Bridging the Gap between Policy and Research on Post-Conflict Transition in Africa

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The initiative of the Nordic Africa Institute (NAI), through its Post-Conflict Transition in Africa – the State and Civil Society programme, in launching a process directed at bridging the gap between researchers and policymakers on post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding issues is timely and much needed. As this report establishes, researchers and policymakers have a lot to gain and little to lose in collaborating closer.

The political focus for international cooperation has shifted in favour of Africa, and specifically in favour of countries in conflict or post-conflict transition. There is a great need for systematically researched knowledge to guide political decisions in this field. The policies have a tendency to become broad guidelines for action instead of context specific analysis. In a fragile environment of peace and/or conflict, decisions on intervention or aid need to be carefully balanced so as not to tip the scale.

I believe, and this report underscores part of the reason for this, that the existing difficulties relate to some differences in work or disciplinary cultures, perceptions and communication gaps, rather than differences in agendas. Ultimately, both policymakers and researchers want their endeavours to benefit the people of countries affected by poverty, disaster or conflict, either through better understanding of the people and their environments through research, or through direct support or intervention through programmes of foreign development cooperation.

I hope and expect that this initiative by NAI will serve as a starting point for further and deeper engagement with African issues and the improvement of the communication and collaboration between researchers and policymakers in this field. This report is therefore an important contribution to the challenge of nurturing the symbiosis between knowledge-based policy and research.
The Institute’s conflict research cluster aims to contribute research and analysis that explore key aspects of, and relationships between, various kinds of conflicts and forced displacement and processes of post-conflict peace building and modes of recovery. One important activity is to engage in public debate and policy dialogue related to these topics. But how do you do that?

To answer this question the institute organized in February 2008 a workshop with researchers, policymakers and practitioners. The aim of the workshop was more specifically to explore the different views on the development trends in post-conflict societies in Africa and to develop strategies for an enhanced dialogue between policy and research.

Often the link between research and policy is viewed as a linear process. A set of research findings has a direct impact on policy decisions or practical programmes. But evidence shows that this is rarely the case. The brainstorming session of the workshop came to focus on the need for a permanent “arena” between researchers and policymakers. As reality tends to be much more dynamic and complex relations are shaped by multiple relations and reservoirs of knowledge, the meeting places must be fairly stable.

The Institute would like to see itself as a meeting place on Africa in general and a meeting place for the ongoing research clusters in particular, one of which is the conflict research cluster. It is my hope that by actively reaching out to different audiences the research of the institute will contribute to better informed policy formulation on issues related to Africa as well as inspire researchers to address issues which are relevant for policymakers.
The collaboration between researchers and policymakers and the use of research as a basis for policy decisions affecting post-conflict African states faces several difficulties. Among these are several problems related to communication and institutional constraints such as the lack of arenas for communication, a lack of understanding of each other’s roles and the stress resulting from increasing workload on desk officers. Other factors include that research results are seldom designed in a way that promotes easy access and usefulness for stakeholders outside of the research community and that the content of the research being produced does not always correspond to the needs of the policymakers. The workshop recommendations included the following:

• Create contacts, and permanent arenas for communication and dialogue between researchers and policymakers
• Work towards long-term institutionalised cooperation processes: examples could be common, long-term research programmes with continuous, shorter term progress reports, forums for networking, access, information exchange, discussion of priorities and strategies
• Make policy making participatory by opening up decision-making processes to include researchers and others: being honest brokers for knowledge, research production and practice
• Understand and respect each other’s different roles
• Make research findings more accessible to practitioners and policymakers. Targeting, packaging and marketing of policy-relevant research. Verbal communication is also very helpful and important.
• Knowledge-based policy is important to the improvement of the quality of political decisions/policies relating to post-conflict transition in Africa
• More analytic research on conflict and peace in Africa is needed for result-oriented policies. Researchers, practitioners and policymakers need to learn at first hand from the field, from the experiences and impacts of bad policies.
Discussions had been ongoing at the Nordic Africa Institute (NAI) for some time on how to better reach out to policymakers and public institutions working on development cooperation and foreign policy issues, with the findings arising from research produced within the institute. With the increasing focus on large budget or sectoral support for developing countries, headquarter-driven harmonization efforts and an increasing strain on individual programme officers in handling larger support in a shorter time, the gap between research and policy decisions is perceived to have widened, thus calling for the bridging of this gap between research and policy.

Policy decisions based on a weak or inadequate knowledge foundation can have devastating effects on a recipient developing country, especially when the country in question is in a delicate phase of post-conflict reconstruction or transition characterized by a fragile economy and weak governing structures/public institutions. During 2007 and 2008, within the “Post-Conflict Transition in Africa – the State and Civil Society” research programme (PCT) at NAI, steps were taken to identify and explore ways to bridge this gap. After some preliminary groundwork, two main possible problem areas were singled out: the first was the institutional disconnection between researchers and policymakers. The second problem area noted was the extent to which research could be policy-relevant or of interest to policymakers, without compromising the autonomy and scientific basis of the research.

It was against the background of the foregoing concerns that a policy and research analyst was seconded from Sida to the PCT programme of NAI, based on a proposal from NAI to help improve communications and understanding, and facilitate the transformation of research into policy inputs. A major part of the groundwork for the activities of the policy analyst was done through the brainstorming workshop on 7th and 8th February 2008, which brought together more than 25 representatives from research institutions, civil society organizations, universities, ministries and cooperation agencies from Africa and the Nordic countries to discuss how policymakers and researchers could improve their communication to bridge, strengthen and safeguard the relevance of research and the quality of political decisions/policies affecting post-conflict countries in Africa. 15 short presentations aimed at stimulating future debate were made on these issues followed by a brainstorming session with the aim of launching ideas and generating targeted recommendations on how to improve the cooperation between the different fields.

The discussions during the workshop showed a broad agreement among the participants on several areas, such as the importance to institutionalise communication between researchers and policymakers to make policy making more participatory. Furthermore, recommendations were made for future research on the impact of elections as a destabilizing factor in Africa and the negative impact of classifying recipient regimes as “good” or “bad” according to performance. These and other discussions and recommendations are further elaborated in this report.

The challenge is now to integrate the recommendations from the workshop in our daily work as researchers or policymakers with the ultimate aim of enhancing and institutionalising the cooperation between the two fields of research and policy.
Måns Fellesson
Research in foreign policy; essential to good quality policy decisions. Challenges and possible ways for an enhanced integration

Måns Fellesson underlined the increasing complexity of international issues handled by the foreign ministry and saw a need for a closer collaboration with the research community. In his presentation he pointed at several impeding factors (challenges) for research based policy making in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

According to Dr. Fellesson, both policymakers and researchers have unrealistic expectations of each other, which in the long run undermine the incentives for collaboration. Part of this miscommunication is also the product of an uncertainty and ambiguity about the value or relevance of research that presents a dilemma for groups and institutions advocating the policy utility of scientific knowledge. From the ministries’ side, communication with researchers is hampered partly by the ignorance of politicians or overstretched bureaucrats about the existence of policy-relevant research since policymakers and bureaucrats are notoriously short of time. Also, the organizational culture within the ministry tends to prefer the use of established and accepted research rather than new, critical and challenging knowledge which creates organizational tension and delays policy making processes. There is another time aspect to the communication since research is a lengthy process, whereas political problems usually require immediate attention.

