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### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1. The review of the Knowledge Sector Initiative pilot programs

The Australian and Indonesian Governments have developed 'The Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Pro-Poor Policy: the Knowledge Sector Initiative'. The Knowledge Sector Initiative (Henceforth 'KSI') aims to increase the quality and efficacy of pro-poor policies in Indonesia through improving the production and uptake of locally generated high-quality research and analysis across the nation's 'Knowledge Sector'.

The assumption is that greater use of evidence in policy and practice can "... help to dramatically reduce poverty in Indonesia, promote democracy and improve the country's overall economic performance" (AusAID 2012: 1). The 'Knowledge Sector' is understood as the institutional landscape of government, private sector and civil society organisations. The KSI will strengthen the capacity and integration of the four components across what it terms Indonesia's 'knowledge-to-policy' cycle:

- i. The **supply side** – organisations and individuals, such as research organisations that produce knowledge and evidence, that produce knowledge that influences policies;
- ii. The **demand side** – policy makers and other decision-making organisations that require evidence to inform policies and programs;
- iii. **Intermediaries** – organisations and individuals whose functions are to assist in making evidence more accessible and policy relevant; and
- iv. The **enabling environment** – the mix of policies, regulations, procedures and protocols that govern how the other three components interact.

AusAID supported two pilot programs as part of the two-year design process for the KSI. One pilot was under the supply component and the other under the intermediary component. The purpose of the pilot programs was to enhance understanding of Indonesia's Knowledge Sector and inform the implementation strategies for the KSI. AusAID have commissioned a review of these two pilot programs.

#### 1.2. Purpose of this literature synthesis

The review of the supply side organisations and government intermediaries pilot program is required to position its findings within an international context. The purpose of this literature synthesis is to provide this international context. This document reviews national and international literature and experience concerning strengthening the capacity of supply side and intermediary organisations. It synthesises lessons relevant to the AusAID Knowledge Sector Initiative.

The key question this literature synthesis aimed to answer is:

*What can we learn from international experience about strengthening the capacity of Indonesian supply side and intermediary organisations to improve the production and uptake of evidence?*

In answering this question the following research themes were addressed:

- what is evidence-based policy?
- what is capacity strengthening?
- what is contemporary good practice of capacity strengthening programs?
- what models of intermediary organisations are there in the literature?
- what types of support mechanisms and funding models are available to donors and which are the most effective?
- what are the characteristics of effective supply side and intermediary organisations?
- how important are donor-grantee relationships?

An analysis of the literature and experience collected for this synthesis is provided in Section 2.

### 1.3. Methodology

This literature synthesis was based on data collected and analysed from March to May 2013. The review focused primarily on English language publications from the last 30 years with an emphasis on recent publications to capture contemporary lessons. Sources of literature included:

- articles or papers, drawn from a combination of peer reviewed articles and working papers (working papers and reports proving a particularly rich source of data);
- a review of posts on relevant blogs; and,
- consideration of previous reviews undertaken by this review team as part of previous projects<sup>1</sup>.

Additional data was generated through semi-structured interviews with representatives from a selection of organisations with well-regarded experience in supporting supply side and intermediary programs. These representatives included both Indonesian and international actors. A snowballing strategy was employed. In total 6 interviews were conducted.

The specific interviews were confidential but de-identified data has been used by the researchers to triangulate findings from the literature to provide greater confidence.

Thematic areas of interest and selection criteria evolved over the project in response to discussions with AusAID staff and initial review findings. This synthesis has been timely. It has been able to tap into the rich stream of discourse concerning the theory and practice of capacity strengthening and evidenced-based decision-making currently occurring in the development sphere.

### 1.4. Structure of this document

This literature synthesis is structured into three sections. Section 2 analyses the theoretical framework within which the KSI operates. The purpose of this discussion is to locate the later discussion on strengthening capacity of organisations in the appropriate context. Section 3 presents the findings from the literature and experience in supporting supply side and intermediary organisations.

## 2. Contextual Theory

The purpose of this section is to analyse the theoretical and contextual framework in which the KSI pilot programs have operated. Understanding of the framework is useful for a number of reasons. First it provides appreciation of the aims of the KSI and why the program has focussed on particular issues, organisations and approaches. Second it provides understanding of where the KSI fits within contemporary capacity strengthening for development discourse. Finally these insights identify the reasons the research topics and themes of this synthesis – the findings of which are presented in Section 3 – have been chosen.

The rest of this section is structured around the following discussion:

- the use and influence of evidence on policy making;
- the knowledge-to-policy cycle;
- challenges faced by Indonesia's 'Knowledge Sector'; and,
- capacity strengthening.

### 2.1. Evidence-Based Policy

The aim of the KSI is to strengthen Indonesia's Knowledge Sector to better promote evidence-based decision-making for pro-poor purposes. Evidence-based policy-making has come to the fore in development theory and practice over the last decade. Enthusiasm for the concept in the development sector owes much to the UK New Labour government of the late 1990s and early 2000s (see, amongst others, Davies 2004; Solesbury 2001; Sutcliffe and Court 2005).

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<sup>1</sup> SMERU, PSF and PKPR

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Thomas (2000) notes that the concept spread to the whole of the UK government via medical practice research in health policy sectors in England and North America in the 1980s and 1990s. This 'ascendancy of evidence' has been driven by three principal factors according to Solesbury (2001: 4-6). First has been a move in academic circles to undertaking socially useful research that provides guidance for action rather than simply understanding. The increased demand for decision-makers to demonstrate efficacy has been a second driver. Third has been the preference for pragmatic rather than ideological public policy.

The assumption behind the push for evidence-based policymaking is that public policy will have greater efficacy if informed by the best available evidence. The expected increase in efficacy is even greater in developing countries where the lack of capacity to produce and utilise evidence presents a critical barrier to countries' understanding and therefore addressing the social, cultural, economic, political and environmental contexts of their particular development challenges (see, amongst others, AusAID 2012; Court and Young 2004; Jones *et al.* 2009b; Mednizabal *et al.* 2011; Sutcliffe and Court 2005). A number of issues in particular can contribute to the less established nature of evidence for decision-making in developing countries. First are issues of operating in more restrictive political contexts with less public representation and limited political freedoms. Ongoing or recent histories of conflict and associated political volatility will also hinder the application and appreciation of evidence. Other factors include heavily centralised governance structures and restrictive media freedoms (Sutcliffe and Court 2005: 3-5).

Precise meanings of the terms 'evidence' and 'evidence-based policy' are however somewhat contested and fuzzy although the latter appears to always be presented as good practice to aspire to. Some theorists have viewed the terms narrowly as essentially relating to research evidence. Broadbent (2012: 6), for instance, argues that although research-based evidence is a 'wide-ranging term' it describes "... the way in which findings are arrived at – scientific, independent, academic, rigorous, subject to validation and open to critique". Most of the literature however assumes the term encompasses more than academic research evidence. By and large 'evidence' is viewed as encapsulating a variety of knowledge types and 'evidence-based policy' more as a process that aims to capture such informed knowledge.

Head (2010: 13) argues that evidence-based policy is an "aspiration" rather than an "outcome" and as such is best understood as the 'quest for rigorous and reliable knowledge'. Fisher and Vogel (2008) note that it is difficult to identify exact definitions as it means different things to different actors. They suggest this is because the term is a both "practice and discourse" and as such is a "fuzzy, value-laden concept" that attempts to encapsulate "aspirations and approaches (p. 1). and Court and Young (2004: 3) reject 'specific definitions' of research and favour "any systematic effort to increase the stock of knowledge", whilst for Sutcliffe and Court (2006: 1) evidence-based policymaking is a "... discourse or set of methods which informs the policy process rather than one which aims directly to affect the eventual goals of policy". Research knowledge, project and program implementation knowledge, and knowledge generated by the participation of civil society, for example are all understood as important types of 'evidence' that can and should be captured in policymaking (Davies 2004; Jones *et al.* 2009a). Fisher and Vogel (2008: 1) argue that recognising this is important as to be 'pro-poor', policy formulation should "... explore a wide range of evidence [...] including non-research evidence and evidence which conveys realities as lived by poor people".

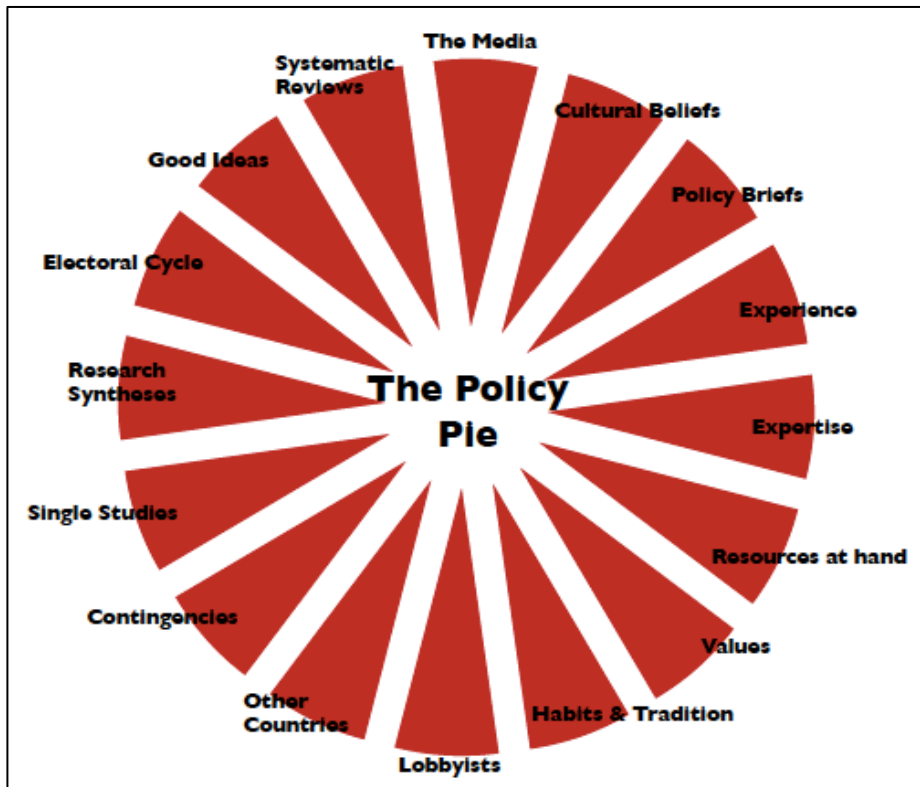
The KSI acknowledges that research evidence is not the be-all and end-all of policy-making, rather only "...one element in the complicated mix of factors and forces behind governmental policy decisions" (AusAID, 2012: 9). Therefore if decision-making is to be evidence-based, research knowledge needs to be heard amongst the myriad of other factors and forces at play in policy-making processes. Campbell's (2011) 'policy pie' diagram illustrates this well. Research is simply one component of knowledge, or one 'piece of the pie', amongst any number of other types of knowledge that must be taken on board by decision-makers. Shaxson (2010: 3) agrees, stressing that producers, communicators and users of research must remember that research is "... but one voice in the knowledge 'ecology'" and that it therefore must effectively collaborate and compete with a wealth of other types of knowledge.

