

Abstract

South-North Non-governmental Networks, Policy Processes and Policy Outcomes

Investigators

Professor Richard Crook (Principal), Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex

Mr Richard Bourne, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit

Dr Paul Gready, Institute of Commonwealth Studies

Dr Nazila Ghanea-Hercock, Institute of Commonwealth Studies

Professor James Manor, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex.

Professor Timothy Shaw, Institute of Commonwealth Studies

Aims and objectives of research

The primary aim of the research is to understand how non-governmental public actors (NGPAs) engage with multi-level policy processes which bridge Southern and Northern contexts, and to investigate the impacts and outcomes of those engagements. The main objectives are:

- to develop an analytical framework for identifying the key factors which explain variations in the degree of effectiveness with which NGPAs participate in multi-level policy processes;
- to contribute to the development of applied policy and practice models which will be of use to non-governmental actors and other development policy practitioners.

Key research questions/hypotheses and methods

How effective are NGPAs at changing policy agendas, influencing policy outcomes and developing sustained engagement with policy implementation? And what explains variations in the relative effectiveness of NGPAs, especially Southern-based ones? Why is it that some achieve practical results whilst others fail?

These questions will be addressed through a comparative study of six 'matched pairs' of mainly Southern-based NGPAs which bridge North-South arenas of action in three issue areas: human rights, human development and human security. The matched pairs illustrate a range of policy engagements and degrees of effectiveness, including both 'normative' transnational advocacy networks and socially embedded groups pursuing particular interests. The cases range from the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, Partnership Africa-Canada or the Small Island Developing States Network at the international level, to the Sisters in Islam campaign in Malaysia, Ghanaian and Indian diaspora associations in the UK, NGO associations in Ghana and India, and land reform campaigns in Rwanda.

Analysis of the policy processes will utilise theories which focus on the interaction amongst actor ideas, interests and structures (policy communities, institutions and regimes), and data will be gathered using a variety of field work methods.

Relation to the programme

The research will :

- a. contribute to the development of theoretical models of the policy process;
- b. generate significant new empirical knowledge about a range of non-governmental actors;
- c. facilitate co-production of knowledge through the research team's special relationships with Commonwealth and other non-governmental groups;
- d. develop policy-relevant knowledge on issues of poverty, exclusion and human rights, human development and accountable governance.

Relevance of this research to user groups

Non-governmental actors:

research outputs will help NGPAs in the study (and more widely) to develop more realistic and effective strategies for engaging with multi-level governmental authorities, strategies which go beyond normative advocacy. For instance, with issues such as human rights or justice it is clear that to achieve sustainable gains means localising human rights concepts and 'translating' them into local cultures, institutions and legal systems.

Policy makers in donor agencies, international institutions and national governments:

the research will disseminate more informed insights into how issues are perceived by Southern-based actors and locally-embedded groups, and into the ways in which policy makers need to engage with transnational alliances. The policy and issue-based character of the research outputs will also inform the work of public opinion formers in the media and policy 'thinktanks', as well as other researchers and academics.

Contact details

Professor Richard Crook
Institute of Development Studies,
University of Sussex
r.crook@ids.ac.uk

Mr Richard Bourne
email: richard.bourne@sas.ac.uk

Dr. Paul Gready
email: paul.gready@sas.ac.uk

Dr. Nazila Ghanea-Hercock
email: nazila.ghanea-hercock@sas.ac.uk

Professor James Manor
email: j.manor@ids.ac.uk

Professor Timothy Shaw
email: tim.shaw@sas.ac.uk

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