Dr. Fellesson also pointed out obstacles from the researchers’ side where there is a poor policy comprehension and an inadequate knowledge of both existing policy processes and how to access these. Researchers are many times ineffective communicators. His ideas to improve the communication between research and policymaking included establishing contacts and putting more effort into disseminating information about ongoing research projects as widely as possible. He called for an improvement in the communication of research findings and a presentation of research in a form and format that can be used by policymakers.

Per Karlsson
Possible areas of cooperation between policy and research – the case of Sudan

Per Karlsson used his experiences on policy making on fragile states and the case of the country strategy process of Sudan to show possible areas for stronger links with the research community. He stated that the risks are higher in a fragile environment but therefore also more urgent to attend to. Flexibility and speed are of highest importance, he said, and showed that research might therefore be even more complicated to integrate in the decision making process. Yet, policies need to be scrutinized. Researchers will somehow need to be in the “loop” during the policy process. He asked for more institutionalised modes of contacts, perhaps in the form of more long term agreements, which permit more ongoing interaction between researchers and policymakers. Mr. Karlsson also highlighted the need for research to provide early warnings in fragile environments but said this is an incentive for not making research too demand-driven since it could then lose its ability to see the “unorthodox” reasons for conflicts.
**Markus Derblom**

Meeting demand – connecting Africa-related policy and research in the defence community

Using the defence research institute (FOI) as an example, Markus Derblom showed how a government-grants establishment successfully made the transformation to an assignment-funded agency bridging the gap between policy and research. Many different drivers prompted FOI to build up its Africa competence. Mainly, it was due to an increasing number of requests from FOI’s stakeholders and financiers and the new focus on international missions within the defence policy. Also the fact that Africa seems to be a very clear example of the much talked about political-development-security nexus. During this transition, FOI also had to learn how to communicate the research results in a policy-friendly way. “They want the results, packaged and transferred in a manner adapted to the sponsors’ needs and time available.”

During 2007, a concept was drafted and presented to FOI’s major sponsors. It was based on a quick analysis of the “market”, its actors and the institute itself. The conclusions from this concept showed that FOI already possessed the structure and expertise within the multidisciplinary approaches needed for understanding African security matters. The weaknesses in country or region specific knowledge could be strengthened through recruitments and strategic partnerships and networks with other institutes focusing on Africa.

Mr. Derblom summarized the lessons learned from FOI as an input to the discussion and said that researchers must learn to speak the language of their sponsors and to understand their problems and questions from a policy perspective; use multidisciplinary approaches to answer questions posed; stay in tune with the policy processes and timing of the sponsors; explore institutional partnerships to form adequate teams to increase richness and reach of both the analysis and its results.

**Krishna Kumar**

Tensions between democracy promotion and state building in post-conflict Africa: A few areas for policy research

In Kumar Krishna’s view, past experience indicates that while democracy promotion and state building programmes are complementary and even mutually reinforcing, there can be tensions between them. Kumar Krishna mentioned three potential sources of tensions. The first is the sequencing, or timing, of international interventions in fragile states: a functioning state is often essential before some democracy promotion activities can be successfully undertaken. An extremely fragile state, with few or no resources and dysfunctional public bureaucracy, is not in a position to promote democratisation in a meaningful way. Therefore statebuilding often needs to be promoted before democracy. It is all about the timing of aid.

The second is that democracy promotion interventions can exacerbate intra-group tensions in multi-ethnic societies, which recent events in Kenya have shown us. This phenomenon is not unique to Africa. In fact, even in the most established democracies, such primordial loyalties play a part in elections. However, established democracies have institutionalised procedures and practices, which reduce their divisive impacts. The situation is different in recovering war-torn societies where memories of conflict are still fresh. Electioneering can revive them and come in the way of healing the wounds of war. According to Dr. Kumar, two other kinds of democracy promotion activities can exacerbate political tensions: those relating to war crimes tribunals or truth commissions, and those relating to the media. Finally, democracy promotion, particularly competitive elections, the growth of civil society, and the rise of independent media, often raise public expectations, which if not met, can erode people’s confidence in public institutions and de-legitimise the state.

Kumar Krishna suggested that the academic community could help policymakers by focusing on the issues that have been raised above. The purpose should be to identify solutions that are realistic and can be introduced within existing constraints. These solutions should be based on rigorous examination of past experiences, but should also go beyond them.

First, research should examine the tensions between programming for democracy promotion and state building with reference to Africa. Second, the question of sequencing of democracy promotion and state building programmes needs urgent attention. Third, it will be useful to explore and identify measures that can be taken to reduce the disruptive effects of elections during the early stage of post-conflict reconstruction. Finally, it will be helpful to explore indigenous approaches which can replace or supplement truth commissions and war tribunals. Such approaches should be able to
promote social and political reconciliation and undermine the culture of impunity that has existed in the past.

_Göran Holmqvist_

*What do doers do?*

Göran Holmqvist used the Swedish experience of Latin American peace processes to give a comparative view on how to best engage in fragile, post-conflict environments.

Mr. Holmqvist highlighted the role of external actors as honest brokers to parties caught in a prisoner’s dilemma. To be able to take on this role, practitioners need to invest in deep and broad trustful relations, and exploit the ability to provide neutral spaces for dialogue.

Regarding peace agreements, they often tend to address symptoms rather than the underlying causes of the conflict and Mr. Holmqvist suggested a promotion of an expanded circle of actors close to the negotiation table when these agreements are discussed. Anybody with the ability to see more than just the power struggle should somehow be involved. Reinforcing agreements should be established to provide security, verification, and truth and reconciliation mechanisms, covering transition costs and broaden the peace agenda to become the platform of aid.

When comparing experiences with Africa Mr. Holmqvist noted that we are now more aligned with EU and the war on terror has changed our ability to become this “honest broker”. From a political point of view, our networks are “thinner” in Africa than in Latin America, the peace agreements are more shortsighted and we are further from the nucleus of the peace processes.

He finalized his presentation by asking if it would be possible to research these experiences. Can it provide reflection and debate amongst key actors? Policymakers can benefit from researchers pointing at the root causes of conflict. Can researchers form part of the expansion of trustful relationships and contribute to the provision of dialogue spaces?
Ibrahim K. Sesay
Bridging the gap between policy and research on post-conflict transition in Africa

Ibrahim Sesay presented his view on the subject from the standpoint of an African policy maker, using Sierra Leone as a case study.

Why do most African states find it very difficult to translate research into policies? The challenges faced by countries characterised as post-conflict states in Africa can to a very large extent be mitigated through the use of scientific research results. This will lead to sound policy that will positively impact the state. Mr. Sesay argued that the present gap that exists between research and policy on post-conflict transition in Africa is not only due to the failure on the part of African States to put more premium on research but also the lack of adequate resources to actualise the process.