Young (2008) provides a neat summary of much of the knowledge-to-policy literature by identifying a number of factors evidence-based research projects require if they are to be successful in the complex task of engaging with policymakers and thus influence policy. It is suggested that international experience shows research-based projects should:

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- focus on current policy problems;
- engage policymakers closely throughout the research process – from problem identification, conducting the research, and drawing out policy recommendations from the results;
- understand the political factors which may enhance or impede uptake of research and implement strategies to address them; and,
- invest heavily in engagement and communication activities.

Volume 3, Diagram 1: The 'Policy Pie'



(Campbell 2011: 8)

In light of the factors discussed above, there have been attempts to shift terminology from 'evidence-based' to 'evidence-informed' or 'evidence-influenced' (see, for instance, Bassey 2013; Campbell 2011; Davies 2004; Davies and Nutley 2001; Court and Young 2004; Sutcliffe and Court 2005). Davies and Nutley capture the reasoning for this:

*The term 'evidence-based' when attached as a modifier to policy or practice has become part of the lexicon of academics, policy people, practitioners and even client groups. Yet such glib terms can obscure the sometimes only-limited role that evidence can, does, or even should play. In recognition of this, we would prefer 'evidence-influenced', or even 'evidence aware' (Davies and Nutley 2001: 86).*

The KSI is inline with this literature in understanding both that evidence entails numerous types of knowledge and that 'evidence-based policy' should be taken as a collection of processes in which efforts are made to ensure evidence influences policy (see AusAID 2012). Therefore the discussion in this literature synthesis concerning capacity strengthening for improved evidence-based policymaking is conducted under the following assumptions:

- that 'evidence' needs to be understood as potentially incorporating a wide range of knowledge types as opposed to simply academic research evidence;
- that evidence is more likely to influence decision-making processes if the focus is on process rather than outcome. That is, understanding the process of how and when evidence influences in the wider policymaking process is more important than aiming for an 'evidence-based policy' as a final product; and,

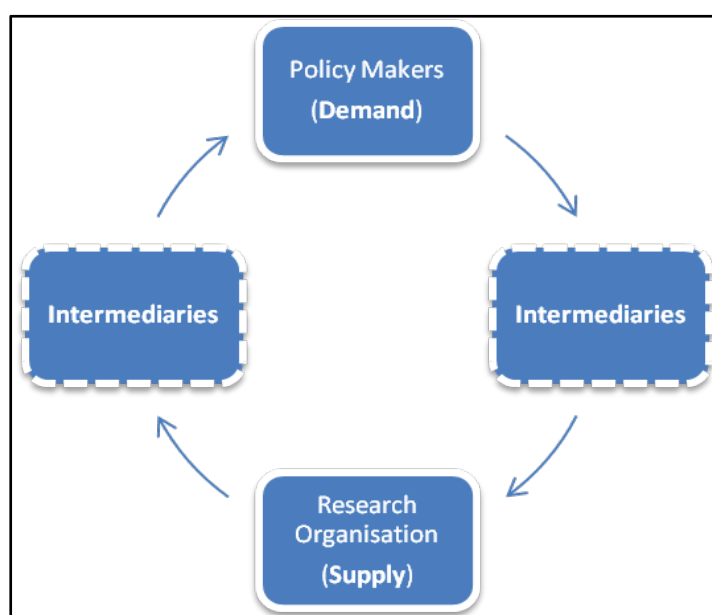
- that evidence is only one element in the complicated mix of factors that determine policymaking processes.

### 2.2. The knowledge-to-policy cycle

Given the above the question then becomes one of transmission; how knowledge ‘flows’ between producers and users (Head 2010: 19). How does the evidence find its way into the policy-making process so that decision-making is better informed? Court and Young (2004) make the case that this is especially important in developing country contexts as less attention has been paid to research-policy links in developing countries and thus there is even less systematic understanding of when and how research feeds into development policy. The KSI uses the conceptual mechanism of the ‘knowledge-to-policy cycle’ as a way of conceiving the forces and processes behind the provision and inclusion of evidence in policymaking.

The interactions between these elements that construct the knowledge-to-policy cycle are presented in diagram 2 below.

**Volume 3, Diagram 2: The Knowledge-to-Policy Cycle**



(AusAID 2012: 10)

Though the knowledge-to-policy cycle is conceptually divided into four functions, the KSI stresses that this is a model rather than a rigid description. Categories are porous and functions overlap. However the essential idea behind the concept is that producers and communicators of research evidence are often quite separated from decision-makers and the decision-making process. The four pillars therefore provide a mechanism for taking a planned and systematic approach to reforming Indonesia’s policy-making processes. Understanding the forces and processes amongst and between these pillars is important as “...continuous production of research for policy purposes allows decision makers ...to have access to a ready supply of evidence-based options for timelier, well-targeted and more responsive decisions” (AusAID 2012: 9). Thus strengthening the capacity of organisations within each of the knowledge sector pillars will better foster evidence-based policymaking.

The assumption behind the knowledge-to-policy cycle model is that the various elements and links across the cycle need to function effectively and understand each other if research evidence is to collaborate and compete with the other types of knowledge that vie for policymakers attention. This assumption provides the justification for the capacity strengthening interventions of the KSI. The need for better interaction between producers and users of knowledge is a well-recognised problem in evidence-based policy literature.

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As Campbell (2011: 2) argues "... researchers and decision-makers are two very separate communities ... The motivations and metrics of decision-makers are tethered to different poles ... They act in a world coloured by compromise". Therefore as Davies and Nutley(2001: 90) make clear there is a need to "...bring research producers, research funders and commissioners, policy makers, and practitioners into much closer and more sustained collaborations" (2001: 90).

In conceptualising the knowledge-to-policy cycle as one component of the wider policy-making process, the KSI rejects traditional linear models of policy-making. The problem with these linear models was that they suggested policy-making could be a relatively neutral and objective process, which it is not (Jones 2011). Again this approach brings the KSI inline with much of the literature on strengthening evidence-based decision-making. The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) (ODI, 2012) for example has suggested the KSI as a model of good practice based in part on the fact that the initiative takes a 'whole systems' approach that focuses on the wider 'processes and drivers behind the use and uptake of new or existing knowledge'. Such approaches emphasise the role of those actors traditionally understood as external to the policy process as opposed to simply the role of researchers and decision-makers (Broadbent 2012: 7).

Whole systems approaches were developed in response to the shortcomings of simple linear knowledge-to-policy models. In linear models researchers disseminate their findings directly to a target audience who in turn assimilate this knowledge into their decision-making. This leaves little room for the complex mix of factors and forces described above. Best and Holmes (2010) outline three generations of thinking about what they term the 'knowledge to action' cycle. This outline is a useful summary of how whole systems approaches have built upon limitations of previous conceptual models to place emphasis on the relationships between producers and users within larger policy-making systems. The three generations are:

- linear models, in which researchers produce and disseminate knowledge to end users which is then incorporated into policy and practice;
- relationship models, which place greater emphasis on the exchange of knowledge and development of networks between knowledge producers and users with common interests; and
- systems models, which assume: knowledge producers are embedded within relationships of linkage and exchange, which in turn are embedded within a larger system that is shaped by culture, structures, priorities, and capacities.

(Best and Holmes, 2010: 628)

Jones et al (2009a) note that systems approaches present a number of implications for knowledge-to-policy understanding. First, is the fact it problematises a 'knowledge-driven' view of the policy process. This makes the assumption that policy-making involves pragmatic decision-making in uncertain and ambiguous contexts. Second, such approaches demand the starting point to addressing policy challenges must be the whole system that affects the process of knowledge production and use. It is not enough to start with a research-based 'problem' that requires 'solving' by researchers. Diagnosis of the whole policy-making system to identify and understand barriers and constraints is required. At this point feasible and effective intervention opportunities can be identified. Overall the authors suggest whole systems approaches emphasise:

- the role of demand for knowledge not just the supply of it, and therefore the importance of strengthening the demand side;
- understanding and capturing tacit knowledge as well as explicit and codified knowledge;
- the role of linkages and networks in channelling the uptake of knowledge;
- facilitating trust and interaction amongst a diverse range of actors;
- understanding the structural factors and national context that shape the use of knowledge; and,
- the need for 'intermediary' functions to facilitate 'supply' and 'demand' exchanges.

(Jones et al. 2009a: 26)

Whilst Best and Holmes indicate widespread support for the *systems* model, they suggest four aspects that are not receiving sufficient attention:

- the need for a wider interpretation of what constitutes knowledge (including tacit and explicit knowledge);

- the importance of distributed, collaborative and supportive leadership throughout the knowledge-policy cycle;
- the use of organisational networks to increase the effectiveness of the cycle; and
- the need to recognise issues that may hinder research to policy efforts, including individual and organisational credibility and reputation, politics and power.

To summarise, the KSI knowledge-to-policy cycle takes a systems approach to conceptualising policymaking. The KSI's capacity strengthening interventions therefore place great emphasis on understanding the role of knowledge in the overall policy process and focuses on further building the elements, links and interactions to make the knowledge-to-policy cycle function in a more influential manner in the larger system.

### 2.3. Capacity strengthening

This contextual and theoretical discussion concludes with a brief synthesis of existing literature relating to using knowledge and learning for capacity strengthening for knowledge-based theory and practice in the development sphere.

