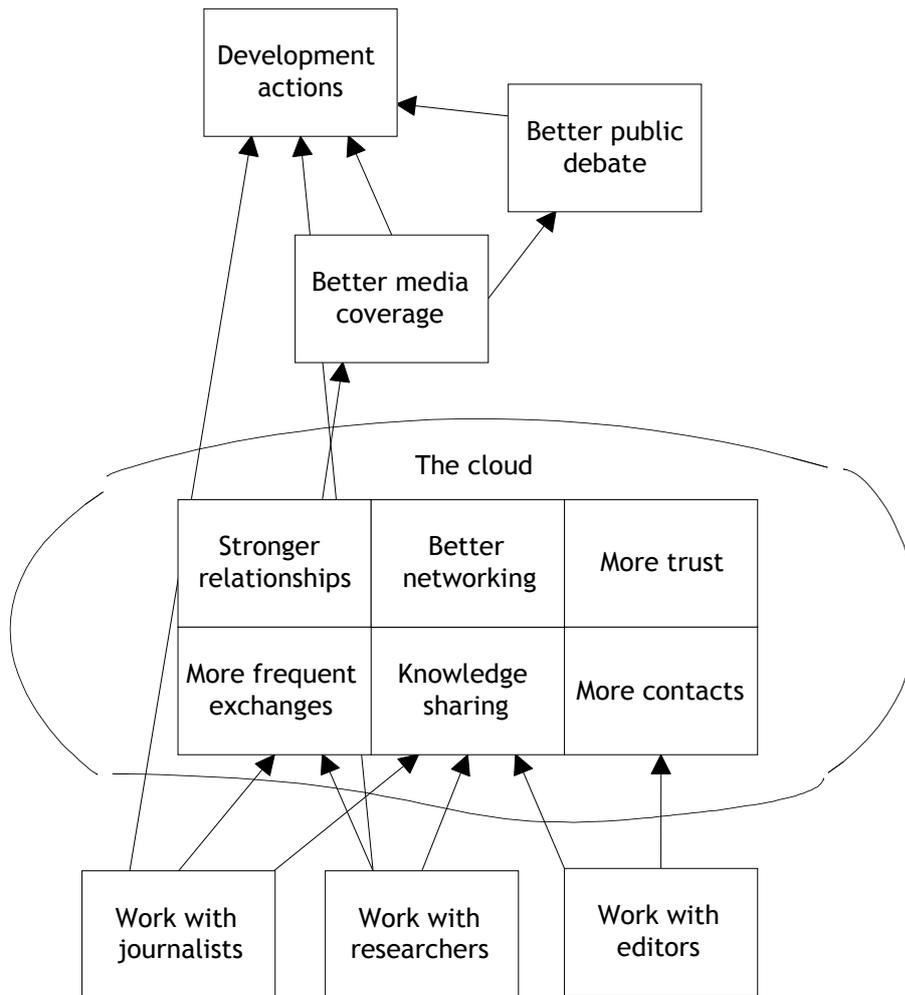


Figure 8. A New Theory of Change for Relay

A revised and deeper approach to monitoring

The next steps for Panos Relay are focused on testing the ideas in this report. This will include a revised approach to monitoring and reporting, and this is likely to require an increased effort in these areas. Relay has started with the development of Progress Markers for each Boundary Partner and the collection of baseline data. Relay staff are testing a range of visual interview tools which appear to be performing well and delivering different insights when compared with more verbal approaches.

It is also necessary to monitor higher level impacts that may emerge as a result of the work with boundary partners even though these impacts are not key to the justification of the project work.

There are some interesting operational questions that emerge as Relay staff work on identifying work that is likely to have more impact in the new focus on the behaviours and competencies of Boundary Partners.

Risk Assessment and Mitigation Measures

The review team carried out a simple risk assessment exercise with Relay staff. This was relatively simple in South Asia as the team worked on the single big dams issue and consequently focussed on the risks within this tight focus.

Risks were identified by brainstorming. The risks were then ranked according to how likely they are to occur – the most likely at the top of the list (Table 3). The risks were then assessed for the severity of the consequences that would follow if they occurred. Project staff then examined mitigation measures that might reduce the likelihood or the consequences of each risk.

Table 3. Risks Register for big dams project (South Asia)

Likelihood	Risk	Mitigation
More likely ↑	Huge advertising blitz (damaging)	Lobbying with editors
	Lack of knowledge (very damaging)	Workshops. Publishing. Commissioning
	Political instability (damaging)	
	Development gains for state (damaging)	Public meetings.
Less Likely ↓	Partisan expert comments swing opinion	
	Issue gets caught in judicial arbitration	
	Network falls apart (potentially fatal)	Encourage more dialogue. → People’s assemblies. Engage experts and key people. Smaller meetings with the core groups. Maintaining personal contacts (goodwill).

