



Drivers of chronic poverty policy process: overview

Purpose of this series

The process of policy-making and influencing is multi-factorial and non-linear. Getting to terms with what works, where and why, can therefore be a complicated task, which is often left to a handful of actors who are bounded by the particular experiences to which they have been exposed, rather than informed by more systematic analysis. Policymakers, for instance, may not know what research is available; researchers may not know how to engage effectively with the policy process, while policy implementors may be faced with a disjuncture between intention and practice that is difficult to explain and prevent.

This series of guidance sheets aims to lend clarity to what drives the chronic poverty policy process in particular, although the broader approach could easily be adapted to other social and economic policy issue areas. The focus on chronic poverty was selected because although there has been some recognition of this issue by policymakers in some regions, others continue to lag behind (CPRC, 2008) (see Box 1 for a definition of Chronic Poverty). However, a broad and systematic analysis of the causes of this increased recognition (or lack thereof) has not been forthcoming and is hence the subject of the guidance sheets.

By introducing a more systematic framework to assess the important, less important, and unknown

Box 1: What is chronic poverty?

The distinguishing feature of chronic poverty is extended duration in absolute poverty. Therefore, chronically poor people always, or usually, live below a poverty line which is normally defined in terms of a money indicator (e.g. consumption, income, etc.), but could also be defined in terms of wider or subjective aspects of deprivation. This is different from the transiently poor, who move in and out of poverty, or only occasionally fall below the poverty line (CPRC, 2008).

variables in the policy process, previously overlooked entry – and veto – points can be identified which can inform programme and policy-influencing strategies, and/or serve to bolster approaches that already exist. These strong, weak and unknown/uncertain variables, which determine the potential for change in chronic poverty policy process, were identified through an extensive literature survey to determine where arguments about the relative importance of specific variables from different authors and studies were consistently present or absent, or in need of further analysis

The identification of unknown and uncertain variables, also provides a basis on which to promote vanguard research or introduce contingency planning



Box 2: The knowledge-policy interface

Research-based knowledge is more likely to contribute to evidence-based and pro-poor policy change if it recognises:

- **Context** - the structural settings in which policymakers witness incentives and are pressurised, as well as the values through which they mediate these incentives.
- **Actors/Linkages** - researchers, policy-makers, activists and politicians share networks, influence and legitimacy in various policy areas.
- **Evidence** - more credible when produced rigorously and framed appropriately for different target audiences.

that takes into account complexity and the risks that emerge over the programme and policy-research cycles.

In essence, the method presented in the guidance sheets can also be envisaged as a modified deployment of the Drivers of Change (DoC) framework as promoted by the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID), while taking into consideration some of the more widely recognised commendations and criticisms of the approach. It also seeks to marry insights from a growing body of literature on the knowledge-policy interface which are largely ignored in the DoC approach, but reflected in the work of Court et al. (2005) (see box 2).

Guidance sheet overview

Diagram 1 provides a useful way of thinking about the interaction of drivers within the settings of three key dimensions of the knowledge-policy interface: context, evidence and actors/linkages. It displays a three-step process where drivers are first identified and located in terms of the degree of influence they bring to the change process – the guidance sheets assist in indicating the relevant drivers that may be noteworthy in a given situation¹. Following this, drivers are assessed in relation to whether they oppose or support an agency’s policy influencing aims (alignment). This second step assumes that an agency has predetermined aims. If not, it could be usefully sub-divided to accommodate a stage

whereby influencing intentions are outlined. This activity can refer to the the five key dimensions identified by Keck and Sekkink (1998) in the Summary Guidance sheet for support. These discuss the ways in which drivers of change can be influenced by activities such as debate reframing, obtaining discursive commitments and procedural changes from policy elites, securing policy and legislative changes, and affecting behavioural shifts. Finally, the drivers are then reviewed in terms of the degree to which a given agency has the potential to shape the direction of a driver.

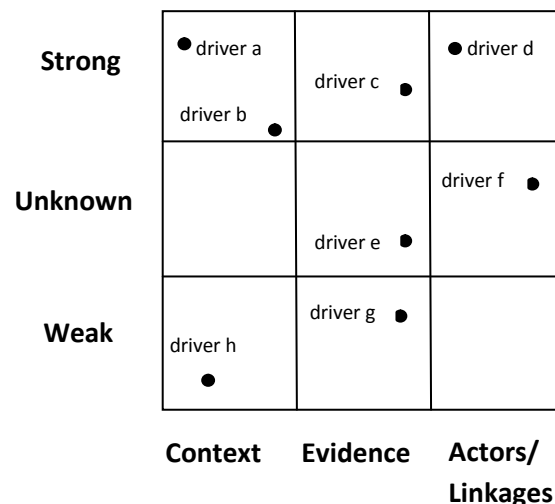
The Summary and Implications sheet adds to this process by providing a synthesis of key lessons that highlight the strongest and weakest drivers for each setting. It also tabulates these drivers for more practical-orientated purposes by presenting their relative characteristics, implications for policy influencing and some possible actions.

Target audience

These guidance sheets are envisioned as providing a tool for policy-orientated agents and networks in governments, NGOs, and research institutions, but may be used by any party interested in affecting change in the policy process.

Diagram 1: A three-step process to identify ingredients to inform an influencing strategy: drivers, alignment, and potential impact

A) Drivers - these are first identified and located in terms of the degree of influence they bring to the change process – the guidance sheets assist in indicating the relevant drivers that may be noteworthy in a given situation.





B. Alignment - the drivers from matrix A are next assessed on whether they are likely to serve as a supportive or oppositional force to a given agency's influencing aims. This second step assumes that an agency has predetermined aims. If not, it must be sub-divided to accommodate a stage whereby intentions are outlined.

C. Potential impact - the drivers are then reviewed in terms of the degree to which a given agency has the potential to shape the direction of a driver.

Strong	● supports opposes ●	opposes ●	● supports
Unknown		?	● ?
Weak	● supports	supports ●	
	Context	Evidence	Actors/ Linkages

Strong	● hi impact lo impact ●	hi impact ●	● lo impact
Unknown		?	● ?
Weak	● hi impact	lo impact ●	
	Context	Evidence	Actors/ Linkages

Endnotes

1 Based on the Alignment, Influence and Interest Matrix of the ODI RAPID Outcome Mapping Approach (Mendizabal, 2009).

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This Research Guide is written by David Walker and Nicola Jones

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The **Chronic Poverty Research Centre** (CPRC) is an international partnership of universities, research institutes and NGOs, with the central aim of creating knowledge that contributes to both the speed and quality of poverty reduction, and a focus on assisting those who are trapped in poverty, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.