Capacity strengthening has gained acceptance as a priority in international development interventions over the past decade, recognised as a critical issue in the 2005 Paris Declaration. Though acknowledging that the concept can be confusingly all-encompassing, the OECD (2006) claims that capacity strengthening is a critical factor in meeting the Millennium Development Goals. The OECD defines "capacity" as the ability of people, organisations and governments to manage their affairs successfully, and "capacity strengthening" as the process through which capacity is created, strengthened, adapted and maintained over time (p. 12). Knowledge – of which research evidence is one form as per the above discussion – is a key component of capacity. The generation and acquisition of local knowledge, as opposed to traditional development practice of injections of external expertise, allows local actors to own and replicate performances and results (Lim et al. 2001). Velho (2004) stresses the importance of this by suggesting it is only those countries capable of exploiting local research knowledge that are able to grow economically and improve the living conditions of their populations. AusAID makes clear that this assumption provides the KSI with its 'raison d'être' (see, for instance, AusAID 2012; Ford 2012; Nielsen 2010). However knowledge is more concentrated than wealth (see for example Nielsen 2010; Velho 2004) and Indonesia in particular has a poor concentration and production of knowledge (Nielsen 2010).

Knowledge-based capacity strengthening then can be understood as the various processes through which effective and dynamic knowledge-producing-and-using relationships between individuals, organisations or regions are built and strengthened (see, for instance, Shaxson *et al.* 2010). The end goal of knowledge-based capacity development is better policy and practice outcomes through improved production and uptake of evidence in decision-making (AusAID 2012; Andrews 2010; Lim et al. 2001; Mendizabal *et al.* 2011; Velho 2004). The importance of knowledge in development has long been appreciated. However development practitioners had traditionally conceived knowledge strengthening in a developing country as largely a one-way process involving a Northern partner transferring knowledge to a Southern partner as opposed to the systems-wide dynamic process described above. Since the move to capacity strengthening in the development sector, such North-South transfer is no longer seen as the appropriate modality. Rather, there is a need to focus on what Wilson (2007: 196) terms the "... 'absorptive capacity' of Southern partners – the ability and motivation to learn, rather than simply the capacity to receive a knowledge 'thing'". Reflecting these shifts, recent experience suggests that capacity strengthening programs for knowledge-based purposes need to be long-term, systematic yet flexible, and rooted in local ownership to ensure knowledge is developed and acquired locally (see, for instance, Shaxson *et al.* 2012; OECD 2006).

The literature in this review provides a wide-ranging discussion of theory and practice in strengthening capacity of government institutions, local non-government organisations or research institutes. Much of the capacity strengthening literature focussed on North-South and South-South partnerships as the principal mechanisms. The literature on capacity-strengthening-as-development-practice was inconsistent in approach. However three elements or levels at which capacity to produce, communicate and absorb research can be strengthened were consistently discussed across the literature as being central to capacity strengthening. Not all of the literature discussed these elements as being necessarily integrated or interlinked, though Vogel (2012), Jones et al. (2012), Mendizabal et al. (2011) and Shaxson (2010) are examples where the connections are explicitly acknowledged.

These authors noted that there are no clear boundaries between these levels. The three levels at which capacity to produce, communicate and absorb research can be strengthened are:

- development of individual skills and abilities;
  - development of effective, sufficiently resourced and efficient entities in which individuals can work; and,
  - creating enabling environments within entities for individuals.
- (see, amongst others, Andrews et al. 2012; Garten et al. 2008; Godfrey et al. 2002; Jones *et al.* 2012; Lim et al. 2001; Mendizabalet *al.* 2011; OECD 2006; Shaxson 2010; and Vogel 2012)

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1. Purpose of this section

The purpose of this section is to present the findings to the key question of this literature synthesis:

*What can we learn from international experience about strengthening the capacity of Indonesian supply side and intermediary organisations to improve the production and uptake of evidence?*

The rest of this section is structured in three parts that address the key literature question as well as the key questions for the overall review. Part 3.2 pulls together the discussions in the literature concerning intermediaries. The term intermediary is defined and various intermediary models are identified according to functions and roles. Part 3.3 discusses elements that make intermediaries effective. Part 3.4 briefly provides a definition of supply side organisations and notes how and when such organisations can be effective in the knowledge-to-policy cycle. This section and literature synthesis concludes with Part 3.5 that includes a discussion of lessons on what works to strengthen the capacity of these organisations.

#### 3.2. Intermediaries

This part aims to answer the key review questions concerning international experience around the various models including elements, structures, mechanisms and functions of intermediary organisations. The term intermediary is defined and various intermediary models are identified according to theorised functions and roles. We conclude with discussion of the elements that make intermediary organisations effective. The reason behind this in-depth review of in the light of the PAT, which was the less developed of the two pilots.

##### Defining intermediary models by functions and roles

There is a growing emphasis on intermediary organisations and functions in the knowledge-to-policy for development literature Fisher and Vogel (2008) suggest this enthusiasm is being driven in part by the assumption that intermediaries represent a new communication structure that contributes to a stronger enabling environment through multiple and hybrid communication and engagement channels. Tied in with this is the belief that pro-poor decision-making is improved when drawing on multiple sources of knowledge (see, for instance, AusAID 2012; Fisher 2010; Fisher and Vogel 2008).

Identifying a concise definition of what an intermediary is and does is challenging. Whilst the focus on the role of intermediary bodies is a recent trend in the development context, the intermediary concept has a longer history in other policy-making sectors. Whilst terminology tends to differ, it is evident that these terms essentially all refer to the same or similar functions. This literature synthesis has identified that principal amongst these interrelated concepts are 'knowledge brokering', 'intermediary' and 'boundary worker' (for discussions of intermediary functions falling under these categorisations see, amongst others, Fisher and Vogel 2008; Fisher and Kunaratnam 2007; Jones *et al.* 2009a; Michaels 2006; Thompson et al. 2006; Ward *et al.* 2009).

It is possible to trace the development and connectedness of these ideas by summarising discussions of the various functions and roles attributed to these terms (Jones et al. 2009). Doing this proves a useful method to determine what an intermediary engaged in knowledge-to-policy cycle work should look like and do. Thompson et al. (2009: 6) for example suggest that although terminology differs, all the concepts have two similarities 'cutting through them'.

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First is that all have an underlying assumption that increasing the availability of knowledge and strengthening interpersonal contacts inevitably leads to behavioural change. Second, that each actor within the various concepts is essentially a form of change agent.

Table 1 highlights the way in which discussion of functions identifies the commonalities between different intermediary labels across the literature. Recognising the interconnectedness of these terms has allowed expansion of literature and sectors covered in this synthesis. This in turn means that it is possible to draw on a greater depth of experience around effective intermediary models and functions, as well as lessons for supporting these organisations.

**Volume 3, Table 1: Commonalities of intermediary functions**

Concept	Author	Definition	Functions of Effective Intermediaries
Intermediary	Wolfe (2006)	'The actors who are involved in processes of generating, interpreting, organising or communicating information for a particular purpose or for particular groups' (p. 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information dissemination</li> <li>Provide a platform for multiple perspectives</li> <li>Play an advocacy role and lobby for particular groups or issues</li> <li>Facilitate interaction &amp; generate discussion amongst stakeholders in the research to policy-making cycle</li> <li>Assist in processes of mutual learning</li> </ul>
Information Intermediary		Intermediaries concerned with generating, filtering, editing and transmitting information (p. 11).	
Knowledge Intermediary		Intermediaries concerned with interacting with end-users in order to ensure a process of understanding achieved through shared learning (p. 11)	
Intermediary	Fisher & Vogel (2008)	'Actors who are involved in the processes of generating, interpreting, organising or communicating research based information for a particular purpose or for particular social groups' (p. 5) .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leverage access to research</li> <li>Acting as a repository of information</li> <li>Organising information to make it more accessible</li> <li>Summarising and synthesising a body of research to translate and tailor it to the needs of a policy maker</li> <li>Advocacy</li> <li>Facilitate dialogue and exchange</li> <li>Facilitate engagement between policy makers and researchers</li> </ul>
Information Intermediary		'Information intermediaries are primarily concerned with the accessibility, structuring, and packaging of information' (p. 5).	
Knowledge Intermediary		'Knowledge intermediaries are additionally concerned with interacting with their stakeholder groups to engage in the interpretation of information and use it to co-create new knowledge' (p. 5).	
Information Intermediary	Fisher (2010)	Information intermediaries are concerned with enabling access to information from multiple sources and engaged in informing, aggregating, compiling and signalling information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informing by disseminating information</li> <li>Enabling and maintaining access to information</li> <li>Making information more palatable for audiences</li> <li>Linking and matchmaking expertise to need</li> <li>Creating demand for knowledge use</li> <li>Supporting marginalised voices</li> <li>Collaboration both short and long-term</li> <li>Strengthening resilience of institutions</li> <li>Enabling accountability</li> </ul> <p>Encouraging social change and social learning</p>
Knowledge Intermediary		Knowledge intermediaries: concerned with helping people make sense of and apply information and engaged in disseminating, translating and communicating knowledge	
Knowledge Broker		Knowledge brokers are concerned with improving knowledge use	
Innovation Broker		Innovation brokers are concerned with changing contexts to be	

