Coopération Internationale pour le Dévelopement et la Solidarité (CIDSE) in Cambodia [13]

Cambodia's economic growth has been achieved mainly through the exploitation of resources such as timber. However, high levels of corruption, the absence of effective legislation on land use, and lack of clarity over land ownership and rights to resources have prevented effective regulation of the timber industry and protection of the rights of local people who depend on those resources for their survival. The devastating result is that private logging companies have gained control of vast areas of forest. They have used intimidation and coercion to push people off land, and to pressurise villagers to sell their land, in defiance of communal laws. Christian Aid partner CIDSE works with community organisations to fight for justice and carries out local advocacy and research on logging.[14]

ENDNOTES

1 For example, partners working on debt and trade Jubilee South (www.jubileesouth.org), ISODEC in Ghana (www.isodec.org.gh), and Centre for Education and Communication in India (www.cec-india.org)
2 For example, Fair Trade Alliance (www.fairtradealliance.org) and Third World Network (www.twnside.org.sg)
3 For example, partners working on issues of health and education, such as the Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education in Malawi.
4 For example, partners' involvement in PRSP processes in Mozambique, Sri Lanka and Rwanda.
5 Amy Pollard and Julius Court, *How Civil Society Organisations Use Evidence to Influence Policy Processes: A literature review*, ODI Working Paper 249, July 2005.
6 For example, Malawi Economic Justice Network, ISODEC (Ghana) and the National Centre for Advocacy Studies (India).
7 For example, Trocaire, CAFOD and ActionAid.
8 For example, CAA has held roundtables in the Philippines and Peru for partners working on mining issues with local government officials – see http://www.christianaid.org.uk/indepth/502peru/index.htm and http://www.christianaid.org.uk/indepth/412philippines/index.htm
9 www.sarp.org.za/CountryPovertyPapers/cppMalawi.php
10 *Livelihood Centred Approach to Disaster Management: A Policy Framework for South Asia*, ITDG South Asia and Rural Development Policy Institute, 2005.
11 From conversation with Daphne Villanueva, Philippines country representative, Christian Aid.
12 Emmanuel Bugingo, edited by Genevieve Painter, *Missing the Mark: Participation in the PRSP process in Rwanda*, Christian Aid, 2002
13 CIDSE publishes a regular newsletter about its advocacy work, as well as briefings on trade-related issues: www.cidse.org
14 From discussions with Marie-Louise Schuiller, Christian Aid field support officer, Cambodia.

Implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action at a local level

Ten practice notes for community-led policy monitoring for disaster risk reduction

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Note 2A
Christian Aid partners and community-led policy monitoring

Christian Aid increasingly works with local organisations worldwide that support poor communities in their efforts to claim their rights to development. Our partners are gradually developing more strategic approaches to advocacy and policy work, and in particular to evidence-based policy monitoring. Local organisations can use evidence in the following ways:

- In **influencing agenda setting** – to build momentum behind an idea until it reaches 'tipping' point. A key factor here is the way in which evidence is communicated – to inspire support or create new ways of framing an issue.[1]
- In influencing the **formulation of policy** – to establish the credibility of partners. It may be necessary to adapt the way they use evidence to maintain credibility with local communities and policy makers. The quantity and quality of evidence is central to informing the views of others.[2]
- In influencing the **implementation of policy** that is critical to improving the effectiveness of development initiatives. Partners should capitalise on their practical knowledge and local expertise to show how technical skills, expert knowledge and practical experience can inform each other.[3]
- In influencing the **monitoring and evaluation of policy** – to manage and present evidence clearly in order to improve policy. Whether developing evidence internally, through participatory processes, or gaining the interest of the media, it is vital to communicate evidence in a clear, conclusive and accessible way.[4]
- However, **political context** is the most vital issue for partners to influence effectively, and evidence must be timely, appropriate and relevant.[5]

Strengths of Christian Aid and partners to support community-led policy monitoring:

- **Access to communities** The ability to analyse and document the concerns of communities at a local level. To provide evidence, to communicate and understand the real impact of policies and government initiatives on communities.
- **Linking micro to macro** Work on economic justice in many areas of Latin America, Africa and Asia has highlighted the negative impact of trade and debt policy on poor communities, and made credible policy recommendations.
- **Networking** Ability to share best practice, examples and case studies of community policy monitoring from a range of countries and partner experiences. Potential to link local grassroots partners and church networks with more technical organisations for different phases of policy engagement.

