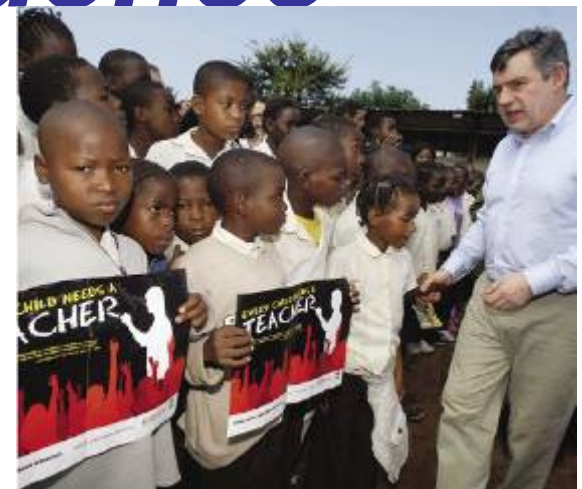# Policy Engagement

## *How can civil society be more effective: using evidence to influence policy*

Why this matters?

- CSOs are **important players** in development …
- … but their **impact can limited** in scope, scale and sustainability.
- Many development **challenges** remain.
- There is more potential for **partnerships**.
- To have greater impact:
  - CSOs need to **engage** in policy processes
  - and use **evidence** better.