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Concept	Author	Definition	Functions of Effective Intermediaries
Knowledge Intermediary	Jones et al. (2009a)	Actors who 'broker understanding between researchers and policy communities, but also among the general public, in advancing effective and context sensitive ... policy strategies' (p. 1).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce audience-appropriate information through short synthesis-type products such as policy briefs;</li> <li>Promote inclusive dialogue, interaction and discussion between researchers, policy-makers, other stakeholders &amp; involve the public;</li> <li>Strengthen capacity of policymakers by helping access and interpret a range of credible evidence</li> <li>Network with knowledge producers and other intermediaries</li> </ul>
Boundary Workers	Michaels (2009)	Organisations or individuals that straddle the shifting, socially constructed divide between knowledge and policy to facilitate transference of policy-relevant evidence and bi-directional flow of information between researchers and policy-makers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inform decision makers with targeted dissemination of data</li> <li>'Match make' and facilitate appropriate communication between decision makers &amp; researchers</li> <li>Engage relevant stakeholders &amp; facilitate collaboration between them and decision makers</li> <li>Build capacity through activities such as co-management, joint fact finding and co-production of knowledge</li> </ul>
Knowledge Brokers	Ward <i>et al.</i> (2009)	An individual, organisation or a structure whose role is to make research and practice more accessible to others and in doing so, seek an equitable relationship between research and practice (p.2).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge management</li> <li>Linkages and exchange</li> <li>Capacity building</li> </ul>
	Land & Water Australia (2006)	"Knowledge brokering is typically used by intermediaries [knowledge brokers] in mediating between sources of knowledge [usually science and research] and users of knowledge" (p. 6).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring people together to build links and share ideas</li> <li>Identify information gaps and needs</li> <li>Apply information to solve problems</li> <li>Assist groups to communicate and understand each others' needs and abilities</li> <li>Guide people to sources of research</li> </ul>
	van Kammen et al. (2006)	A knowledge broker is an entity that "... focuses on organizing the interactive process between the producers and users of knowledge so that they can co-produce feasible and research-informed policy options... Knowledge brokering is a two-way process that aims to (1) encourage policy-makers to be more responsive to research findings, and (2) stimulate researchers to conduct policy-relevant research and translate their findings to be meaningful to policy-makers" (p. 608).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organising and managing joint forums for policy-makers and researchers</li> <li>Building relationships of trust</li> <li>Setting agendas and common goals</li> <li>Signalling mutual opportunities</li> <li>Clarifying information needs</li> <li>Commissioning syntheses of research with high policy relevance</li> <li>Packaging research syntheses and facilitating access to evidence</li> <li>Strengthening capacity for knowledge translation</li> <li>Communicating and sharing advice</li> <li>Monitoring impact on the 'know-do' gap</li> </ul>

From the above table, it is clear that there is enough cross-over regarding functions for definitions of the term 'intermediary' to be used interchangeably with 'knowledge broker' and 'boundary worker'. As Stone (2002: 292) summarises, ultimately an intermediary – whether an individual, an organisation such as a think tank or a network – needs to have a 'flair' for interpreting and communicating technical or theoretical policy work, as well as for networking and engaging both supply and demand sides. With this in mind, this document uses the term 'intermediary' as one that covers all variations listed above.

The discussion of intermediary functions in Table 3.1 makes it possible to synthesise the core set of personal brokering skills required of effective intermediary actors (for broader discussion see Campbell 2011; Fisher 2010)

- *Personal attributes*: inquisitive, enthusiastic, flexible, inspirational, imaginative, as neutral as possible, highly credible and keenly interested in learning. They should be skilled analysts, able to see the 'big picture' and be able to readily identify links between ideas and pieces of information.
- *Evidence gathering skills*: be aware of the best sources of synthesised evidence and original studies within their content area and have focused expertise in searching these sources for research evidence. They should also be skilled in searching for less formal contextual evidence such as policy documents and evaluation reports. The ability to evaluate the effectiveness of knowledge brokering activities is also a necessary skill.
- *Critical appraisal skills*: should be adept at appraising evidence to evaluate its quality, importance, and applicability to a particular context; have knowledge of the sector and the broader relevant environment.
- *Communication skills*: strong oral and written communication skills and use a variety of methods targeted to the needs of the diverse stakeholders; active listening skills to gain insight into the interests, issues and innovations of their network members.
- *Mediation skills*: skilled mediators; foster collaboration amongst individuals and groups who would not normally work together; reconcile misunderstandings, facilitate the identification of shared goals, and negotiate mutually beneficial roles for all group members.

### 3.3. Effective intermediary models

Intermediary functions, as presented in Table 3.1, have been used in the literature to explore possible intermediary models.

#### Conceptual models

Diagrams 3 and 4 illustrate two conceptual models of intermediaries. The first diagram develops a model outlined by Fisher and Kunaratnam (2007) in which intermediaries can operate across a knowledge-to-policy (or knowledge-to-decision-makers) continuum. Under this continuum model, intermediaries choose operational models that primarily focus resources either on working more closely with research producers or with decision-makers. This choice would be based upon the perceived need for intermediary functions in the given policymaking context and the particular abilities and resources of the intermediary in question. Such a model proves useful in helping to fill the theoretical gap identified by Michaels (2009) concerning how intermediary functions 'mesh' with other actors within decision-making processes.

Diagram 4 groups intermediaries into three broad models dependent upon role: 'knowledge management', 'linkage, exchange and advocacy', and 'facilitation and capacity strengthening'. These three principal roles, identified by Ward et al. (2009), can be matched with the functions identified in Table 3. Under this framework intermediaries could opt for more or less complex and intensive operational models.

The diagram shows that, theoretically, the effectiveness of an intermediary increases as the roles it performs become more complex. 'Linkage, exchange and advocacy', and 'facilitation and capacity strengthening' are more involved roles than 'knowledge management'. They require intermediaries to work more intensely with a greater number of key actors in the policymaking process. The idea then is that the more complex the functional role, the greater the interaction with both the supply and demand sides, and thus the greater the potential to ensure relevant evidence is influential in policymaking processes. Jones *et al.* (2009b) and Ward *et al.* (2009), for example, have found that of all the potential functions of government intermediaries, it is those concerned with building the capacity of policymakers to use scientific research and networking between producers and policymakers that are most likely to have greatest impact. However the more complex the role, the greater the demand on resources and abilities.

The functions covered under 'facilitation and capacity strengthening' require more specialised skill sets and resources than do those under 'knowledge management'. It is also suggested that as an intermediary moves along the x-axis it would still incorporate the functions from previous roles. The potential for increased impact then needs to be weighed against the intermediary's ability to meet the additional capacity and resource demands.

### Structural models

Shaxson *et al.* (2012) note that intermediary structural models can include those that sit outside government (such bodies could include universities, think tanks, civil society organisations and other networks), those that are inside government (such as evidence, policy and strategy units), and those that exist in between (commissions and advisory councils). An important suggestion from the literature concerns *institutionalising* intermediary bodies. Embedding intermediaries within reputable and supportive government institutions has been found to improve technical and intellectual support to decision-makers as well as helping to assure credibility of information in the eyes of both researchers and decision-makers (Kammen *et al.* 2006; Fisher and Vogels 2008). Kammen *et al.* (2006) argue embedding intermediary bodies in government institutions can be especially effective in developing countries by providing decision-makers with a clear conduit for evidence. This is important as decision-makers in developing countries are often less 'evidence literate' yet can be surrounded by the 'noise' of an often less rigorous knowledge sector.

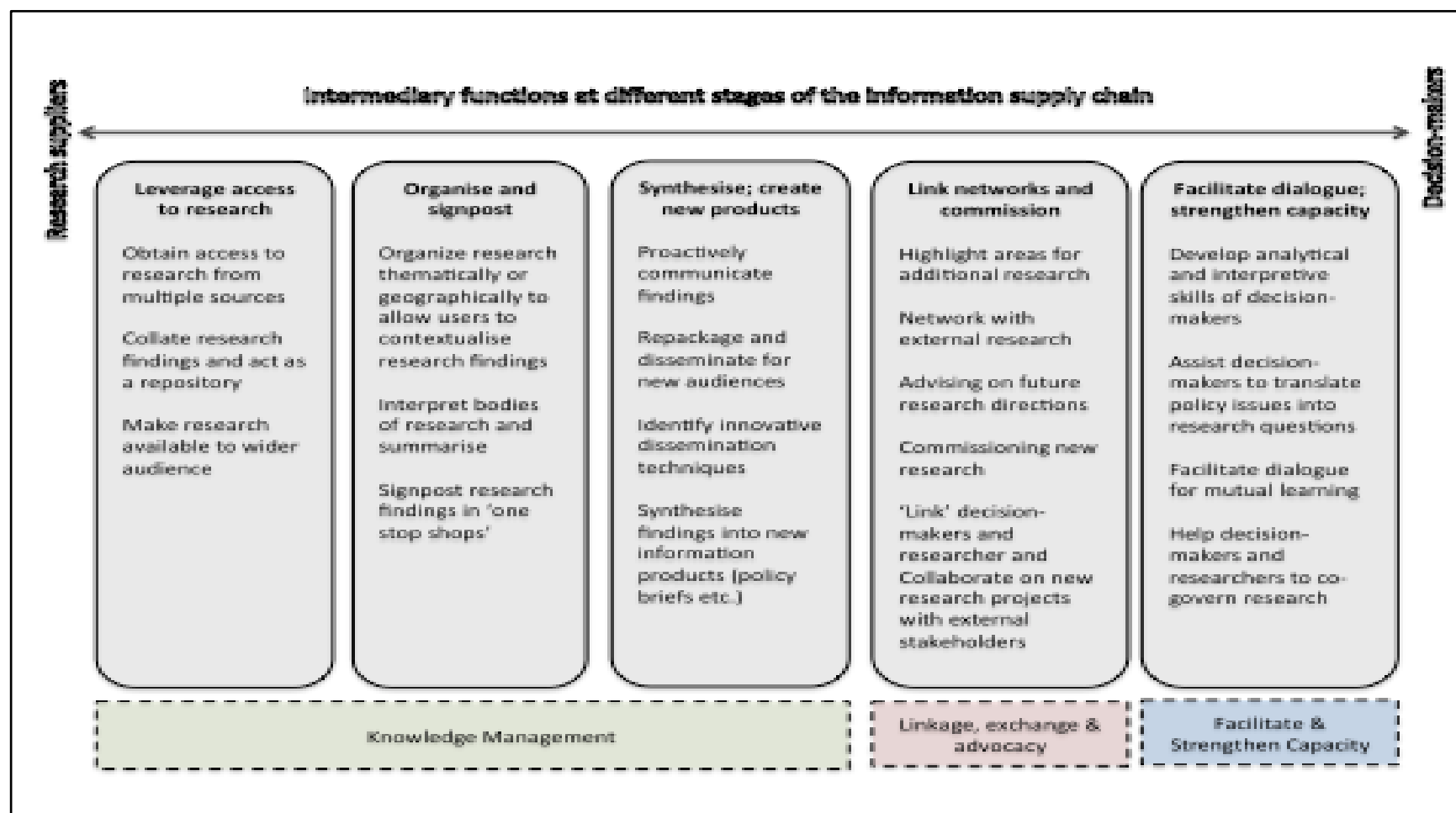
Ajoy Datta's Think Piece (Datta 2013) makes mention of two such institutionalised government intermediary bodies (operating under 'think tanks' monikers): The Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS) and the Chinese equivalent, CASS. Datta notes that these embedded models can help ensure that capacity strengthening interventions – which are inherently political processes because they seek institutional change – succeed by providing champions from within the agency. As we will see in 3.5, the benefit of such endogenous approaches is a key lesson of good practice for supporting intermediary and supply organisations to strengthen their capacity. It is also worth noting that the most established and arguably more effective intermediary models at the workshop conducted as part of this review were those embedded within government. Fisher and Vogel (2008) make the important point that although there are potential benefits, being embedded carries a risk that intermediaries lose their autonomy and integrity in research matters.