Almost all mitigation measures are routine project activities and no special measures were proposed by the Relay participants. Most risk reduction seems to come from the work necessary to promote the network of people and institutions working on big dams issues and networking in general. The need to rely sometimes on personal links is made explicit.

“Lobbying with editors” would be a new activity that had not been mentioned in other exercises. This would follow from fears that they might be swayed in their editorial policy by advertisers or owners and a belief that they could be influenced by Relay staff.

In Eastern Africa, the exercise was done slightly differently with the risks being described as necessary conditions for success; i.e. the positive expression of a risk being avoided. The risk register applied to the whole Relay program and its work on tax and governance (Table 4).

Table 4. “Good media coverage will only happen if” in Eastern Africa

	Necessary condition of success / Risk	Mitigation
Most likely	All sides to a story presented Journalists supported to cover stories Proactive journalists ask the right questions Skills are acquired, used and sustained	More training Motivate Push them Assess problem with them. Fellowship continued (or repeated)
	More research relevant to the people is produced. Researchers partner with media	Training Showing examples Promoting links Highlight the benefits
	Editors pick interest/understand and provide space Editors allow space	Relationships – links editors to research Highlight benefits Commission work Get editors to influence editors Engage editors early in process Use fellowships
	Media owners balance public interest with commercial interest Media owners embrace development	?engage directly? Through editors? Highlight benefits, reassure their fears. Pick more sympathetic – easier targets
Least likely to occur	Stable political environment, limited state interference Free media environment Media remain free Media houses remain on air/working	

Note that, similarly to NE India, engaging with editors occurs again as a possible measure of mitigation. However, the Relay team had already admitted that it had weaker relationships with editors than with other key stakeholders and that they were harder to work with.

The question marks in the table against media owners indicate how the Relay team acknowledges that it does not have very effective mitigation measures against the risk of political interference with editors and does not have effective relationships with the owners of media houses.

The team also carried out a risk assessment exercise on the risks that threaten the quality of public debate and the key learning points were very similar to those above. However, there appear to be far more risks that apply to the good public debate that the Relay program would be unable to mitigate. The same activities of trying to feed in good quality information would mitigate some of the risks. The major risks of lack of support from editors and from owners of media houses still apply and Relay can only lobby for better coverage from a relatively weak position. In fact Relay’s strength and ability to mitigate these risks come from the relationships it already has with journalists, researchers and communications professionals.

The risk assessment exercise brings out a fear of public apathy, a lack of public good will or the unwillingness to participate. This has not emerged in this form in the other exercises although it is underlying some of the issues that limit the impact of media coverage. Relay can only combat this risk with the promotion of good media coverage of key issues.

Targeting Key Stakeholders in the Media

Old journalists or young - The review exposed the interesting targeting question of whether Relay should work with established journalists (who are more likely to have an impact with their publications but are probably less easy to influence) or to work with less experienced and less well known people (who may be more willing to work in different ways but may have less impact when they publish).

At the extreme of this latter approach is the suggestion that Relay should work on the training and education of students of journalism so that over time more and more of those entering the profession share Relay ideas of what constitutes good media coverage. **It would be useful to experiment with mentoring of younger journalists by more experienced journalists.** This model has not been tried yet but may offer sustainable impacts.

Researchers likely to contribute - It is also interesting to consider how Relay can be more certain to target those researchers who are more committed to getting their work into the media and avoid wasting time on those who are always likely to prefer to restrict their output to specialist journals. This is not to do with researchers' academic ability, but rather their amenability to a wide range of communication approaches for their research. Some institutes have press offices, who may help identify suitable researchers, otherwise it is down to good journalistic detective skills to find suitable researchers.

Editors likely to be interested - The targeting of editors is another contentious issue. Editors constitute a powerful determinant of the quality of media coverage and to get their support could lead to immense impacts. On the other hand, if they are difficult to reach and even more difficult to influence, it may be a wasted effort. Is there, therefore, some way of identifying those editors who would be most sympathetic to supporting the Relay program aims? This approach has to fit with the Relay analysis of the influence of the different media organs so that efforts lead to increased influence as well as to improved coverage.

More support and follow up

Repeat and sustained engagement will be necessary to promote networking that can be expected to last longer than the few months of exchanges that have occurred in earlier phases where little follow-up has been provided.