CSOs, Evidence, Policy, Impact
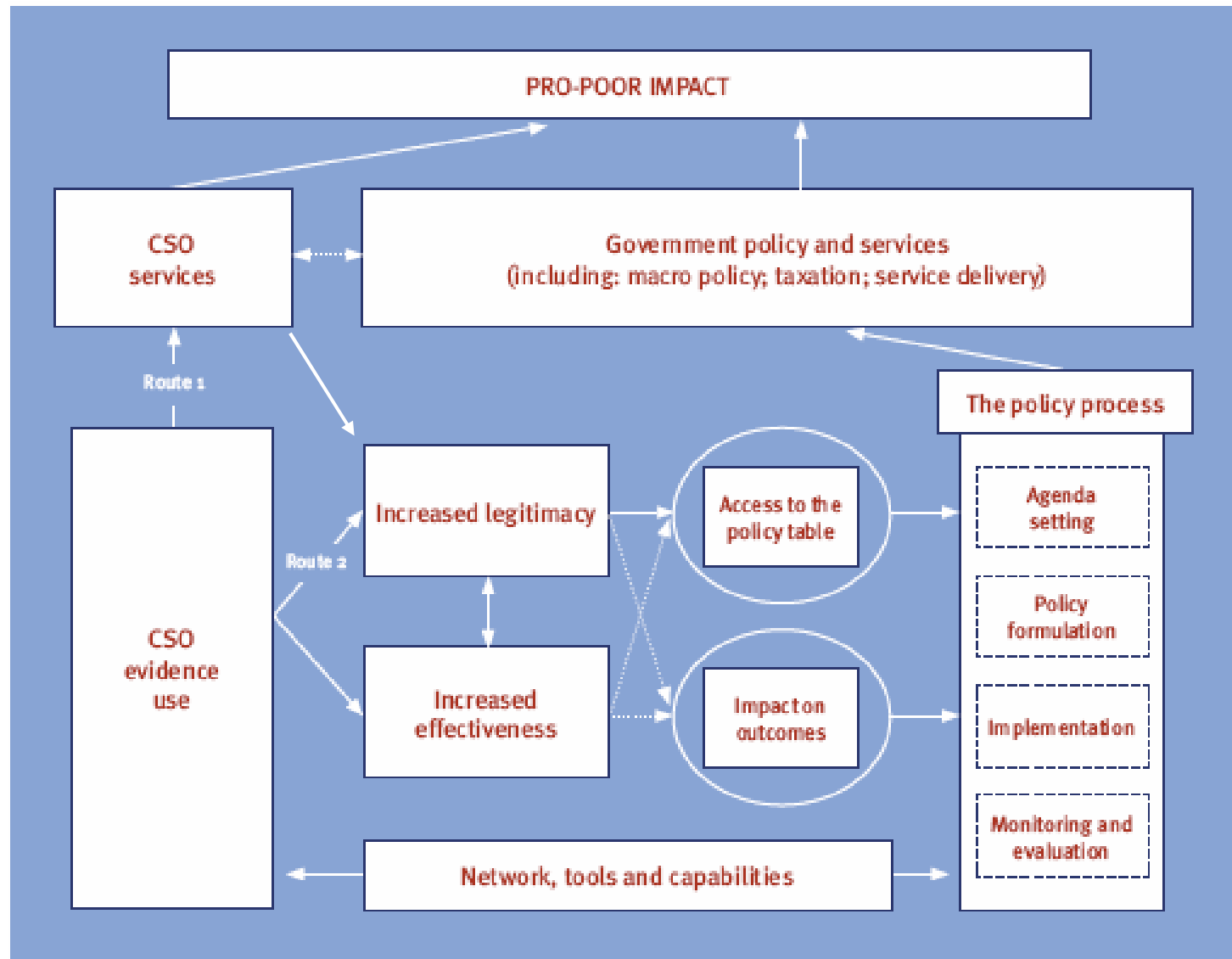
Context

- Democratisation and liberalisation.
- In some countries, move from challenging the state to policy engagement.
- CSOs increasingly involved in policy processes (from a previous focus on service delivery).
- CSO accountability and legitimacy of CSO involvement is often questioned.
- Challenge of engaging in a way that does justice to the evidence.
- Research capacity has been reduced.
- CSOs, researchers and policymakers seem to live in parallel universes.

Definitions

- <u>Research</u>: *"any systematic effort to increase the stock of knowledge"*

- <u>Evidence</u>: the result/output of the research process

- <u>Policy</u>: a "*purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors*"

  - Agendas / policy horizons

  - Official statements documents

  - Patterns of spending

  - Implementation processes

  - Activities on the ground

The linear logical policy model...

Identify the problem

→ Commission research

  → Analyse the results

    → Choose the best option

      → Establish the policy

        → Implement the policy
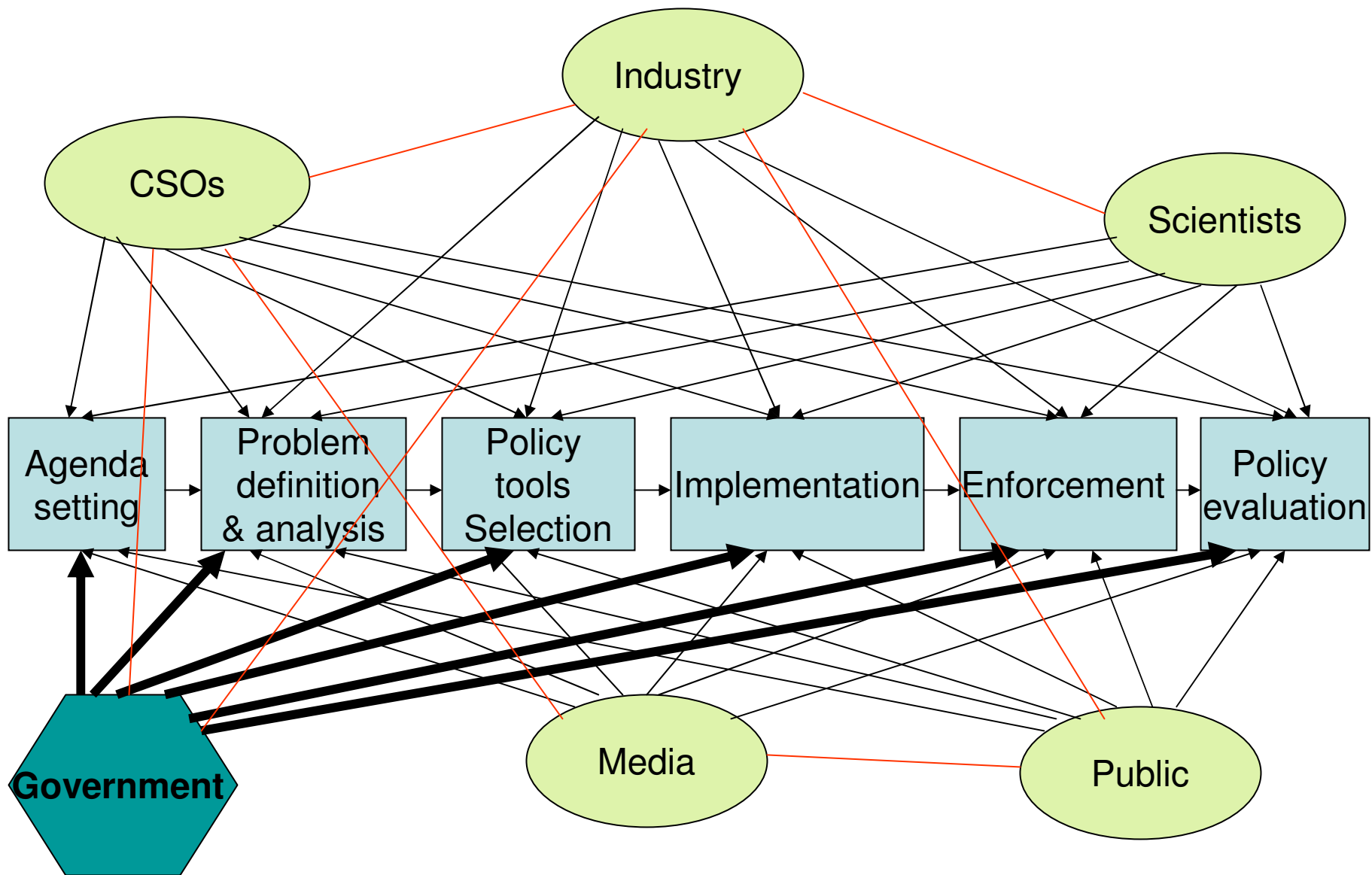
          → Evaluate the results