Another important structural element of effective intermediary models is the capacity to be *cross-sectoral* with well connected networks. As noted in Section 2, research producers and policymakers are often two separate communities and lack appropriate understanding of one another's operational contexts (see, for instance, Campbell 2011; Shaxson 2010; Land and Water Australia (2006); Williams 2010). Intermediaries can thus benefit from anomalous hybrid structures that allow them to 'exist at the boundaries' and balance the different identities between knowledge producers and users (Fisher 2010: 8). Sin (2008) uses the term 'cross-pollinators' to describe how such well-connected intermediary bodies are better able to identify opportunities to share useful information among relevant sectors. Cross-sectoral models are similar to the practice of 'co-production of knowledge' outlined by Michaels (2009) in which institutional practices foster production of usable knowledge by bringing together policy makers, scientists and other key stakeholders to learn together as they seek to address an issue.

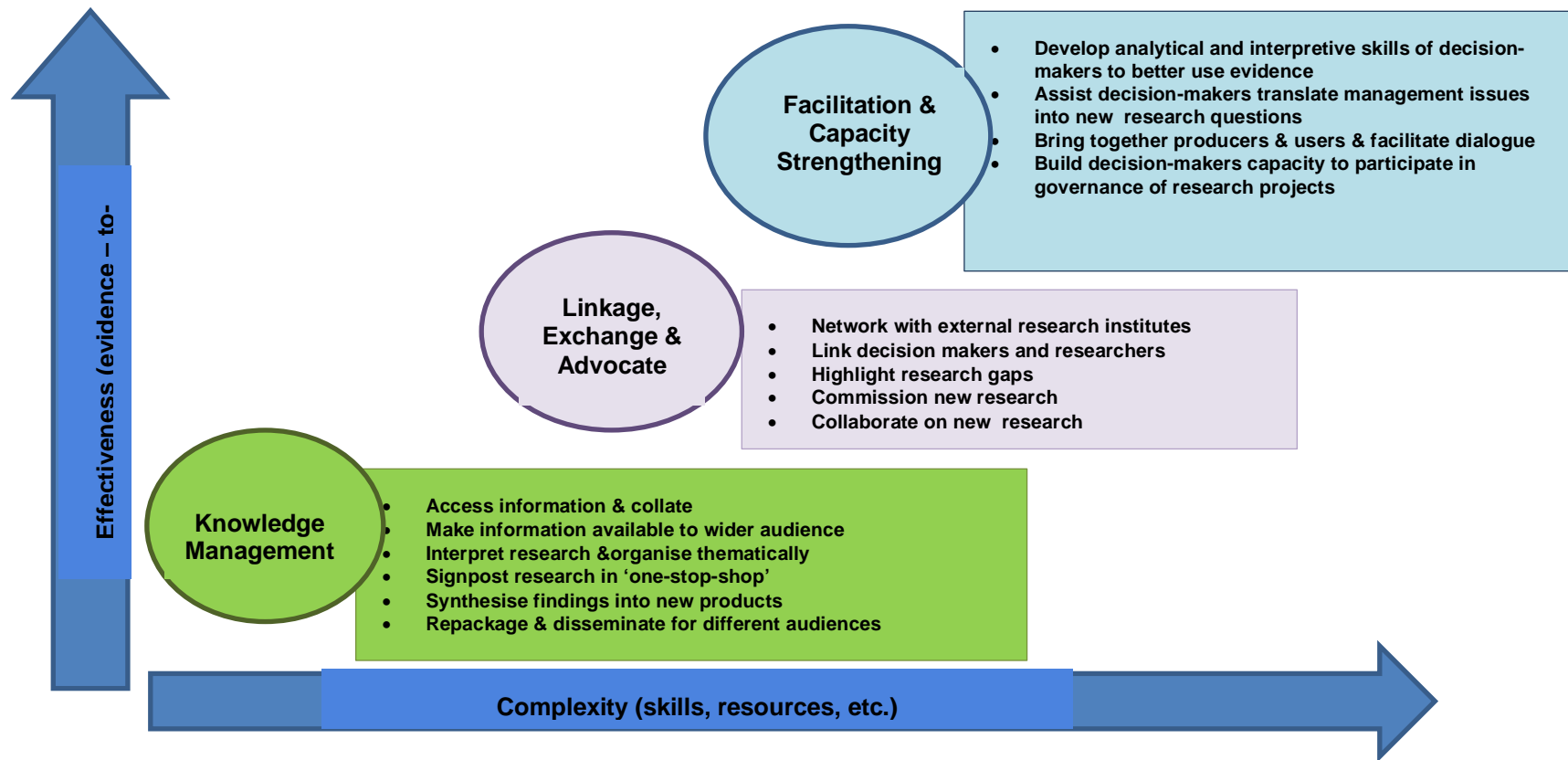
Being both embedded and cross-sectoral helps intermediaries to be proactive, not merely responding to change. It is also a strategy recommended in the literature as preferable to passively reacting to new developments (see, for instance, Campbell 2011; Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith 1992 and Johnson and Wilson 1999).

Volume 3, Diagram 3: Intermediary functions across the information supply chain

(continuum concept adapted from Fisher and Kunaratnam 2007)



Volume 3, Diagram 4: Three broad roles of intermediaries showing increasing complexity



(source: Euan Hind)

### 3.4. Defining the supply side

Defining supply-side organisations in-depth was not a specific focus question for this literature synthesis. These organisations are sufficiently defined in the KSI design documents and whilst those documents note a problem of volume in regards to the number of organisations in Indonesia that produce applied knowledge for development that is of high quality, AusAID is clearer on the separated nature of supply functions as opposed to intermediary functions (AusAID 2012). This clarity comes about in large part because there is significant literature on supply side organisations as most donor-led support efforts to improve evidence-based policy has concentrated on supply-side organisations (Datta and Rodriquez 2013). This being the case, the discussion below on supply-side organisations refers to: "... organisations and individuals, such as research organisations that produce knowledge and evidence, that influence pro-poor development policies" (AusAID 2012).

### 3.5. Lessons in supporting supply side and intermediary organisations to strengthen capacity

This discussion focuses on intervention options that target capacity at technical, organisational and enabling environment levels, as per the KSI design. A significant body of work in this field has been developed. In synthesising the frequent capacity strengthening approaches taken by donors, Datta and Rodriquez find that donors usually instigate a mix of interventions activities. Typical mixes of interventions include:

- core funding managed by the grantee to support whole of organisation activities;
- grants for specific projects;
- programme funding to organisations for a specific set of projects over medium to long-term;
- technical assistance;
- mentoring for individual and team facilitation;
- knowledge exchange fora;
- collaborative work between northern and southern entities; and,
- scholarships and fellowships for individuals

(Datta and Rodriquez 2013: 6)

The findings from this synthesis support those in the list above. The remainder of this section examines the lessons on contemporary good practice capacity strengthening for supply-side and intermediary organisations under the following thematic headings:

- Selection of partners;
- Endogenous learning;
- Long-term commitment;
- Funding modalities;
- Technical assistance;
- Strengthen organisational capacities;
- Networks and communities of practice; and
- Improving performance indicators and monitoring and Evaluation.

#### Selection of Partners

The literature is clear that the selection of partners for capacity strengthening programs is a critical initial step if such programs are to be a success. The following good practice principles for funders are consistently highlighted across the literature (see, in particular, Bennet *et al.* 2012; Buldioski 2013; Court and Young 2006; Datta 2013; Datta and Rodriquez 2013; Jones *et al.* 2009b; Kammen *et al.* 2006; Kilelu *et al.* 2012). Key good practice principles for funders to consider when developing criteria to identify supply-side and intermediary partners are:

- i. careful and deliberate in matching production and intermediary services to a demonstrated real demand for services from country level stakeholders. Rudy Prawiradinata (cited in Shaxson 2010: 9) from BAPPENAS has suggested that deliberate matching in order to stimulate policy-maker demand for research is especially important in Indonesia.

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Firstly he argues that in Indonesia local level policy issues are more numerous and problematic than at the national level. This is exacerbated by limited supply of local-level research for local-level policy-making. It is therefore important to consider which supply and intermediary organisations decision-makers are partnering with which policymakers as this has a significant effect on contextual understanding and on demand for research.

- ii. rejecting the outliers and selecting partners with sufficient existing capacity and track record of influencing policymaking to ensure partners are able to undertake the required policy analysis or a relevant plan of action. A review of more than 50 case studies from developing economies by Court and Young (2006) found that greater credibility is conferred to research findings produced by organisations with a strong existing reputation.
- iii. identifying the organisations that have the capacity? Or another words, to benefit from the specified mix of capacity interventions. It is worth noting there is debate across the literature over the benefits or otherwise to donor and grantee alike about selecting those organisations with higher existing capacity. Datta and Rodriguez (2013), for example, note that these strategies have the potential danger of reinforcing 'cliques' of supply and intermediary organisations with more established brands. The authors also suggest that younger, 'up and coming' think tanks with less established organisational systems might be more responsive to policy challenges as they find change less challenging.
- iv. clarify functions to be undertaken by partners and the rationale for these. The functions might be undertaken in varying models such as:
  - embedding researchers in a government agency to tailor knowledge for key decision-makers;
  - a clearing house for new research on relevant themes;
  - collaborative partnerships between a national level agency and its provincial counterparts; and
  - collaborative partnerships between two or more national or international agencies.
- v. demonstrated willingness by the agency to improve organisational governance through:
  - provision of a specific plan for improvement;
  - existence of some records of changes that have started;
  - internal mechanisms for reflecting on performance and a demonstrated commitment to evaluation;
  - nominated persons to provide the institutional leadership for change; and
  - demonstrable sufficient existing capacity to undertake the required policy analysis or a relevant plan of action to achieve this capacity.