In Sierra Leone several important national policy documents have linked research to policy and been adopted to facilitate the governance process, the most important being the strategic visionary document “Sierra Leone Vision 2025” in August 2005 and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). In these documents research is used as an early warning mechanism that will provide opportunities for decision makers to attend to tendencies, which could endanger the peaceful post-conflict transition if left unattended to. As in Sierra Leone, research in transition states can be used not only for understanding the nature of the transitional process, but also to ensure a successful transition. Research and its findings will help policymakers to understand society better and take necessary action, also through the mapping out of long term strategy guidelines.

Fiona Rotberg
Climate change migration in Africa: Current research for development policy

Even though the arguments are there, research has not been given much prominence in most transitional post-conflict states in Africa. The reason for this is mainly due to limited resources in post-conflict states in Africa, according to Mr. Sesay. Other factors include the non-existence of well-resourced African think tanks and little interest shown in research findings; a gap between research project findings and the pressing need to quickly take appropriate action is another factor influencing the low impact of research. In countries where there actually are resources available and think tanks do exist, the latter have not been able to effectively communicate their findings to government and the public. Regarding research carried out by non-governmental organisations in Africa, Mr. Sesay noted that it often has objectivity problems, since it is directed at their respective objectives and not necessarily done with national priorities in mind.
eral resources depletion, such as water, forest, and land; and the indirect impacts of climate change include migration. Also, climate change is not a singular phenomenon, but rather an evolving challenge that involves numerous interacting factors. How climate change is linked to poverty and its reduction is not yet fully understood. Despite the difficulty among researchers in estimating exactly how many environmental refugees there are, or might be, in Africa and the world, there is agreement that weather-related events will in fact cause migration to increase.

The key research findings included that there is much disagreement in the academic and policy fields about the definition of environmentally induced migration; there are no reliable global figures on the number of people who could be displaced from their homelands by climate change in the world, nor in Africa; migration, international development, environment and security can no longer be viewed as independent topics, but rather as interconnected and interdependent policy fields; climate change impacts do lead to social destabilization; the extent of destabilizations depends on many factors that need to be better mapped and further investigated (such as the correlations between climate change impacts and poverty, and climate change impacts and sustainable livelihoods); vulnerable societies will likely trigger further destabilization processes that could lead to national crises such as state failure, a breakdown in law and order, and an inability to provide for human security; climate change will likely create internal and cross-border conflicts and thus will lead to increased migration.

Dr. Rotberg concluded that climate change is not a static process, thus development research in this area needs to not only be interdisciplinary but collaborative between the natural and social sciences. Also, development and poverty reduction policies must integrate actions to address the interconnectedness of regional impacts of climate change. Climate change and migration issues should be directly linked to development cooperation efforts and should not be viewed as separate fields. Development strategies should be managed to build local resilience and to strengthen and develop adaptation methods on both local and national levels. Resources within the Swedish governmental, academic, and non-governmental organization communities need to be coordinated, developed, and pooled to address climate change and migration issues in a comprehensive manner.

Specific areas for further research could be to assess current adaptation strategies and methods; analyze climate change and migration linkages and to evaluate climate change migration and the stabilization of fragile states.

Anders Nilsson
Normative strength, a way to assess research applicability in policy formulation

Anders Nilsson provided a conceptual intervention regarding normative strength. To him, all political decision-making is guided by basic assumptions of a paradigmatic nature. Politicians and civil servants carry internalized theoretical explanations and images of causality, too often constituting an implicit guidance in the search for interventionist measures. An analytical structure, such as normative strength, may contribute to making these basic assumptions regarding paradigmatic coherence and theoretical congruence more explicit and visible. A more conscious reflection along these lines could serve as a point of reference in the political decision-making process, increasing both the normative strength of the research, and the prospects for successful implementation of political decisions.

Normative strength is a three-pronged theoretical structure that includes paradigmatic coherence, theoretical congruence, and political operativeness, which could be used to improve and develop the relationship between researchers and politicians/civil servants involved in peace processes. The basic argument is that if researchers and politicians/civil servants do not share an understanding of the impact of ontological and epistemological assumptions on concrete measures, the dialogue between them may be severely hampered. Furthermore, if they do not agree on the content of these assumptions, their joint efforts will have less likelihood of success. As regards methodological considerations aiming at closer co-operation, action research would probably be an approach that could develop such co-operation.

Paradigmatic coherence means an acknowledgement that a research process has an inner world of reflection, in which the researcher should consider the compatibility between ontological, epistemological, and methodological considerations when designing research activities. Not all epistemological assumptions are coherent with Dr. Nilsson’s image
of the universe, and not all methods may satisfy the
desire to understand certain aspects of the reality.

Theoretical congruence implies that norma-
tive and problem-oriented research must search for
congruence between the nature of the phenomenon
under study, and the theoretical approach guiding
the study. This means that a pre-understanding of
a conflict should be deeply pondered upon, and
made explicit.

Political operativeness concerns how we succeed
in integrating our research among the political
‘operators’, and gain credibility for our research’s
capacity to handle anomalies. This is not only a
question of finding the better argument in a spe-
cific case, but also of developing a craftsmanship,
which will help the researcher to stay on course in
the turbulent political environment, in which con-
crete peace and development strategies mostly are
implemented.

Catherine Hoppers
Questions of transparency, accountability and re-
sponsibility to the citizenry in Africa
Catherine Hoppers focused her address on the
question of transparency, accountability and re-
sponsibility to the citizen by both researchers and
policymakers and underlined the necessity to un-
derstand the ethic and moral implications of our
research as well as policy decisions.

Policymakers, according to Hoppers, do not
make enough time to read, leave alone read re-
search reports. There is also always the possi-
ilit of arrogance of power making it difficult for
political actors to admit that they do not actually
know something. “Locked in a seemingly eternal
turf war over who had the greater power, a culture
of finger pointing, labelling, stereotyping and mu-
tual suspicion has all but guaranteed that research
findings remain remote products hoarded by the
academic community and couched in a language
code digestible by neither the common citizen nor
the policymakers.”

Researchers, on the other hand, have a far greater
responsibility than is often demanded.

Nations, even impoverished ones, pay them to
generate, transmit, and disseminate knowledge.
Entire subsystems in universities, research institu-
tions and colleges etc all hail and seemingly nour-
ish this goal. So where lies the problem?

According to Dr. Hoppers, the complexity of
reality and conflict requires that research be un-
dertaken from many points of view. A deep un-
derstanding of the nature of violence, the deep
structures of the violence, the resources for peace
building, the cartography of indigenous knowledge
systems all need to be elucidated. We need good,
embedded, free scientific explanations at the basic,
applied and strategic levels. In order for such re-
search to be conducted, it means that researchers
themselves must abdicate from the ancestral view
that knowledge they produce is fixed and universal.
They have to recognize that scientific research is an
intensely human process that is shaped by human
virtues (or lack of them), values (or lack of them)
and by given societal contexts, as well as the pres-
ure induced by a global research fraternity that
dominates the determination of what is a legitimate
research agenda.

The researcher is both analyst and member of
society and requires us to engage with questions
such as: How has the research defined and limited
what can be “found”? To what extent would a dif-
ferent design and methods of analysis have given
rise to a different understanding of the phenom-
emon under investigation?

