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LINKING APPLIED RESEARCH AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION IN STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT FOR POLICY CHANGE

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The Implementing Policy Change Project (IPC) provides resources to developing country policy implementors and the A.I.D. Missions working with them for managing policy reforms. The project helps developing country managers to apply a strategic management approach to policy change. This approach can be thought of as an ongoing process whereby managers set goals and undertake actions based on assessments of desired future outcomes, of external factors facilitating and/or constraining the attainment of those outcomes, and of the match between current strategies, resources and actions, and those necessary to reach intended goals. The managerial orientation is strongly external, toward seeking to marshal external support for goals, capitalizing on strengths, and responding to changing conditions during policy implementation (see Crosby 1991).

IPC combines technical cooperation objectives, funded mainly through Mission buy-ins, with applied research goals, supported mainly by core funding. Technical cooperation teams, and their host country collaborators, are the lynchpins that join these two sets of objectives. It is vital to the success of IPC, therefore, that technical cooperation teams understand what research in IPC means, and

what their role is in supporting and conducting research. This note presents the answers to some frequently asked questions about applied research and technical cooperation in IPC.

What is the purpose of IPC research?

First of all, research is a primary component of the way the project envisions effective management. This viewpoint is encapsulated in the concept of "action research," which is a management improvement technique that orients managers to consciously collect and analyze information on their environment and the results of their actions, and to use that information to monitor and modify what they do to implement policy objectives. It usually pairs external consultants with managers in a process of iterative cycles of data collection, joint analysis, action planning, and monitoring of results. Thus the overarching (but not the sole) purpose of IPC research is to assist developing country managers to implement policy reforms more effectively.

In addition, and more specifically, IPC research is intended to:

- Feed learning into the technical cooperation, networking, and dissemination components of IPC to support improved strategic management practice; e.g., through data collection, reports, articles, seminars, and/or workshops.
- Demonstrate the utility of the strategic management approach to improved policy implementation; e.g., how managerial attention to building constituencies for reform can advance implementation.
- Identify key factors that condition the utility and effectiveness of the strategic management approach to policy implementation; e.g., how organizational incentives influence the behavior of implementors.
- Derive lessons learned from technical cooperation activities in the countries where IPC works; e.g., in the natural resources sector, how to shift forestry agencies from a policing to a community co-management orientation.
- Provide information to support monitoring and evaluation of IPC for AID/RD/EID; e.g., reporting on activities undertaken, progress in meeting targets, responses of host country managers, and so on.

1.b. The concepts, techniques, and processes associated with the strategic management approach can be learned and applied by developing country managers through technical cooperation, networking, institutional strengthening, and dissemination activities.

Proposition No. 2: Adoption and application of the strategic management approach by developing country organizations and managers will improve the effectiveness of policy implementation.

Sub--proposition: 2.a. The conditions under which the strategic management approach contributes effectively to improved policy implementation can be identified and analyzed.

2.b. The collaborative process and learning dimensions of the strategic management approach are generic to implementation of policies across a broad range of sectors.

What research questions does IPC seek to answer?