In addition to the synthesised findings above it is worth separately noting the findings from McGann's (2009) extensive review of best practice principles for pre-grant assessment for strengthening policy research institutes. The findings were the result of consultations with 16 private and public donors, as well as 17 think tank networks that are recipients. McGann (2009: 8-9) recommends funders consider the following selection criteria during pre-grant assessments of research institutions:

- evidence that the institute's director has a proven track record as a manager, policy research scholar, and builder of policy networks;
- degree of transparency in governance structures;
- degree of transparency in financial operations and records;
- the institute's financial viability and history of grant management;
- understanding of the terms and purpose of the grant;
- evidence of capacity to conduct and communicate research that is rigorous and relevant;
- demonstrate a critical mass of research and administrative staff;
- evidence of ability to identify and select policy research projects with high impact;
- evidence of ability to generate additional domestic financial support;
- programmatic relevance of institution to the core capacity needs of the state or region;
- demonstrate a strategic plan for both organisation and program development;
- ability to network with others organisations; and
- ability to submit a realistic estimated budget that does not request coverage of administrative costs totalling more than 50% of the organisation's total administrative budget.

### Encourage endogenous learning

It is widely accepted that successful capacity strengthening programs are delivered through partnerships that empower recipients through autonomy to develop their own strategies (see, for instance, Andrews *et al.* 2012; Buldioski 2012, 2013; Datta 2013; Datta and Rodriguez 2013 and; Ortiz and Taylor 2009).

This presents a challenge to donors in balancing their needs with that of their recipients. Yeo (2013) highlights this dilemma in his think piece. The question for donors is how do they "... ensure organizational effectiveness while still respecting the autonomy of these institutions and allowing them to develop as credible players in the policy arena? He notes that 'arms-length' approaches adopted by some donors has come at a price, as "...many of these think tanks are ineffective since there is no pressure on them to be effective policy actors".

However the literature is clear that development policies work best when they are designed and implemented by local actors, institutions and organisations. Local design and ownership draws on local expertise and knowledge to define problems in a manner consistent with local context. This is crucial as, if knowledge programmes are to work, they must align closely with local realities of what needs to be generated and learned (see, for example, Datta 2013; Jones and Mendizabal 2010; Maruri 2011; The Think Tank Initiative 2007; Ubels *et al.* 2010; Yeo 2013). Mackay (2008) also adds that local ownership of aid programmes creates a positive feedback cycle in building long-term demand for knowledge and exchange. Jones and Mendizabal (2010) find that this local ownership of knowledge generation and transfer programmes is just as important in Northern partners as it is for their Southern counterparts.

Where initiatives are driven by the donor or managing contactor rather than by the beneficiary organisation, there is a great risk of what Andrews *et al.* (2012) term 'isomorphic mimicry'. This is where a development partner adopts the camouflage of organisational forms promoted by development agents as 'modern' or 'best practice' but does not institutionalise the changes at a functional level. With these concerns in mind, the think pieces from Buldioski (2013), Datta (2013), Mendizabal (2013) and Yeo (2013) discuss the need for demand for specific capacity strengthening programs to be led by the grantee. This suggests that where grantees take active interest, willingness and leadership of intervention programs there is greater chance that the ultimate outcomes will see strengthened capacities as opposed to mere substitution. Buldioski (2012) as well as Struyk (2002) argue that one method to encourage this endogenous leadership is asking think tanks or intermediaries to co-finance elements of programs (see section on 'funding modalities' below).

The nature of donor-grantee relationships can also influence the degree of endogenous learning. (Mendizabal 2013). The think pieces by Datta (2013), Buldioski (2013), and Yeo (2013) agree that the relationship between donor and grantee is a direct explanatory variable for the outcome of think tanks' or intermediaries' development.

In his synthesis of these think pieces Mendizabal (2013) highlights the following lessons regarding donor-grantee relationships:

- donors are as dependent on the grantees as the grantees are on them;
- capacity strengthening interventions have become income generating or business development efforts rather than being demand led initiatives. Some think tanks are keen to accept these interventions as a way of securing additional funds. Others take advantage of capacity building interventions to secure income for their employees' participation;
- donors compete with the grantees for human resources. For good researchers the funder is also a highly desirable employer;
- donors and grantees are not always keen on new players. Donors rarely invest in new think tanks and think tanks themselves benefit from keeping their community small, as new players would affect their influence and reduce their income; and,
- often the relationship is too close for the grantee to remain independent of the funders. This can lead to interventions that do not necessarily benefit them, or to the donor not being able to be objective about the grantee's performance.

The findings above point to the need for a donor-grantee relationship that is more like that of an active, ongoing mentor or 'critical friend'. Though this type of approach is resource intensive – requiring more than the traditional project management with which donors are familiar – it promotes endogenous learning. Stenhouse (1975) introduced the idea of a critical friend as a partner providing advice and working with the 'researcher' in the action research. The key roles ascribed to a critical friend include offering support, providing challenge, consultancy, leading inquiry, facilitating resources, matchmaking with similar others, and brokering knowledge (Kember *et al.* 1997).

These attributes help to avoid what Colom (2013) describes as one of the pitfalls of grantors using participatory approaches to continue to shape and direct processes. Whilst the roles associated with a 'critical friend' approach to donor-grantee relationships are inherent in action learning they also reflect contemporary good practices of capacity strengthening (see, for further discussion, Adler *et al.* 2009; Baser *et al.* 2008; OECD 2006; Watson 2006a).

### Long-term commitments

The need for long-term programme planning and support was a common best practice theme across the literature (Mendizabal *et al.* 2011; Lim *et al.* 2001; Shaxson *et al.* 2012). There were multiple benefits linked to long-term support. Lim *et al.* (2001) suggests that attaining and applying knowledge-based capacity is a medium-term to long-term process that necessitates recurrent interaction. It was also a common theme in all of the interviews conducted in this research - that strengthening the capacity of research institutes requires hands-on mentors who work closely with an institute over a sustained period of time as opposed to short-term or one-off activities.

Numerous studies across the literature (see, for example, Jones and Mendizabal 2010; Maruri 2011; Think Tank Initiative 2007; Ubels *et al.* 2010) found that that local input into the design and implementation stages benefits if the grantees are provided with initial commitments to long-term funding and support. The 15-year design of the KSI is recognition of the importance of long-term commitment to support (AusAID 2012). These findings infer that short-term interventions would work against sustainable capacity strengthening. Nakabugo *et al.* (2010), for example, make the point that short-term North-South partnerships often become focused on one-directional transfer of knowledge and capacity as there is little time for other approaches. Lim *et al.* (2001) suggest a number of methods to encourage repeated interactions (and thus capacity development) in medium to long-term programmes, including: situating knowledge exchange within a series of other capacity development interventions; inclusion of mechanisms to provide continuing motivation and support; and, maintaining peer-to-peer interactions throughout the life-cycle of interventions.

Another benefit highlighted in the literature is that long-term support strengthens capacity to self-identify and self-assess organisational needs and project goals. A number of authors (see, for instance, Andrews *et al.* 2012; CHF 2008; Lardone and Roggero 2010; Think Tank Initiative 2007; Velho 2004) found that donors should spend significant time in utilising their technical expertise to assist Southern partners self-define activities, monitor results and define next steps. In particular these studies found that local nomination and definition of problems further helped build ownership as well as drawing out and strengthening local capacity by relying on local ability and expertise to the greatest extent possible.

### Funding modalities

The literature makes clear that financial stability is crucial if supply and intermediary organisations are to function effectively. Financial support mechanisms are therefore one of the central ways through which a donor can provide support to strengthen capacity of supply and intermediary organisations. Reviews of international experience in funding for knowledge-to-policy capacity strengthening programs indicate that donors typically provide a mix of core funding and funds for project grants (see Datta and Rodriguez 2013; McGann 2009). Whatever the exact mix the ultimate goal is the sustainability of the supply and intermediary organisations being supported. This being the case, the key challenge for donors supporting such programs is to identify the appropriate balance between funding modalities in order to promote organisational sustainability (Datta and Rodriguez 2013).

Significant attention across the literature is given to the benefits for grantees of core funding. A number of findings related to core funding were consistently identified across the reviewed literature (for further discussion on the points below see, in particular, Block and Mills 2003; Datta and Rodriguez 2013; Lardone & Roggero 2010; Mahmood *et al.* 2011; McGann 2009; Nielsen 2010; Shaxson 2010; Spence 2011; Think Tank Initiative 2007).

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There is widespread agreement that short-term funding fails to build strong research supply and intermediary organisations. For example numerous authors stressed that research institutes relying on short-term project funding opportunities often end up doing “response research” that meets short-term programme objectives but not long-term development concerns. Without access to sufficient funding to cover core costs, intermediaries struggle to deliver the more resource demanding yet effective roles of linking and networking other actors in the knowledge-to-policy cycle, and building the capacity of policymakers to use evidence.

It was clear that access to core funding allows organisations to strengthen their organisational and technical capacities without disrupting core functions or negatively affecting standard of service delivery. For example, a major benefit is that core funding increases autonomy and thus encourages endogenous results. Organisations are provided the freedom to focus on their self-defined needs and conduct research that aligns their core interests and competencies with the research demands of policymakers. Thus organisations can better self-determine the areas in which their staff require capacity strengthening and thus take ownership of intervention activities.

Long-term core funding was also continually linked with strengthening organisational governance structures and capacities. Core funding was found to do this in a number of ways. Increased demand for embedded monitoring and evaluation programmes (and other quality and performance indicators) within grantees’ organisations was one commonly identified factor. Other factors were the ability to use funds to build and retain a critical mass of staff; allowing resources and time to be given to efficient administration; having funds to create a more effective media presence; and, establishing and strengthening networks and engaging stakeholders more effectively through increased financial and human resources.

The KSI design document makes clear that AusAID is aware of the benefits discussed above, and of the particular need for increased access to core funding in the Indonesian Knowledge Sector:

*Adequate core funding allows organisations to set an independent research agenda and choose projects that fit with their core mandates. It also allows research institutes to increase their capacity for administration and infrastructure. However, this is a luxury that most Indonesian organisations do not have ... the majority of contracts are short-term and do not always cover ongoing costs, overheads and institutional capacity building (AusAID 2012: 10-11).*

The findings on core funding in the think piece from Buldioski (2013) are worth noting here. The first finding is that most core funding grants can be broken down into three ‘constituent’ parts. These include the sustainability component, which refers to funds that partially underwrite the grantees’ core expenses. The second component is the development component. This refers to funds spent on developing the capacity of employees and improvements in organisational governance and infrastructure. The final component is seed funding, which refers to funds spent on specific policy relevant research.