in reality…

- *"The whole life of policy is a chaos of purposes and accidents. It is not at all a matter of the rational implementation of the so-called decisions through selected strategies."* [1]

- *"Most policy research on African agriculture is irrelevant to agricultural and overall economic policy in Africa."* [2]

- *"CSOs often have very little to bring to the policy table."* [3]

- "CSOs, researchers and policymakers seem to live in parallel universes." [4]

[1] – Clay & Schaffer (1984)
[2] – Omamo (2003)
[3] – CSPP Consultations
[4] – ODI-AFREPREN Workshop

Industry

CSOs

Scientists

Agenda
setting

Problem
definition
& analysis

Policy
tools
Selection

Implementation

Enforcement

Policy
evaluation

Government

Media

Public

Source: Yael Parag

An Analytical Framework

External Influences
Socio-economic and cultural influences, donor policies etc

The **political context** – political and economic structures and processes, culture, institutional pressures, incremental vs radical change etc.

The **links** between policy and research communities – networks, relationships, power, competing discourses, trust, knowledge etc.

The **evidence** – credibility, the degree it challenges received wisdom, research approaches and methodology, simplicity of the message, how it is packaged etc

A word of warning…

- The world is complex
- We do not aim to make it simple
- Only to find recognisable patterns or beacons
- Which might guide your actions