Instead what we researchers miss is the fact
that consumers and observers of research are often
bored stiff by the non-insightful, regurgitative re-
search that speaks to no one but the academics and
the journal editors to whom they aspire. Steeped in
and very content with familiar nods from familiar
networks, researchers forget that the citizen may be
interested in a different set of questions – the re-
sponse to which demands that we are ready to walk
the “roads less travelled”.

Also, she asked, how does the fear of sanctions
and penalties for non-compliance with the estab-
lished research agenda compromise, for instance,
our will to genuinely explore new themes, new
perspectives and new approaches to inquiry and
dialogue? These questions are especially pertinent
when we recognize a most insidious form of control
that drives and flourishes in academia. There is
a dangerous degree of self-censorship and self-con-
trone where the interests of the state, corporations
and funding agencies are internalised by academia
itself, its administration, its students and its faculty
to such an extent that it assumes the appearance of
“freedom” or “self-determination”.

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Jónína Einarsdottir

A little learning is a dangerous thing

According to Jonina Einarsdottir, aid policies have sometimes proven to be based on badly researched facts, with serious consequences to the recipient nations. In 1997, it was argued in the Swedish policy declaration Partnership with Africa – Proposals for a New Swedish Policy towards Sub-Saharan Africa that there should be no more discussion about recipient and donor but rather about a partnership where both parties should fulfil the agreed conditions and if not, the cooperation could be discontinued. A similar approach was adopted in the UK.

According to the UK government, the criterion for becoming a partnership country was to be a low-income country with a large proportion of poor people. In addition the country should have a commitment to the principles of the agreed international development targets and be pursuing policies designed to achieve these and other UN targets which they have agreed on; be committed to pro-poor economic growth and conservation of the environment, … and pursue policies which promote responsive and accountable government …’ (UK Government, 1997: Panel 14).

Concerns were quickly raised from, for example, The Overseas Development Institute that the poorest countries as well as countries in conflict would become excluded from aid. Should a country’s performance now take priority over need? What should be the role of recipient countries in defining the concept partnership and deciding on criteria of partnership?

The State Secretary for International Development Cooperation within the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs was explicit in the late 1990s about which countries would qualify for partnership relations: ‘Partnership will follow those who lead their countries to greater openness, respect for human rights and deeper democracies. Those who do not will see their legitimacy erode, and with it the basis for partnership’ (Karlsson 1998:263).

Certain countries saw their legitimacy eroded in the wake of the partnership policy and became ‘aid orphans’. These are the so-called ‘difficult partnership countries’, ‘fragile states’ or ‘failed states’ likely to be characterized by political instability and war.

Lately there is an increasing recognition that the so-called spill-over effects of these failed states are contagious and threaten the security and stability, in particular, of their neighbours but also globally. This fact has contributed to concerns among the international donors about their reluctance to address the serious situation in these failing states.

Dr. Einarsdottir suggested in her presentation some research themes to better understand how international development institutions might become better equipped to formulate improved and engaged policies relevant for work in fragile situations and contribute to the prevention of their emergence.

• On what grounds is policy making based within the most influential international development organizations? Who is formulating policy for whom?

• How are “new” development actors that do not adhere to the Paris Declaration (China, Bill Gates Foundation and others) impinging on policy making among the ‘big’ international donors?

• Has reluctance to allocate aid to ‘difficult partnership countries’ contributed to state failure?

• The various tools used to classify countries into ‘good’ vs. ‘bad’ performers need to be analysed as well as corresponding discourses. Who makes the classification, on what grounds and for what purposes?

• Research can contribute to knowledge of the local context so forcefully stressed as crucial in DAC’s Policy Commitment and Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations. Research could also highlight how that very same context might counteract the general principles.

• Post-conflict elections, so important in peace-building efforts, have some problematic side effects that need further examination. What are the consequences for local perceptions of democracy when international/foreign observers declare elections, to be transparent, free and fair, despite being recognized by most local people as being rigged?
Angela Ndinga-Muvumba
Bridging theory, policy and practice? A view from ACCORD

Angela Ndinga-Muvumba shared her practical experiences on connecting research and policy. According to her, academia has unique methodological tools for assessing and evaluating phenomena in the ‘real world’ and can make important contributions to peace through sustained engagement with practitioners. In Africa, policymakers must often respond to, or plan for, engagement without the benefit of long-range studies, reliable and comparable evidence or perspectives from practitioners. They are often forced to design policies that duplicate other policies or ignore the realities of people that will be most affected by a failed response.

Despite the influx of human, financial and technical resources deployed through local, national, regional and international actors, the prospects for durable peace in many post-conflict societies in Africa, remain murky and unclear. It is important to note that the role-players or stakeholders engaged at all of these levels rarely have the opportunity to interact and share lessons; sometimes view one another with ambivalence and ‘mistrust’; and have neither the time, space or resources to link academic research, policy and practice.

A 2004 report of the Swedish Foreign Ministry, ‘Thinking about the World’ best captured the negative aspects of compartmentalized approaches to security policy. The report was published as an outcome document of an extensive enquiry on how to strengthen the capacity for policy intelligence and research. It identifies the need to bridge the gap between academia and practically-oriented institutions, for a number of reasons: 1) new objectives on security policy for people as well as states, in the context of globalization, require creative analysis and clarity; 2) research is improved by drawing upon real life (the practitioner’s perspective is an example); and 3) drafting policy and implementing policy instruments would be simpler to manage with the input of relevant research and practitioner perspectives. It is unlikely that bridging policies, practices and theories will lead to more definitive solutions that bring about peace overnight. Rather, the linking of the three ‘silos’ of the conflict resolution field (theory, policy and practice) can gradually lead to greater clarity and less duplication in the policy formulation processes, closer cooperation, reduced compartmentalization and make policy and practice intelligence more accessible.

Jalal Abdel-Latif
Supporting civic engagement in post-conflict recovery: The case of South Sudan

Jalal Abdel-latif argued in his presentation that the current international assistance being provided to Southern Sudan has been a major disappointment. Even though the jointly accepted frameworks for development, such as the Peace Agreement and the Joint Assessment Mission Process identified community-driven recovery as one of their “quick win” priorities, both civic engagement and participation have largely been ignored.1 The present aid architecture under the Multi Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) arrangements is extremely top-down and does not seem to provide speedy, effective and inclusive implementation of recovery projects. The need to

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1. “Quick win” is a term used in development cooperation referring to quick, and visible positive results, in a complex, long-term development programme.
address urban-rural recovery in Sudan in an integrated manner is consistent with the needs of poor countries emerging from protracted conflict with little or no infrastructure or experience of a modern economy. In such situations the interventions that work, tend to be those that respond to basic livelihood needs while reinforcing each other.

The rationale behind the demand-led approach of Community Driven Development or Community Driven Reconstruction (CDD/CDR) derives from the belief that local communities are in a better position to identify their needs and corresponding actions than higher administrative authorities or outside partners. Particularly in post-conflict situations, the CDR approach provides the best opportunity for a local reconstruction process, by ensuring actual needs of the community are met and benefits of peace are rapidly seen.