Mentoring has been successful in the last phase of Relay but requires more support than was previously offered. This is especially true for the mentees who need to be followed up in order to see that they are getting what they need from the mentor.

Maintaining focus on the boundary partners will be important despite the distractions of opportunities that might occur for more immediate impacts in media coverage.

6. Summary of Lessons

Design, Theory of Change and Measurement

A key finding that emerged from the review is that it is essential to get the staff who are actually carrying out the work to define the theory of change of the program they are responsible for implementing. This allows them to express where they are confident about impact and also where they have doubts, and increases ownership.

Theories of change are more easily translated into action when they centre on people rather than processes. There needs to be a strong focus on people who are targeted by project activities – through capacity building or influencing work. As part of the theory of change, Relay staff found weakness in the use of the term “decision maker”. The theories are useful for revealing where mechanisms for attaining projects aims are uncertain. Both of these points are important for management and monitoring of the project.

Problem tree analysis shows the overlaps in working on improving media coverage and on improving public debate, and that improved media coverage is only one aspect of policy influence. An important aspect of improving public debate is the number of roots the problem tree that the Relay program cannot or does not influence. Similarly the political situation roots in the problem tree are not directly impacted by Relay activities. These are important issues that are beyond the scope of Relay activities but could make the Relay work ineffective. These areas need to be fully considered in the logframe assumptions and its risk analysis.

The risk assessment exercise for Relay brings out a fear of public apathy, a lack of public good will or the unwillingness to participate as key potential blocks to success. Relay can only combat this risk with the promotion of good media coverage of key issues.

In relation to monitoring, it was found to be a challenge for the project to define and assess the ‘quality’ of public debate and the quality and quantity of media coverage. The lesson emerging from this relates to the need for more sophisticated indicators and thus M&E system to better measure the changes effected by the project.

An Outcome Mapping approach would strengthen this type of project’s M&E as it makes explicit the fact that the direct impacts of the program are in improving the networking and relationships of those who are involved in determining media coverage.

Results in the Real World

The Relay programs all have a narrower focus for their next phase. This confines the project scope and brings benefits of better use of resources and more concerted efforts on a narrower focus; it appears chances of success may be greater where the scope is more tightly defined.

The most extraordinary part of the Relay review is the range of answers received in response to the question - ‘*What happened after articles had appeared in the media as a result of some inputs by the Relay program?*’ This showed that improved media coverage can, as predicted in the theory of change, result in a range of changes. These include: feedback from readers, further media coverage, take-up of stories in mainstream media, stimulation of lobby activity, and changes in the way government talks about an issue.

The review also found stories of direct impact; where there was not only an immediate reaction but also where the government went on to take action on the issues raised in the media coverage. It is very tempting to focus on the higher-level impacts and to claim them as project results. The nature

of project funding creates an environment where attribution to the higher level of the results chain is encouraged, as donors apply pressure for demonstrations of impact and proof of value for money. However this type of project has a complex, multi-faceted causality map, with many aspects of the change process outside its ambit (beyond its influence). Projects should avoid making hubristic claims of impact that are difficult to support, but focus on understanding, and managing and monitoring for those changes it can directly affect or closely influence.

Capacity Building and Research Uptake Activities

Part of the divide between researchers and journalists is based on inaccurate stereotypes – this was found particularly in the African projects. This finding explains the effectiveness of some Relay activities. Bringing researchers and journalists together can be effective as the stereotypes can be rapidly undone in workshops or meetings, and Relay has demonstrated that workshops putting researchers and journalists together can be very effective in changing relationships. This can lead to rapid changes in coverage of research issues, and some lasting changes in the relationships between researchers and journalists.

It is important to support repeated contacts between researchers and journalists and to try out different models of contact and interaction. Clearly more intense interaction requires a narrowing of scope of Relay activities unless additional resources can be allocated to the networking support.

Overall, the Relay analysis as set out by staff in all the different programs visited during this review appears correct and therefore the work in training journalists, putting journalists and researchers together and providing funding for better research for articles seems to be appropriate to address the problems that are identified. Based on the evidence collected, this analysis appears correct across all Relay programs reviewed.

Relay-funded Fellowships have been very successful in terms of getting better quality material into the press, and it is clear that the fellowships can remove an important barrier to good quality coverage.

There are ways to address the uneven power relations in getting research into the media. The most direct approach is for research institutions to have their own press office or communications staff who can manage relationships with the media and plant press releases in attempts to get better coverage. There is evidence that this is effective. It is also important to develop and maintain contact with a group or network of interested journalists.