- There is NO blueprint. NO linear, logical, rational, proper, method.
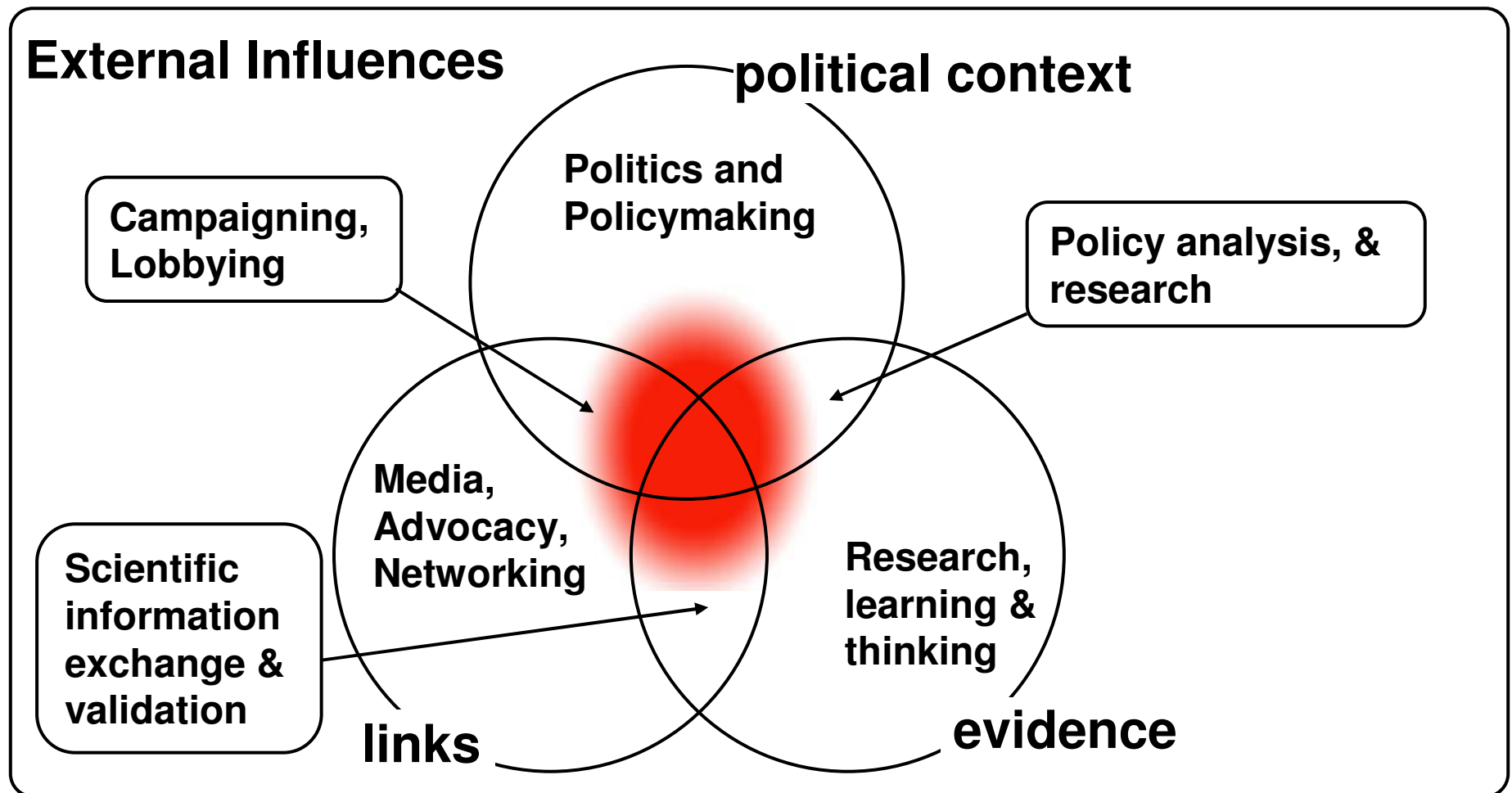- Most of the time it is up to you.

… A word of warning

- You will probably never find out what goes on within the policy process
- And never have all the evidence you need
- You need to be confident to act even in a context of uncertainty
- And be systematic and scientific (context, strategy, action, record, learn) but flexible and original
- ...and, policy is not always about evidence, is it?

What CSOs need to do

What CSOs need to know	What CSOs need to do	How to do it
Political Context: • Who are the policymakers? • Is there demand for ideas? • What is the policy process?	• Get to know the policymakers. • Identify friends and foes. • Prepare for policy opportunities. • Look out for policy windows.	• Work with them – seek commissions • Strategic opportunism – prepare for known events + resources for others
Evidence • What is the current theory? • What are the narratives? • How divergent is it?	• Establish credibility • Provide practical solutions • Establish legitimacy. • Present clear options • Use familiar narratives.	• Build a reputation • Action-research • Pilot projects to generate legitimacy • Good communication
Links • Who are the stakeholders? • What networks exist? • Who are the connectors, mavens and salesmen?	• Get to know the others • Work through existing networks. • Build coalitions. • Build new policy networks.	• Build partnerships. • Identify key networkers, mavens and salesmen. • Use informal contacts

A Practical Framework

External Influences

political context

Campaigning, Lobbying

Policy analysis, & research

Politics and Policymaking

Media, Advocacy, Networking

Scientific information exchange & validation

Research, learning & thinking

links

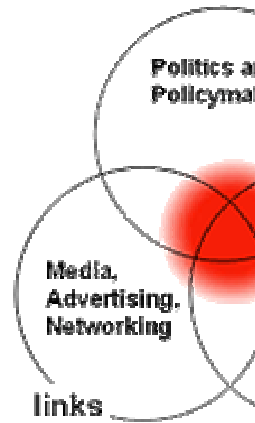**evidence**

Practical Tools

Overarching Tools
- The RAPID Framework
- Using the Framework
- The Entrepreneurship
  Questionnaire