- **Strong partnership** with national organisations that have developed the policy and budget monitoring agenda,[6] as well as INGOs interested in this field.[7] Ability to act as facilitator to provide advice, networking opportunities and expertise for communities on how to carry out monitoring.
- **Legitimacy with government officials** In many countries, Christian Aid and its partners can act as a neutral facilitator to bring different stakeholders together that traditionally may be reluctant to work together.[8]

the Afghan Civil Society Forum
In 2006 Christian Aid, together with the Afghan Civil Society Forum, organised two workshops for more than 50 civil society organisations in Herat, to encourage local organisations to play a stronger role in their communities. The workshops were the first of their kind to be held in the western region of Afghanistan and were attended by NGOs, cultural, women's and youth organisations, religious scholars, journalists, local government officials and members of village organisations, as well as representatives from various government ministries, including the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture.

'The workshops brought together diverse groups of Afghans for the first time to discuss the concept of civil society, its legal doctrines, and the role and responsibilities of civic institutions. A strong civil society in Afghanistan can work towards creating stability, improving the accountability of local government and providing a public framework for elections.' *Sultan Maqsood Fazel, Advocacy Officer, Christian Aid*

Remaining challenges:

- **Organisational capacity and focus.** The majority of local partners are overstretched, dealing with too many priorities and issues – many spread themselves too thinly across a range of different activities. Experience of partners who have successfully monitored policy processes shows that it is better to engage selectively with a smaller number of issues, but in greater depth.
- **Community capacity** to participate in policy or budget monitoring in general is still very low, because of poor grassroots institutional ability – *communities are not organised enough to hold government to account.*[9] Moreover, most disaster-prone communities **live in rural areas and urban peripheries on marginal land**.[10] Geographical remoteness, lack of communication and transport links mean that it is much more of a challenge to gather evidence and monitor policy implementation in these areas.

- Different **stages of policy monitoring** (from gathering evidence to targeted advocacy) all require **different skills, expertise and legitimacy** with different stakeholders. One single organisation is rarely equipped to follow the whole policy process through. This can lead to monitoring efforts being ineffective or wasted. This is exacerbated if existing information is not shared, or if each stage of the process takes place in a vacuum, without sustained follow-up; particularly if existing information and analysis is not being accessed or used, leading to a duplication of efforts.

  For example, mining is an important issue for civil society in the Philippines. However, campaigns protesting against the mining activities of specific companies at the local level were working in isolation from Manila-based advocacy organisations lobbying the Philippines government (eg campaigning for the Mining Act to be reviewed, and to stop granting concessions for international companies). Christian Aid partners helped to facilitate a nationwide network – Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM) – for all groups involved in anti-mining campaigns to strengthen micro-macro linkages, and make both groups more effective.[11]
- **Practical alternatives** to current policies. Many organisations have not yet had the space to research what exactly they would ask or lobby their local governments for in regard to the policies that affect them.
- **Mistrust and competition** can also prevent local and national NGOs, research institutions, academics and journalists from working effectively together. Christian Aid can play a role in encouraging dialogue between NGOs, and in sharing monitoring information between partners working at different levels. In some countries in Africa and Latin America **church networks are also ideally placed to facilitate** this networking because of their **resources, influence and wide geographical** spread.
  An example of this is the work of the Ugandan Debt Network, where members are encouraged to play an active role in holding public officials accountable for their actions, both in central and local government.
- Influencing formal policies takes time, often **a longer-than-average, donor-funding cycle**. Donors need to be more flexible and understanding of the time lag between research, gathering evidence and tangible policy change, and to be encouraged to accompany longer-term process.
- A key challenge is posed by the **regular turnover of government staff, and by political and election cycles** that result in changing priorities and approaches.
  The Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS), a Christian Aid partner in Bangladesh, has resolved this issue by meeting every three months with the Union Council Chairman to ensure continuity, and that their issues are always on the agenda of the Union Council, regardless of which politicians are in power.
- In some countries the **legitimacy of Christian Aid partners to undertake advocacy** is weakened by their dependence on funding from external and international organisations. The perception (either real or perceived) is that these external interests may be represented ahead of the poorest communities with which the partners are working.[12] This highlights the need for a strategic approach, and for continuity.
- Other actors, agencies and institutions also influence how policies are implemented at a local level. The behaviour of local, national and international companies, for example, is fundamental to the way in which natural resources are managed and controlled. It is often difficult to change the behaviour of institutions such as companies who have very limited or no accountability towards poor communities.