CDD is an approach that empowers local community groups, including local government by giving the community direct control over planning decisions and investment resources through a process that emphasizes participatory planning and accountability. Where post-conflict public institutions are weak CDD may help to build bridges between the state and citizens, as well as help to strengthen social cohesion where social groups are divided.

The focus on local management of resources and decision making in CDD programmes signifies a shift in existing power arrangements, creating opportunities for poor and marginalized groups to gain a voice and control over their own development.

CDD in post-conflict contexts similar to those of Southern Sudan has demonstrated its effectiveness in key areas such as: effective response to demand for rapid implementation through rapid disbursement and delivery channels that deliver cost-effective goods and services to communities; promoting participatory models of local governance and service delivery based on principles of downward accountability, civic engagement, agency responsiveness, and information transparency; enhancing social capital and fostering peaceful, representative, and inclusive planning and decision making at the local level.

Peter Kagwanja
From power-sharing to state-building: The conceptual pillars of the African Union’s post-conflict reconstruction policy

Peter Kagwanja noted that Africa has recently witnessed an increase in the number of peace deals aimed at ending decades of festering conflicts. No less than 20 peace deals were signed between warring parties in Africa between 1990 and 2007. The resulting cessation of active conflict and return to relative peace has transformed the concept of “post-conflict transition” into a watchword. The key plank of the peace pacts was the concept of ‘power-sharing’, a central concept in ‘liberal peace’ now informing peacemaking in Africa. According to him, it is a significant indication of the limitations of ‘liberal peace’ that many of these peace deals have either collapsed or failed to deliver lasting peace. Countries like Angola and Rwanda are actually ascending to peace through battlefield victories. Despite this, the term ‘post-conflict transition’ aptly describes the transformation now taking place in much of Africa, and all the challenges and opportunities this has posed.

Democratic elections in countries emerging from conflict have been assumed to usher the post-conflict countries to peace, democracy and state-building. But elections have also ended the era of “power-sharing” rather than building on the elements that held the transition together. Peter Kagwanja called in his presentation for the re-examination of the peace processes, and the elements that held them together as a way of consolidating peace and the new states. The African Union model has the potential of effectively guiding Africa’s post-conflict reconstruction, but research on how to make liberal peace work for Africa is needed. In this research, it is necessary to take into account the potential impact of the new scramble for African resources, now increasingly interwoven with the role of China in the scramble, and the West’s war on terrorism.

Thus, the state emerging from power-sharing deals has been as unstable as its post-colonial predecessor. ‘Power-sharing’ has tended to come to an end following elections that replace the various transition authorities or “Governments of National Unity” (GNU) with new elected governments, which have tended to be as fragile and exclusive as their pre-war variants. In this regard, the process of state building after the war is haunted by the failure of the power-sharing to be reflected in the constitution and the emerging state, leading to the continuation of ethnic polarization, exploitation and tension. This contradiction is reflected in the post-conflict reconstruction and development models pursued by the African Union and even external donors.

Post-conflict reconstruction is a key component of the African Union’s peace and security architec-
ture. Despite this, the AU post-conflict framework is extremely short on providing a clear roadmap for re-engineering the state to take on board the root-causes of conflict and accommodate the various conflicting ethnic and other interests, thus making the state building sustainable. The weakness of this framework is reflected in the failure of transitions in Sudan, Somalia and the recent failure of the democratic process in Kenya. The potential impact on state building on the continent by new actors like China and Brazil in both providing resources for and fuelling tensions in the scramble for Africa’s resources is also unclear.

From his argumentation above, Mr. Kagwanja identified a number of areas where further research is needed to help inform successful post-conflict intervention policies:

- A deeper understanding of the root causes of the conflicts from which states are emerging in order to avoid setting the state building process on the road to failure.
- Re-evaluation of the peace processes and transitions to ensure that the power-sharing elements that ensured the stability of the transition period are incorporated into the state building process.
- A nuanced understanding of the post-election conflicts largely because African countries emerging from conflict and post-conflict elections face the danger of relapsing into conflict, not because of lack of development but because of disputed elections. Events in Kenya point to the demand for research into elections and suggestions on mechanisms of resolving electoral disputes.
- The impact of the new scramble for Africa’s resources, especially fuel, by new actors like South Africa, China, India and Brazil on the post-conflict reconstruction demands research.

Weade Kobbah Wureh
Enhancing participatory research in policy formation implementation in post-conflict transition in Africa
Weade Kobbah Wureh argued that policy driven by participatory research is likely to make the formation of transitional governments in post-conflict areas in Africa less cumbersome and acceptable to all indigenous stakeholders thus bringing relief, measured in terms of peace and security, for all including various external partners with competing interests.

Early involvement of key actors from the inception sets the pace and engenders support for implementation. Research helps identify existing and potential resources and strategies for tapping them. It also helps identify gaps, challenges and emerging issues, refines them and develops strategies for dealing with them. This means information gathered at all levels of society should be analysed and fed to policymakers periodically. This participatory approach to policy formulation strengthens coordination, generates goodwill and builds confidence and political will of stakeholders. Awareness and confidence are increased among key actors whose interventions can positively influence others. This lessens tensions between the donor community which funds policy issues, on one hand, and the government functionaries who oversee policy implementation and people who are the direct beneficiaries of these policies on the other.

Early research into policy issues also provides opportunities to test research hypotheses and validate information. Often, policy formation research in conflict and post-conflict areas is conducted not by parties to the conflict but by external consultants whose knowledge of the conflict is seldom informed by experiences and circumstances pertinent to the cultural norms of the given society. Victims of conflict situations are often not consulted or make very few inputs into remedies being sought by external partners to alleviate their plight. This condition underscores the need for a participatory research imperative with the view to maintain peace, security and sustainable economic recovery in post-conflict societies in Africa.

Kwesi Aning
Negotiating the ‘demand’ for security sector reform: Domestic imperatives or donor-driven agendas in post-conflict societies
Kwesi Aning argued in his presentation for a nuanced and differentiated approach to implementing donor policies on security sector reform. A one-size-fits-all approach is a recipe for further disaster. He posed the question if the ‘demands’ for better ‘management’, ‘reform’, ‘transformation’ or ‘governance’ are driven by domestic imperatives for change or as a result of external conditionality presented as part of the broader agenda for state reconstruction and restitution. Also, the use of the terms is being changed to include different areas of development to fit the donors’ agendas.
In Liberia, in spite of these demands from donor partners to reform the security sector as part of the general public sector reforms of the 1980s and 1990s, several pre- and post-conflict administrations managed to resist this. In the 1980s and 1990s, several of Africa’s public sectors underwent a series of extensive reforms that culminated in the establishment of what came to be broadly known as national institutional renewal programmes (NIRP).

As a rule, however, the security institutions were excluded from these reforms, which also benefited from substantial external funding. Only in the last few years with the rapid spate of state failure and the resultant wars and destruction of security sector institutions has the idea gained ground that, perhaps even more than the rest of the public sector, the security institutions in general, and the police in particular, also require extensive reform. The transition to democratic forms of governance, the increasing emphasis given to issues of security, and fiscal problems are together driving the perception of the imperative need for security sector reform in post-conflict societies.