The second finding is that experience with the Think Tank Initiative has identified a number of general organisation-related and donor-related factors that help to determine if core funding will be successful. These factors are:

- think tanks are *mission*-based as opposed to expertise-based. Their expertise needs to be complemented by a heartfelt vision about the organisation and the country or region in which it operates;
- grantee organisations need to be mature to make best use of core funding. This aspect is best reflected in the attention given to strategic planning and overall management. Many grantees approach core funding as a raft to weather difficult times in project funding, rather than as a bridge or highway to further organisational development. The sustainability and maintenance of the organisation have often trumped developmental goals even when the latter would have been a smarter long-term investment;
- grantees must find the balance between ‘*the market for policy advice*’ and ‘*the market for funding*’. Surviving in policy environments where decision makers genuinely do not value policy-relevant research is hard. Some think tanks therefore end up paying too much attention to funders to the detriment of other important actors;
- donors must critically assess when to apply a hands-off style or a hands-on approach depending on the grantee’s maturity and experience;

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- donors must also determine if the support is allowing a think tank to be sustainable or subsidised. Fellow donors who award project funding can 'free riding' on other donors' core support by not paying for any overhead or administrative expenses (Datta and Rodriguez (2013) also highlight the danger to donors who provide core funds that they may end up subsidising other donors who are not willing to cover overheads);
- donors should discern between grantees that are genuinely concerned with and work towards their betterment and others who pay a lip service as a disguise for maintaining their expensive existence.

(Buldioski 2013: 8-9)

Even in light of the wide recognition of the benefits of core funding, there is a clear message across the literature that best practice for donors involves more than core funding. There is particular attention to the benefits of project grants and to diversifying funding sources. Nielsen (2010), for example, suggests that funders can create conducive climates for supply and intermediary organisations to operate in by diversifying demand through the use of competitive grants.

Block and Mills' (2003) findings provide further explanation. They conducted a survey of 176 health policy and systems research organisations in developing countries and found that the low volume of funding for such supply and intermediary organisations in developing countries is most likely not a result of "... availability of funds per se, but rather the constraints imposed by the weak institutional capacity and lack of critical mass of most institutions" (p. 19). Project grant funds in particular have an important role to play in improved organisational governance as appropriate project funding stimulates training and institutional development as well as provides the critical experience to consolidate research skills through practical experience.

A number of authors argue that diversification of financing is as important as securing long-term core funding. Noting experience in think tank funding in Africa, Yeo (2013), for instance, concludes that the central issue of funding for think tanks is the tendency for a given think tank to rely on a small number of donors. This, Yeo suggests, is good neither for think tanks, which risk independence, nor for donors as they are likely to exert more influence than they want to or should exercise. To diversify funding sources think tanks in developing countries need to tap the private sector and philanthropists as think tanks in the OECD have been able to do. Bennett *et al.* (2012), McGann (2009) and Struyk (2002) arrive at similar conclusions on the benefits of funding diversification through additional public donors or through the private and philanthropic sectors.

Another theme in the literature concerns the need for supply and intermediary organisations to move towards full cost recovery. Whilst core funding has traditionally allowed for institutional costs, there have been calls for more than a decade for institutes to begin to charge out research projects at the real costs so that core funding is not subsidising institutional costs (Struyk 2002). The danger if this does not occur is that donors who provide core funds may end up subsidising other donors who are not willing to cover overheads (Buldioski 2013; Datta and Rodriguez 2013). In the knowledge sector in Indonesia, an independent review of SMERU in 2011 recommended that institutional costs be fully costed and charged out to commissioners of research (Hind and Widayanto 2012). Similarly, the Think Tank Initiative has recently decided that its core funds will no longer be able to be directed to institutional costs (Buldioski 2013). It is worth pointing out here that experience elsewhere indicates that organisations attempting to move to full cost recovery usually require direct practical assistance, including training of staff, the development of costing tools, and assistance with developing financial management strategies (Productivity Commission 2010).

This discussion on funding modalities concludes by synthesising the findings from McGann's extensive review of international best practice for funding research supply organisations. These are worth noting separately due to the breadth of funding programs examined in the study. The recommended best practices are to provide funds for:

- information sharing initiatives amongst grantees such as collaborative projects;
- resources to employ a critical mass of staff;
- technical assistance training programs including access to professional resources throughout the life of the grant;
- mentoring and peer review activities throughout the life of the grant in order to support peer learning and strengthen collaborative relationships between organisations;
- communications and public engagement for staff;

- training of researchers in applied policy analysis;
- organisational sustainability – financial management, organisational change, public relations, organisational development – for staff;
- training to assist organisations find local funding opportunities to lessen dependence on grant market;
- collaborative projects and initiatives between program grantees as well as with other donors;
- creation and promotion of international brand recognition for the organisation.

McGann (2009: 63-66):

### Provision of technical assistance

Technical assistance covers the transfer or adaptation of knowledge, practices or skills that help to facilitate development (Jones 2013). Morgan (2002), the OECD (2006) and Wilson (2007) cover the history of technical assistance in depth. They note that the concept developed out of the United Nations in the late 1940s.

These authors also argue that up until the 1990s technical assistance efforts were flawed as they tended to conceive of knowledge as an independent entity that was detachable from context. Thus practitioners tended to diagnose the “missing links” in technical or policy advice and then emphasised the provision of external expertise through generic external technical assistance (TA) solutions to fill these gaps. According to Morgan (2002) however development problems are insoluble through the application of external TA. Development problems are highly context specific. Without regard for this fact, technical assistance projects have often resulted in failures in which local ownership, commitment, motivation and independent capacity have eroded through the diverting away of resources from national capabilities and inadvertently encouraging dependence on external capacities (Morgan 2002; OECD 2006).

Wilson (2007) suggests however that since the 1990s the concept of technical assistance has changed to reflect that knowledge is not a ‘thing’ that is simply collected and passed on from the ‘knower’ to the ‘ignorant’. Rather technical assistance projects now generally appreciate that knowledge is a process of learning in which the relationships between stakeholders are all important. On a similar note the OECD (2006) argues that technical assistance should help in ensuring that capacity strengthening is a strongly endogenous process. More emphasis has been placed on the concept of “absorptive capacity”, which concerns the ability and motivation to learn, as much as on administrative matters (Morgan 2002; Wilson 2007). With this shift in emphasis comes a need for donors to start addressing the “output” side of technical assistance – how projects do or do not deliver value for money – as opposed to traditional “input” concerns (Jones 2013). Coupled with this concern over “output” has come suggestions that sector-specific organisations are often better placed than the donor community to provide technical advice. This has led some donors to consider the pros and cons of technical assistance being provided at ‘arm’s length’ through these ‘semi-autonomous enabling organisations’ (Booth 2013).

One interesting potential best practice lesson for providing technical assistance was that provision of technical assistance for capacity strengthening works best when the demand is partner-led coupled with embedding of technical advisors (Mendizabal *et al.* 2011). Some authors recommended that the agency providing the assistance keep their on-ground numbers to a minimum. In CHF’s (2008) experience limiting their field presence to a minimum and emphasising short-term assistance helped to encourage participation, ownership and capacity development by relying to the greatest extent possible on the capacities of the southern partner. Godfrey *et al.* (2002) also recommend the limiting of technical assistance expertise, particularly so in aid-dependent countries. Where dependence is an obstacle to capacity strengthening, they suggest assistance be concentrated. This helps to reduce dependency by, again, emphasising dimensions of pre-existing capacity development, particularly that other than the individual, and by transferring ownership to government as quickly as possible.

In addition to the above, a number of relevant best practice suggestions for using technical assistance to strengthen capacity can be synthesised (taken from CHF 2008; Datta 2013; Jones 2013; Mendizabal *et al.* 2011). In addition to limiting in-country presence and relying upon local capacity to the greatest extent possible, best practice principles for improving the uptake of technical assistance could include the following lessons:

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- short-term workshops (and other one-off activities) are ineffective. Both Datta (2013) and Mendizabal *et al.* (2011) are clear that workshops do not provide sufficient long-term engagement for technical expertise to be shared and lessons learnt for individual and organisational improvement. Where they are unavoidable, significant effort should go into making the sessions engaging and to have them followed with longer-term engagement methods;
- knowledge flows should be widespread amongst participants and interested parties. CHF (2008) indicates that it attempts to assimilate its partners' approaches and subsequently pass these onto other partners. This also helps, it suggests, to encourage and strengthen South-South and North-South networks and exchanges;
- both providers and recipients of technical assistance need to ensure they have strong coherent formalised approaches to capturing 'lessons learnt' knowledge. Jones (2013) notes that too often good technical assistance work is not captured or published. Jones and Mednizabal (2010) find that this is often exacerbated by the fact that donor agencies too often lack these learning approaches;
- technical assistance approaches are more effective when they take a coaching approach. CHF (2008) argues that coaching is cost effective yet tailored for each partner to assist them self-define activities, monitor results and define next steps;
- engagement of knowledge users by knowledge producers is critical and needs to happen from the outset. Jones (2013) suggests embedding technical advisors is one way to encourage this engagement;
- engaging and sustaining organisational change depends to a significant degree on the ability of technical assistance to embed with and tap into local expertise;
- technical assistance needs to be carefully targeted to maximise its effectiveness. Jones (2013) argues that careful targeting goes further than identifying knowledge gaps. To be sufficiently targeted there is a need to understand the interaction between knowledge and power in the given context;
- designing and delivering sub-projects within a larger project has been found to be effective in measuring the impact of capacity building interventions; and,
- technical assistance projects need to be flexible. Jones (2013) suggests adjustable budget categories, monitoring and evaluation procedures, and clear exit strategies provide projects with the flexibility required.

### Strengthen organisational capacities

Another strong best-practice theme across the literature was the importance of strengthening organisational environments. Block and Mills (2003) find weak institutional capacity and critical organisational mass are the key challenges to more effective research capacity. The literature cites a need to focus on strengthening the environment within government institutions and research organisation and, in turn, the links between networks of institutions and organisations. Both Nakaguboet *al.* (2010) and the OECD (2006) state explicitly that in their experience capacity development depends crucially on the quality of the *organisation* in which knowledgeable and skilled individuals work. They also argue that the ability of organisations and institutions to support and develop capacity of their individuals is determined to a significant extent by the *enabling environment* the structures, power and influence embedded in the institution (note that this is essentially an intra-organisational definition as opposed to the KSI's much wider application). From this it can be taken that best practice capacity strengthening would include a focus on strengthening the enabling environment of institutions and organisations as opposed to focusing on identifying and then filling short-term individual knowledge gaps or skills.