Communication Tools
- Communications Strategy
- SWOT analysis
- Message Design
- Making use of the media

Policy Influence Tools
- Influence Mapping & Power Mapping
- Lobbying and Advocacy
- Campaigning: A Simple Guide
- Competency self-assessment

...ent Tools
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...Bibliometric Analysis
- Focus Group Discussion

Tools for Policy Impact:
A Handbook for Researchers

Daniel Start and Ingie Hovland

odi
Research and Policy in Development Programme
111 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7JD
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7922 0300, Fax: +44 (0)20 7922 0399

RAPID Programme

Politics and Policymaking

Media, Advertising, Networking

links
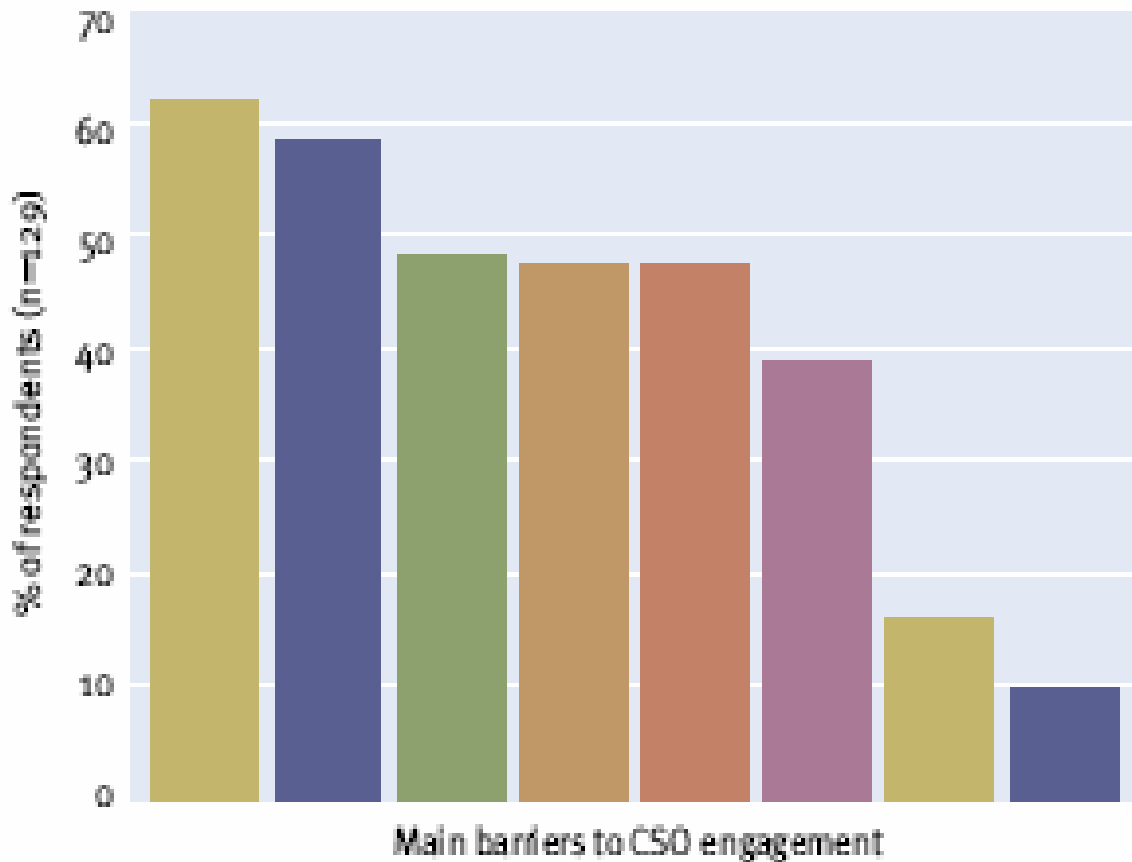
An overall framework

- Identify the problem
- Understand the context
- Identify the audience(s)
- Develop a Strategy
- Identify the message(s)
- Resources – staff, time, partners & $$
- Promotion – tools & activities
- Monitor, learn, adapt

Audience

Who?

How?   What?