There are increasing concerns about the true meaning of the term security sector reform. This uncertainty has led several writers to proffer new suggestions, creating a certain wariness in the application and operational usage of the term. There is an increasing shift from security sector reform to ‘security sector transition’ or ‘security sector transformation’. The United Nations Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) is championing a new term, namely ‘justice and security sector reform’ (JSSR), while the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is now arguing for a ‘security system reform’.

To the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), security sector reform was applied variously to mean ‘...demilitarising police, and restructuring armies [as] important stabilising factors... A reformed security sector will alleviate many concerns of potential investors, and thus help rebuild the economy’. For the World Bank, improving governance systems and reform of the security sector was part of a larger demand for retrenchment of public sector staff and not necessarily about improvements in the delivery of public services.

Thus, for most donors, World Bank and IMF bureaucrats the usage of ‘governance’, ‘reform’ and ‘management’ should be contextualised. For most bilateral and multilateral donors, these terms meant the ‘provision of a limited set of public services at the lowest possible cost’. Therefore, the context within which for some donors ‘management’, ‘governance’ and ‘reform’ were presented meant that Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) should be more accountable and transparent. Such processes were perceived as critically essential to improving efficiency in the public sector. Therefore, the demand for ‘reform’ and ‘governance’ in the security sector became part of the Bank’s Public Sector Group’s objective which sought to ‘focus more of its efforts on building efficient and accountable public sector institutions’ of which the security sector was perceived as one.
3. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

COMMUNICATION
Issues: conditions in the demand-side of research, need for research-based knowledge, unrealistic expectations of the other, ‘packaging’ and communication of policy-relevant research, networking, research design, poor perception of policy-making process, contacts

One of the main problems that was singled out by the participants concerned communication. There was consensus among the participants that the main problem concerning the gap between policy and research is first of all about communication. As the discussions showed, not all research is for policy. In real terms, policymakers can tap into basic knowledge to inform their decisions and options. The challenge is to find out how policy-relevant research can be more effectively communicated by research institutes, and how policy institutions can better access and use such information. Institutional and research autonomy should be defended, but not at the expense of cooperation.

There is a perception that policymakers and researchers work in watertight environments that do not understand each other, do not speak to each other and do not respect each other. Yet, they are dependent on each other for the sake of the quality and impact of their work. The necessity of getting to know and understand each other’s fields of expertise and processes of work was brought up by several speakers. Researchers tend to have poor policy comprehension of both policy processes and how their research might be relevant to this process. There is a need to establish more permanent meeting grounds where both parties continuously update one another of their work to enhance the accessibility of policy and practise intelligence, as stated by Angela Ndinga-Muvumba in her contribution.

One idea that was discussed was to invite mutual participation to a larger extent in processes that already exist within the institutions concerned. This would give researchers a chance to get a “feel” for the policy world and a chance to react before issues suddenly sail up on the official political priority list. Policymakers for their part would acquire enhanced knowledge on what research is out there and how to access it. Only through enhanced communication could we get around the lack of use of already existing knowledge, and the tendency to always ask for new knowledge. It would also avoid the unrealistic expectations both parties have of one another.

Traditional methods of communicating research are often limited to publication of reports. This fits badly with the constant time constraints of desk officers within political institutions. There is simply too little time to read. As was said in the contributions, “bureaucrats rarely have time to read, but they do listen” implying that verbal presentations are more easily accepted in the political institutional environment. Targeted, verbal presentations of research findings could easily be introduced in the planning of research programmes.

INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES
Issues: what kind of research will promote cooperation? interface between research and development policy, need to safeguard basic research, long-term approaches, resources, time, region-specific knowledge on Africa, donor-recipient country relationships, networking, institutional partnerships, donor dilemma, career considerations of policymakers, internal power games in institutions, and the role that NAI as an honest broker can play in institutional collaboration aimed at creating an arena for dialogue
Within bureaucratic policy institutions, there might also be institutional structures making it difficult to chart and absorb relevant research. The organizational culture within foreign aid agencies and foreign ministries is not very permissive towards a forward-looking approach. Creative solutions and incorporation of new perspectives are difficult to handle for big bureaucracies. This organizational culture promotes trust in old knowledge from specific, traditional sources. It makes it difficult to encounter and accept research, which does not confirm choices already made. There are also other institutional challenges to the easy acceptance of research within the policy world. Desk officers have overstretched agendas and are faced with time constraints with regard to policy decisions, which require immediate attention. Research, on the other hand, is a lengthy process that does not produce results from one day to another. There is also the fact that too many perspectives complicate policymaking. When taking decisions the preferred background material should give clear and straightforward recommendations, something that research seldom provides.

The danger of politicising research was also discussed. A political agenda deciding where the resources for research should go would weaken the pull of research. It would provide ample resources for problem-solving research, the kind of applied research answering the question “How do we best solve this crisis we are presented with in country x?” whereas the production of good basic, long-term research might be under-financed.

Another institutional caveat is the difficulty to handle incoming research within the ministry or agency. A need for a specific unit with the mandate to look for and communicate relevant research within its own agency was identified. This requires administrative resources in an already strained budget.

Nor should we forget the formidable institutional challenges confronting African policymakers to actually make use of research being produced around the world. Speaking from inside one of these institutions, Ibrahim Sessay made a clear point on the extreme need African policies have to be infused with researched facts. At the same time, both in his and Angela’s presentations, it was stated that policymakers in Africa must often respond to, or plan for, engagement without the benefit of long-range studies, reliable and comparable evidence or perspectives from practitioners. They are often forced to design policies that duplicate other policies or ignore the realities of people that will be most affected by a failed response. Quite often, these difficulties are made worse by the pressure from donors to quickly adapt long-term developmental policies for the governments to be eligible for foreign aid (see issues identified).

The Design of Research

Issues: institutional constraints: time, organisational culture, lack of harmony between demand and supply, politicisation of research, normative paradigms, ignorance of existence of policy-relevant research, access to policymakers, dynamics of issues—researchers need to be one step ahead of the issues, ineffective communication on the part of researchers, active involvement with actors, recognition of the importance of indigenous knowledge in Africa, suggestions: institutional bridge building and networking, establishing and nurturing contacts, better packaging and communication of research findings, use of seminars, design research in a more policy-friendly way

Several participants were more concerned with the design of research and the way it is presented than the needs for communication, even though several arguments might fit into both categories. Researchers are often ineffective communicators (see list of issues above) when it comes to a policy audience. When not specifically produced on demand, academic books are often produced for an academic audience with the detail, length and language this implies. For the purpose of communicating with policymakers, this could be treated with changing the physical format of the academic products to shorter briefs targeted at the specific policy audience. (See issue on the need to protect basic research.) It could also be done through a change in the language in which academic reports are written. But just as well as a change in the physical presentation it could require a change in the non-physical presentation.

