



**Chronic Poverty
Research Centre**

International Policy Engagement
on Chronic Poverty



This presentation is based on practical experience of engagement with policy makers and opinion formers on the issue of Chronic Poverty. There are four areas:

1. **Preconditions** for effective policy engagement
2. **Political capital and the links between national and international** environments
3. Engagement with the **Human Development Report**
4. The implications for international policy engagement in a **research centre context**

Policy engagement and Advocacy

What is policy engagement?

Establishing **relationships** with policymakers (direct, preferable personal dialogue, building **trust, understanding** policymaker's agenda and needs) and using relationship to transmit **messages** based on **evidence** and **application** of evidence to policy.

How is it distinct from advocacy?

- Advocacy is much more agenda-led – using evidence to make a case with less attention to balance or caveats.

CPRC has been primarily working on policy engagement, but with advocacy tendencies!

Preconditions for effective policy engagement

1. KNOWING WHAT YOU WANT

The first essential discipline is to ask yourself:

What do you want to be different as a result of your policy engagement?

“Making the world a better place” is not a good enough answer!

Preconditions for effective policy engagement

2. KNOWING WHO TO ASK

WHO can deliver what you want and **HOW** are they going to do it?

- **In an international environment this is especially important, as organisations are clearly limited in their mandates and scope but individuals often have a wide sphere of influence.**
- Are you trying to achieve a mindset/paradigm change – awareness of a BIG IDEA?
- Or are you trying to achieve textual changes in policy documents which can then be used for leverage
- Or are you trying to engage in implementation – methods and strategies.

Preconditions for effective policy engagement

KNOWING Who to ask and What to ask for

The Chronic Poverty Report wanted to influence policy in two ways:

*We wanted to **alert policy makers to the idea** that chronic poverty is a major issue and will not be addressed by 'more of the same' development policy*

*We wanted to suggest **strategies and methods** for addressing chronic poverty in the context of poverty reduction as*

Preconditions for effective policy engagement

3. UNDERSTANDING AND RESPECT

Understanding international agendas:

To engage and influence, we first have to **understand** the process, aims and limitations of the organisations. We need to **demonstrate respect** through knowledge and the **onus is on us to prove why our issues are relevant to them.**

Preconditions for effective policy engagement

4.Relevance to the international agenda

International processes tend to be **bureaucratic** and focused around events – UN Commissions, IFI annual meetings, formal reports. There is **fierce competition** for attention. **What will achieve any influence?**

The **first base** to be covered is to ensure that your issue is **not perceived as a threat** or potentially damaging.

Preconditions for effective policy engagement

Relevance to the international agenda

Second issue is deciding whether it is **worth understanding the bureaucracy?**

What **leverage** can be expected to result if we are successful in **institutionalising** an issue in an organisation – over what **time frame?**

Preconditions for effective policy engagement

5. Credibility and trust

Effective international advocacy relies on a **persistent and authentic** interest in the goals of the process and the clear evidence that we can be relied on to provide **solid information.**

Preconditions for effective policy engagement

6. Accessibility and resonance

Information must be **readily understood and talked about**; in **simple language** – and **intuitive.**

In international environments, most people are operating in English as a second language and phrases which can be incorporated into text are valued.

Chat matters

Preconditions for effective policy engagement

7. Timing

Being after the event is probably a waste of time

- international processes are often very inflexible, but if you get text incorporated you can use it as a lever for years to come.

Preconditions for effective policy engagement

8. Branding and Visibility

CPRC is working on a **mindset shift** – to get Chronic Poverty to be seen as mainstream and major.

A **clear, recognisable image helps** – especially in the competitive international environment

The style was deliberately designed for **partners to customise** and add to their own logos and brands

Political Capital

- Political capital is crucial for policy engagement – both building it and using it.
- Political capital is all the intangible linkages – the people you know and the people they know; the ability to offer policy advantages; the unspoken favours due and owed.
- Most policy people work on multiple issues and in lots of forums in their careers – political capital tends to be based around people rather than institutions so maintaining relationships is crucial

Building political capital?

- In international advocacy there are lots of **opportunities to broker contacts and alliances** – introducing people and processes to each other. That builds political capital

CPRC had a potentially **fragmented constituency** of 'special interests'. It has tried to offer **benefits from being seen as part of a bigger, mainstream issue**.

Building political capital

Practical examples

Can you offer people a platform to promote issues which are of interest to you?

- Hilde Frafjord Johnson and human rights
- GTZ and Social Protection

National and International advocacy are linked:

- the people involved are often the same
- In representative institutions like the EU a nation may be part of a collective group
- You can operate at both levels – priming national representatives on your issues and creating a receptive environment in the international Institution.

Engagement with the Human Development Report (HDR)

The CPRC policy strategy in 2000 set a **goal to get a Human Development Report focused on Chronic Poverty**. We estimated that at least two, discrete CPRs would be needed first.

What progress?

- Engagement before the research started
- **Using and building political capital** – using pre-existing contacts with the HDRO, visits to HDRO director and staff by a CPRC partners in New York on a more or less annual basis
- **Offering platforms** to speak

Engagement with the Human Development Report (HDR)

- Demonstrating **credibility and reliability** by providing data and information
- Being **accessible and responding quickly** to requests
- Editing a special edition of the **Journal of Human Development** – an outcome in itself and part of the process of institutionalising attention to chronic poverty in the HDRO.

The implications for international advocacy in a research centre context - some of what we have learnt

Timescales and compromises

“Dynamics driving policy are often so tightly bound to specific timeframes that they cannot wait for research findings to be perfected” (Introduction to the CPR)

This is difficult – it compromises the comparative advantage of research – that of producing objective, solid, reliable knowledge but it is also part of the price for engagement.

The implications of doing international advocacy in a research centre context

Labour intensiveness

- Building and maintaining **relationships**,
- **following through on issues** with an institution,
- **maintaining knowledge** of the key issues in relevant institutions and
- **targeting evidence**, research and engagement to the **needs of users**

is VERY LABOUR INTENSIVE

What's more, it **grows exponentially**.

- Contacts and engagement **generate demands** for information and opportunities for advocacy that go way beyond the capacity of most research and policy centres

The implications of doing international advocacy in a research centre context

Selecting opportunities/building alliances

The increased number of policy opportunities means that CPRC has to select and prioritise between people and institutions and seeing how the constituency can be supported in different ways – limiting the number of deep collaborations.

This requires attention to the first discipline – what do you want to change as result of your work?

Building alliances – time consuming in itself – can enable messages to be amplified and reach much wider audiences.

The implications of doing international advocacy in a research centre context

Persistence is a vital quality in advocacy – and international processes are often very long term

Having started to engage it can be **damaging to credibility to withdraw**, suggesting that interest in an issue is not **authentic**, but only exists for the lifetime of a project or to meet a goal in a logframe.

This may mean that more resources have to be allocated to policy engagement in order to ensure that the investments made are not wasted.

Finally

Effective policy engagement is rarely acknowledged.

If a good idea is institutionalised, then people will think that it is something they knew all along – and they will start telling you about it!