Promotion

Message
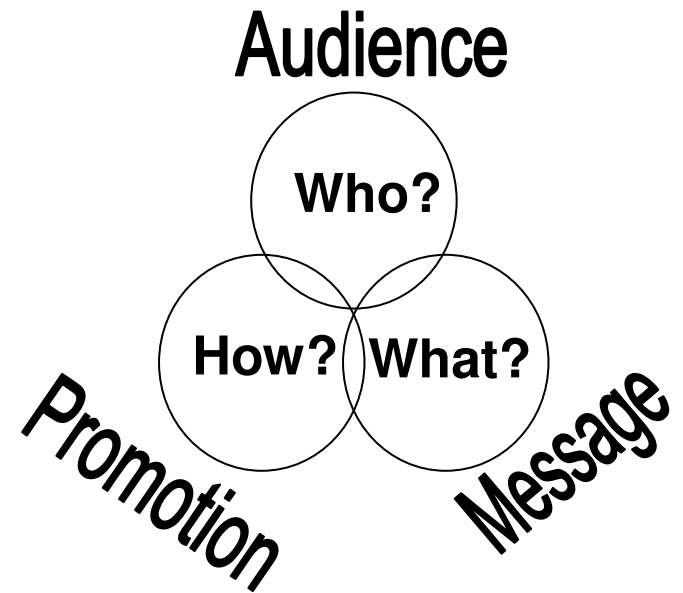
Main Barriers to Engagement

CSOs
- Capacity (62%)
- Funding (57%)
- Process kn (48%)

(CSO evidence not seen as credible)

Policy Processes
- Not open (47%)
- Corrupt
- No capacity to use evidence

Problems and Solutions

Adverse political contexts (external).	Campaigns 'Boomerangs' Pilot projects .
Limited understanding of policy processes.	Rigorous assessments of policy processes and political contexts (key issues & simple approaches).
Weak strategies for policy engagement.	Match approaches to critical policy stages – agenda setting, formulation and/or implementation.
Inadequate use of evidence.	Ensure that evidence is relevant, objective, generalisable and practical.
Weak communications.	Engage in two-way communication. Use existing tools for planning, packaging, targeting and monitoring communication efforts.
Isolation / fragmentation.	Apply network approaches (key roles of networks and 10 keys to network success).
Limited capacity.	Develop or access range of technical capacities (systemic capacity).

Challenging Contexts

- Adverse contexts: intimidation, corruption, closed, murky.
- Possible responses:
  - Campaigns (banning land mines)
  - 'Boomerangs' (*Labor* in Peru)
  - Pilot projects (Animal health in Kenya)
- Further info:
  - Good campaigns guide
  - Policy Influence Toolkit
  - CIVICUS

Understanding Policy Processes

- Limited understanding: of processes, structures and actors
- Possible responses:
  - Rigorous assessments of policy processes and political contexts (key issues & simple approaches).
- Further info:
  - Tools for Policy Impact
  - Assessing political contexts

Weak strategies

- Inadequate choice of strategy: or no strategy at all

- Possible solutions: Match policy influence approaches to:
  - Critical policy stages – agenda setting, formulation and/or implementation
  - CSO's capacities
  - Audience

- Further info:
  - Tools for Policy Impact
  - Assessing Political Contexts

Inadequate use of evidence

- **Inadequate use of evidence**: much of the evidence put forward by CSOs is being ignored

- **Possible response**: Characteristics of evidence: Availability, Accuracy, Objectivity, Credibility, Relevance, Practical usefulness

- **Further info:**

  – Research for Development: A practical guide

  – START: Simple Toolkit for Advocacy Research Techniques

Weak communications

- Poor communication: CSOs findings are often not made accessible despite their relevance for policymakers

- Possible response: Engage in two-way communication. Use existing and new tools for planning, packaging, targeting and monitoring communication efforts

- Further info:
    - The Communications Initiative
    - Successful Communications: A toolkit

Isolation / fragmentation

- Weak links to other policy actors: CSOs, researchers and policymakers often live in parallel universes. Entry-fees and pre-requisite policy networks

- Possible solutions: Apply network approaches (key roles and functions of networks); build formal and informal relations with institutions, organisations and individuals in the policy process

- Further info:
  - RAPID Networks project: www.odi.org.uk/rapid/projects/ppa0103

Limited capacity

- Technical and financial capacity constraints: can limit CSOs ability to be strategic
- Possible solutions: Develop or access range of technical capacities (systemic capacity); build on existing local capacities; identify experts within the group (share)
- Further info:
  - CSOs Survey
  - INTRAC