The discussion on the design and presentation of research was carried out in connection with the “fear” of research institutions of becoming totally demand-driven in their need to focus on policy relevant issues. The argument here goes that it is more a question of learning to format and present the parts of the ongoing research in a way that makes it attractive to policymakers, than to actually change the research profile of the institute.
THE USE OF RESEARCH

Issues: place of dialogue between researchers and policymakers, need for innovative diagnoses, how is policy made? policymaking among big donors tends to be similar—one size fits all! need to understand the tools for classification of countries, knowledge and power tend to reinforce each other. Suggestion: need for humility, no single scientific truth, only options, harmonization and coherence are critical, donor conditionalities sometimes work against bridging the gap between research and policy in Africa

On the applicability and usefulness of research, one point that was made clear was that “a little knowledge is a dangerous thing”. Practitioners are increasingly focusing on the efficacy of their work. Public policy endorses pragmatism and what is important is what clearly works. Evidence or established knowledge is likewise important for those engaged in discourse, no matter if they are selling a product or an idea. Research should produce useful and usable knowledge, though it is important to have in mind that in practice evidence can originate from various kinds of experiences and practices. Validity of evidence, even that which is scientifically established, can be questioned and manipulated. Knowledge and power tend to reinforce each other. Knowledge gives power, and it can be misused as any other source of power (see issues).

We should be humble in our claims that research can produce general knowledge or laws that can improve policy. However, research can yet contribute to a valuable knowledge and awareness about for instance the working mechanisms of international organizations, their policy-making, practices and discourses, as well as knowledge about local contexts and other concerns such as the problematic sides of post-conflict elections. Yet, skilful use of evidence requires awareness of its limits and strengths.

It is unlikely that bridging policies, practices and theories will lead to more definitive solutions that bring about peace overnight. Rather, the linking of the three ‘silos’ of the conflict resolution field (theory, policy and practice) can gradually lead to: greater clarity; less duplication of policy formulation processes; closer cooperation; a closing of the gap between academic research and the ‘real’ world; reduced compartmentalization; and accessible policy and practice intelligence.

The examples from practical experience, which were debated at the workshop, pointed to important weaknesses of the policies on conflict resolution and peace building being implemented today. Several interventions referred this to the inability to include up to date fact-based research as base for the policies. The example from Southern Sudan showed the lack of progress and difficulties of implementation of the developmental agendas due to the exclusion of components of Community Driven Development and participation from below. ACCORD, in its approach to conflict resolution tries to focus on connecting the local perspective to the national plans through dialogue and research. Jonina Einarsdottir illustrated with her examples how the disconnection between centralized, donor-driven reconstruction policies focusing on performance, and the real needs on the ground might actually have promoted the weakness of states and created “aid orphans”. Weade Kobbah opposed the use of “guidelines” or set models for action because they tend to group all conflicts into one mould and target the results of the conflict instead of the root causes. Research has a very important role to play to inform both policy formation and implementation. In all different conflict situations, research can provide the information so dearly needed from the local perspective of victims and participants in a conflict. Yet, the only way these situations can influence policies is if they are understood and fully appreciated.

POLICY RELEVANT AREAS OF RESEARCH WITHIN POST-CONFLICT TRANSITION IN AFRICA

Issues: state of the art studies of countries, democracy and state building, post-conflict elections, transitional justice: truth commissions, indigenous approaches to healing and reconciliation, post-conflict paradigm: understanding the difference between intervention and policy, design and sequencing, understanding the security-development linkages, role of donors

Another part of the discussions concerned policy relevant areas where the participants in the workshop suggested a need for deeper research in the field of post-conflict transition in Africa. Several of the participants had first hand experiences to share, either from a policymaker’s point of view or from a researcher’s point of view.

Most of these topics, especially from the African representatives, concerned the donor-driven focus on democratic development and elections as an exit point for foreign interventions in post-conflict situations. In short, the highlighted areas for future research were:
• What are the consequences for local perceptions of democracy when international/foreign observers declare elections to be transparent, free and fair, despite their being recognized by most local people as being rigged? Post-election conflicts need to be studied and their consequences for local understandings of democracy.

• Too much focus on democracy promotion can lead to conflict or be used as an ideology of domination if economic and social policy is not taken into democracy debate. It also generates expectations that cannot be met and therefore results in frustration and further tension.

• Explore the tension between development programmes of state building and democracy and the possible impact of better use of sequencing of aid.

• Further research is also needed on the engineering of peace agreements to better reflect underlying causes.

• The re-engineering of the state from below and from above.

• Impact of ownership vs. control by aid agencies.

• On what grounds is policy making based within the most influential international development organizations? Is it research, political or donor trends, practice or lack of time that sets the agenda?

• How are new development actors outside DAC, such as China, or private initiatives like the Gates foundation impinging on policy making among the “big” international donors?

• Have the formerly evidence-based recommendations not to allocate aid to ‘difficult partnership countries’ actually contributed to state failure?

• Who makes the classification of countries into ‘good’ vs. ‘bad’ performers, on what grounds and for what purposes?

• Research can contribute to knowledge of the local context so forcefully stressed as crucial in DAC’s Policy Commitment and Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations. Research could also highlight how that very same context might counteract the general principles.
ON COMMUNICATION

Improve communication: “We seldom have time to read, but we like to listen,” said one participant from the foreign ministry. So verbal communication seems to be the mode of preference here. If we want to achieve some of the other results, we would need a permanent, or institutionalised form for verbal communication between researchers and policymakers rather than ad hoc seminars. One step could be to open up participation in already existing processes in each other’s institutions. This could be the country strategy process within development agencies on the one hand, or a more participatory process when establishing new research programmes on the other.

Another step could be to explore the benefits of joint networks of policymakers and researchers. For example, a research institute like NAI with the ambition to produce policy oriented material (policy notes, policy briefs etc), could greatly benefit from a network of policymakers interested in bouncing ideas on content and layout of such products. Through this communication the policymakers would also get a chance to influence the research produced at the Institute to fit their needs.

Stay in tune with the policy processes of the sponsors – a high-quality research report published in three years may have limited impact, the direct transfer of the researchers’ knowledge at specific points and time in the current policy process may have great impact.

Communicate research findings to fragile states: In weak states there is often a lack of access to up to date policy relevant research, as well as a difficulty to absorb and make use of available research. In this aspect, the difficulties encountered are similar to the ones expressed by the policymakers of European countries. Establishment of trustful relations and focusing on verbal communication could be a way forward in this case as well.

ON DESIGN OF RESEARCH

Improve the impact of the research produced through attention to the following areas: Get away from one-off, ad hoc initiatives with the aim to close the gap between policy and research. It takes time to get effects, and to get different initiatives known and accepted by the right people; target the audience of your policy relevant research; create “easy access” lists of articles on prioritised subjects.

Generalise knowledge: It is difficult for policymakers to find use for research that is too detailed or too focused. Generalised and multi-disciplinary approaches to answer questions posed are more easily adapted and useful for policymakers.

Improve the timing between demand and supply: Political reality sometimes includes rapidly changing priorities. A change of government in a donor country would probably raise other priorities to the top of their agenda regarding development cooperation for example. If research is reactive, this automatically creates a situation where research and policy are out of phase with each other. In the discussion, the counter-argument was raised that quite often the research demanded does exist, but maybe it is not available from ongoing research programmes, rather you have to look for it in already produced research. Therefore, the argument goes, this is rather a problem of presentation and communication than bad timing.