The findings of Bennet *et al.* (2012) are a good representation of the agreement across the literature regarding organisational capacity strengthening. In addition to long-term funding the authors stress the importance of external support helping policy analysis institutes to focus on the following organisational governance issues:

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- development of financial plans and clear fund-raising strategies that pursue diversification of sources;
- pursue funding that allows for organisational development along with research activities;
- development and use of strong Board structures to help promote independence, strategic thinking and learning; and,
- seek innovative ways to attract and retain staff and to strategically expand inter-organisational networks.

(Bennet *et al.* 2012: 8)

Velho (2004) finds that strong institutions and organisations that can focus on creating and strengthening interaction across research networks are the key to making possible the capture of the wide-ranging types of knowledge, often coming from generally ignored sources, necessary to address development problems. To achieve improved enabling environments both the OECD (2006) and The Think Tank Initiative (2007) note that it is important to earmark specified time and funds into building and strengthening institutional environments and networking activities between research organisations and government institutions. When attempting to strengthen capacity for knowledge transfer and learning, Jones and Mendizabal (2010) add that it is also highly important that there is strong and coherent systemisation of the separate initiatives occurring within a given institution or organisation. Without such overarching coordination separate initiatives run the risk of falling into the trap of only filling short-term individual knowledge gaps and not developing organisational capacity.

### Networks and communities of practice

Another good practice for supporting supply and intermediary organisations is to assist them to strengthen their networks and to create communities of practice. Close links with policymakers, other supply or intermediary organisations and other key decision-makers are important. The relationship between an organisation's policy influence and the strength or otherwise of their networks is well recognised across the literature. Bennet *et al.* (2012: 7), for example, find that across global contexts the most effective policy relevant research organisations are those with strong links with policy makers. According to the authors strong links are often derived from the individual reputations of institutional leaders. To be effective, supply and intermediary organisations need to be closely linked with key actors in their policy context in order to ensure they respond to real demand (see, for instance, Bennet *et al.* 2012; Court and Young 2006; Davies and Nutley 2001; Fisher and Kunaratnam 2007; Fisher and Vogel 2008; Shaxson 2010). Court and Young (2006) find that to establish these links and maintain them organisations need to build partnerships and 'loose coalitions' of researchers and policymakers from a project's inception. To do this they should emphasise a focus on feedback, dialogue and collaboration with policymakers. (Struyk *et al.* 2007).

The findings from Innvaer *et al.* (2002) drive the above home. The authors conducted a systematic review of more than 2000 interviews with health policy-makers. The purpose was to identify facilitators of and barriers to the use of research evidence by policymakers. The most common facilitators of the use of research evidence included (in order of commonality between studies) a) personal contact between researchers and policymakers; b), timely relevance of the research to policy needs; and, c) client or community demand for research. Conversely, the most common barriers to the use of research evidence included (again in order of commonality between studies): a) absence of personal contact between researchers and policymakers; b) lack of timeliness or relevance of research; and, c) mutual mistrust, including perceived political naivety of scientists and scientific naivety of policymakers. These findings and the discussion above make clear the need for both specialised intermediaries and for research supply organisations with competent intermediary capacities of their own.

It appears clear that good practice from donors would include supporting the development of their grantees networking skills. Garten *et al.* (2008) argue that such a focus is critical for two reasons. Firstly many organisations in need of capacity strengthening have underdeveloped networks and are therefore not as well connected and engaged with policymakers as they need to be.

Second, strengthening relationships between local institutions and government in particular develops the capacity of civil society and governments to see value in continuing investment after donors funding is stepped back. Wilson (2007) raises an important point that to help grantees build stronger networks donors need to have the capacity to manage multi-stakeholder process that require collaboration, partnership formation and dialogue.

It would seem therefore that it is just as important that donors have the ability to be able to coherently and accurately self-identify capacities and gaps when formulating an assistance program.

An effective way to support organisations in forging stronger networks is through establishing and supporting communities of practice relevant to grantees' operations and interests. Communities of practice also assist organisations to gain a clearer insight into their specific skill sets and niches. This particularly appears to be the case in the experiences of intermediaries elsewhere. A number of studies (Fisher and Kunaratnam 2007; Jones et al. 2009a; Land & Water Australia 2006; Shaxson 2010) have highlighted how communities of practice between intermediaries can help promote the sharing of useful resources, to connect and broaden the impacts of their services by progressing the field's understanding of intermediary functions and how to best support the inclusive policy dialogues.

### **Improving performance indicators and monitoring and evaluation**

The need for improved monitoring and evaluation methods to measure program impacts is a consistent theme across the literature. This attention reflects both increased demand for evaluation of capacity strengthening programs in development practice, and a growing frustration with evaluation processes and results in this sector. Horton (2011: 5) suggests these frustrations are the result of five principal challenges evaluators face when reviewing capacity strengthening. These are that: evaluation has been mainstreamed as a tool for accountability rather than improvement; capacity strengthening is an inherently complex process; intervention programs are often badly designed; evaluations themselves are badly designed or weak in method; and, knowledge sharing amongst evaluation professionals is often limited. These challenges are compounded by the problem that evaluation capacity across the international development sector is relatively weak (CDI 2013).

Numerous articles address ways in which these frustrations could be addressed. First, the question of how to measure the impact or otherwise was the subject of a number of articles. If, as the OECD (2006), suggests the development of sustainable capacity has been the least responsive target of donor assistance it would seem there is a pressing need to ensure that capacity performance indicators provide sufficiently accurate feedback. Mackay (2008) in particular has relevant lessons to share on the need for improved performance indicators to achieve evidence-based policymaking and evidence-based management and accountability. The author notes that most poor countries have found it difficult to strengthen capacity in their national statistical offices both in terms of data production and data utilisation. Performance indicators for the intervening steps between budget and donor resources spent and country progress are often absent. Currently there is too much reliance on the indicators at the extremities: donor budget and resources spent compared to ultimate country progress.

Mackay (2008) terms this the "missing middle". The lesson here then is that there needs to be greater emphasis on performance indicators for the intervening, incremental steps of an intervention or programmes. Mackay suggests that such indicators should cover government activities, outputs and services provided and their outcomes. Similarly, CHF (2008) has found that designing and delivering sub-projects within a larger project has been an effective method of improving performance indicators regarding the impact of capacity building interventions. Both Lim *et al* (2001) and the Think Tank Initiative (2007) present findings indicating that building repeated actions and feedback loops into the incremental steps of a programme helps to strengthen quality assurance, accountability and transparency practices.

Two studies (Mahmood et al. 2011; Velho 2004) discuss performance indicators specifically for research institutions, universities or think tanks. Mahmood et al. (2011) suggest that indicators of strengthened capacity could include publications in peer-reviewed journals, successful grant applications, qualifications of the researchers, and the number of projects per year per researcher as well as the number of projects of greater than one year in length. Velho (2004) notes that conventional indicators of strengthening capacity have focused largely on the number and availability of research findings published via traditional academic journals and publications. More relevant indicators of success in developing research capacity and quality, Velho argues, would include qualitative measurements of: changes in attitudes towards research; sensitivity to local knowledge in research; awareness of the importance of self-identification of research agendas in both Northern and Southern researchers; popularity of more participatory approaches to research; the capacity to negotiate, design, implement and manage programs; and, the degree to which developing institutions are determined to be accountable to local institutions and communities as well as to donors.

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The Think Tank Initiative (2007) also suggests a potential for qualitative indicators based on evolving levels of commitments to learning, sharing and continual improvement. Such indicators, the Initiative argues, would be particularly important in building accountability principles in research institutes and think tanks. Calls for more qualitative indicators appear to align with emerging theory that suggests evaluation focus in development needs to shift from evidence-based approaches to approaches based on holistic, integrated learning (see, for example, CDI 2013; Watson 2006).

Much of the literature is consistent in seeing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practice as crucial for improving the outcomes of knowledge-based capacity strengthening programs (Boaz *et al.* 2008; CDI 2013; Horton 2011; Shaxson *et al.* 2012). There is discussion on how M&E can be a practical step to increase inclusion of evidence in policy-making. For example, Sergone (2008) argues that transparent M&E has an important role to play in improving government performance because it supports the uptake of evidence into decision-making. The inclusion of M&E feedback helps, it is suggested, by encouraging “buy-in”. At central government level this generally means senior figures are more likely to sign up to ownership of a project and the evidence that supports it if data is produced in an on-going and transparent manner. It is also suggested that key decision-makers in front line service delivery will more likely ‘own’ and champion the evidence in open, non-hierarchic structures.

Mackay (2008) argues that M&E is necessary to achieve evidence-based policy-making and evidence-based management and accountability. However this study provides more in the way of best practice suggestions with regard to the role of M&E in poverty reduction strategies. Mackay presents a number of key lessons from the World Bank’s experience of supporting developing governments to build M&E systems for evidence-based decision making. These lessons are that:

- there needs to be substantive demand from governments in order to successfully institutionalise M&E systems. To create demand M&E systems need to produce findings that key stakeholders will value;
- demand can be increased by raising awareness of the potential benefits of M&E to the government institutions and or research organisations in developing countries. Awareness can be raised through use of ‘carrots’ and ‘sticks’. ‘Carrots’ could include the use of “how are we doing meetings” in which participants brainstorm ways to follow and evaluate performance in achieving objectives, and are rewarded for improved performance. Carrots can also include the repetition of strong statements from senior managers, ministers, or ‘champions’ supporting M&E systems and the use of evidence in decision-making. The public disclosure of evaluated poor performance acts an effective ‘stick’ (Anderson 2010 also refers to the use of such ‘sticks’); and,
- M&E systems should not be ‘over-engineered’ by demanding data collection that exceeds needs or capacity of statistical offices. Data should be collected for its own sake. Over-engineered M&E frameworks are a symptom of ‘supply-driven’ development programmes. Thus it is important to conduct comprehensive diagnostic analysis for strengths and weaknesses of existing M&E functions in the given country.

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