Keep the research portfolio mixed between proactive and reactive research: If research is to be timely, it needs to be proactive. This argument goes hand in
hand with the above-mentioned “lack of timing”. If research is to exist when it is suddenly demanded, it cannot be driven by demand. It needs to be investigated before the demand arises – and therefore be proactive. Hence both proactive and reactive research is needed to form a holistic picture of reality and to close the gap between research and policy.

ON INSTITUTIONAL IMPROVEMENTS

*Explore institutional partnerships* to form adequate teams to increase richness and reach of both the analysis and its results.

*Collaborate in new ways:* Researchers have access to networks and institutions that donors lack, and vice versa. Research and researchers can provide a neutral ground and help donors invest in trustful relationships.

*A participatory approach to policy formulation* strengthens coordination, generates goodwill and builds confidence of stakeholders. Early research into policy issues also provides opportunities to test research hypotheses and validate information. Often, policy formation research in conflict and post-conflict areas is conducted not by parties to the conflict but by external consultants whose knowledge of the conflict is seldom informed by experiences and circumstances pertinent to the cultural norms of the given society.

*Free up resources for research and research administration:* Policymaking institutions need to create space for efficient handling of research within the institution. If improvements are to be made regarding the use of information in policymaking specific functions are needed within the organization, which can locate, translate and disseminate research within the host institution, as well as communicate their demands towards the research community.

RECOMMENDATIONS SORTED BY INTEREST GROUPS

To policymakers:

- Make the decision making process more participatory by opening up processes for participation by researchers.
- Get involved in more long-term cooperation with researchers, for example through joint designing of research programmes.
- Critically investigate your own institution to map obstacles for acceptance of new research findings that do not fit into already accepted knowledge.
- Researchers often do not know who to turn to when trying to communicate with bureaucratic institutions. The recommendation is therefore that policymakers should be clear on where this responsibility lie within their institutions and communicate this to external partners.
- Free up more resources for research administration.
- The base for collaboration is confidence. Therefore, jointly agree on recurring briefing meetings with networks of researchers with a periodicity that permits the establishment of permanent contacts (for example quarterly). If there is a gap of too long a time between meetings, then people will have to be rotated.

To researchers:

- When designing the research programme or yearly work plan, include a plan for policy contacts and communication. Just as on the institutional level, the individual researcher should think open-mindedly of the objective and methods of the policy contacts he or she is planning for the programme. What could be the pros and cons and mutual benefits? Not all research is policy relevant, but most is, depending on how it is presented and to whom.
- Strive for generalised and multi-disciplinary approaches when presenting research findings for a policy audience.
- Programme occasions for verbal presentation of research results, preferably at the location of the policy institution.
- Stay in tune with the policy agenda and processes to enable timely input and presentation of research results. This is only possible if the institutions are in ongoing communication with each other.
- Include policy-oriented publications in the research programme planning. Use external help in the design and communication of these if needed.
- As an institution, make sure to keep a research portfolio, which is multidisciplinary, and a mix between basic and applied, reactive and proactive research.
- Be open for collaboration with policymakers in ways that go beyond your own research programme.
- To enhance the demand for research, produce and present an inventory of already existing research within specific fields. This could be done in the form of easily accessible lists on the homepage that are continuously updated.
ANNEX I: WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

BRAINSTORMING WORKSHOP ON

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN RESEARCH AND POLICY
ON POST-CONFLICT TRANSITION IN AFRICA

Organized by:
The Nordic Africa Institute

Venue:
The Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden
7–8 February 2008

OPENING SESSION: THURSDAY 7 FEBRUARY  9.30–10.00

Carin Norberg, Director, NAI
Official Welcome and Opening
Mathias Krüger, Research and Policy Analyst, NAI
Introduction and Background

SESSION 2: THURSDAY 7 FEBRUARY  10.00–12.30
Bridging the Gap Between Policy and Research: POLICY
Chairperson: Fantu Cheru

Speaker and title of paper:
Måns Fellesson, Swedish Foreign Affairs
Research in Foreign Policy: Essential to Good Quality Policy Decisions. Challenges and Possible Ways for Enhanced Integration
Per Karlsson, Sida
Possible Areas of Cooperation between Policy and Research in Swedish Foreign Aid Policy Towards Africa
Markus Derblom, FOI
Meeting demand– connecting Africa-related policy and research in the defence community
Krishna Kumar, US Foreign Assistance
Tensions Between Democracy Promotion and State Building in Post-Conflict Africa:
A Few Areas for Policy Research
Göran Holmqvist, Sida
Being an External Actor: Reflections from a Practitioner with a Latin American Perspective

SESSION 3: THURSDAY 7 FEBRUARY  14.00–17.00
Bridging the Gap Between Policy and Research: PRACTICE
Chairperson: Cyril Obi

Speaker and title of paper:
Angela Ndinga-Muvumba, ACCORD
Bridging Theory, Practice and Policy: The view from ACCORD
Jalal Abdel-Latif, UNECA
Supporting Civic Engagement in Post-Conflict Recovery: Donor Dilemma – The Case of South Sudan
Peter Kagwanja, HSRC
From Power-Sharing to State-Building: The Conceptual Pillars of the AU’s Post-Conflict Reconstruction Policy

Weade Kobba Wureh, University of Liberia
Participatory Research in Enhancing Policy Formation and Implementation in Post-Conflict Transition in Africa

Kwesi Aning, Kofi Annan Institute
The Challenge of SSR in Post-Conflict States

SESSION 4: FRIDAY 8 FEBRUARY 9.00 -12.00
Bridging the Gap Between Policy and Research: RESEARCH
Chairperson: Angela Ndinga-Muvamba

Speaker and title of paper:
Ibrahim K. Sesay, Government of Sierra Leone
Bridging the Gap Between Policy and Research in Post-Conflict Transition: The Case of Sierra Leone

Fiona Rotberg, Uppsala University
Climate Change, Migration in Africa: Current Research for Development Policy

Anders Nilson, Växjö University
Normative Strength: A way to Assess Research Applicability in Policy Formulation

Catherine O. Hoppers, University of South Africa
Between Researchers and Policymakers: Questions of Transparency, Accountability and Responsibility to the Citizen in Africa

Jónína Einarsdottír, University of Iceland
A Little Learning is a Dangerous Thing

SESSION 5: FRIDAY 8 FEBRUARY 13.00 –15.00
Bridging the Gap Between Policy and Research: WAYS AHEAD
Moderator: Fantu Cheru

Fantu Cheru, NAI
Summary of earlier sessions and instructions for discussion
Discussions in groups
Recommendations from the groups

Mathias Krüger, NAI
Conclusions and outcomes. Impact for NAI/PCT and others

Cyril Obi, NAI
Endnote
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<td>The Nordic Africa Institute, Sweden</td>
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<td>FOI - Swedish Defence Research Agency</td>
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<td>MATS UTAS</td>
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