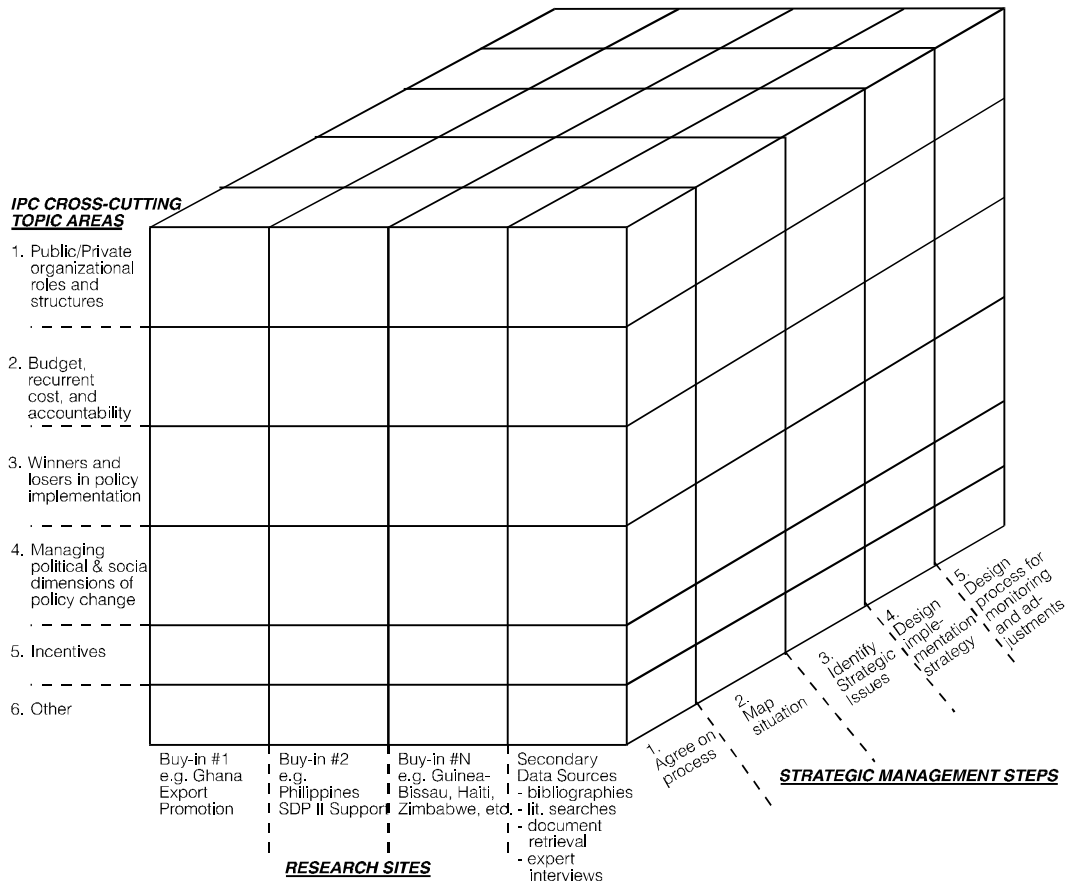
The IPC Project contains a broad range of research questions, all of which are intended to provide answers to two overarching questions. These can be expressed in the form of propositions, each containing two sub--propositions.

Proposition No. 1: The strategic management approach to policy implementation can be effectively transferred to developing country organizations and managers.

Sub-propositions: 1.a. The strategic management approach to policy implementation can be operationalized in a set of concepts, techniques, and processes.

Systematically examining these propositions in ways that fulfill the intended purposes of IPC research calls for posing and answering questions about: characteristics of the country where policy reform is designed and implemented, its socioeconomic situation, and its experience with reform to date; the roles of the public and private sectors; type(s) of policy change undertaken, and of the implementing organizations involved; degree and speed of change required to carry out the new policy; the nature and impact of political and sociocultural factors; the level of resources required; characteristics of winners and losers from policy reform; the nature of incentives; and the results of different approaches to policy change. Further, assessing IPC's propositions requires answering research questions about the application, utility, and feasibility of the steps involved in using the strategic management approach.

IPC RESEARCH FRAMEWORK



How do all these research questions fit together?

IPC's research questions can be thought of as lying along three dimensions. Their intersection creates a framework linking policy implementations in individual countries, cross-cutting topics relevant to many policy implementation situations, and the project's strategic management approach. The graphic illustrates the framework.

Not every "cell" in the framework represents a topic targeted for IPC research. Key research questions addressed are selected subject to a set of criteria: level of demand for research on the topic, potential for research to generate impact and results, feasibility of conducting research on the topic, availability of resources, and degree of bureaucratic support for research on the topic.

What research products does IPC generate?

IPC research products are the result of the documentation and analysis of policy implementation interventions in specific countries, comparative analysis of two or more country interventions, reflection upon the cross-cutting topics, and lessons learned from the larger literature on policy reform and development management. Product categories include:

- Baseline data collection/reconnaissance reports
- Annual country case studies
- Cumulative country case studies
- Comparative case studies

- Specific analyses of technical cooperation experience
- Theme papers on cross-cutting issues
- Summaries/analyses of non-IPC experience
- Research papers on policy implementation issues
- Annotated bibliographies
- Revised strategic management approach paper

What is the role of IPC technical cooperation teams in research?

Technical cooperation teams are the “frontline” of IPC research. Teams fulfill a variety of roles, sometimes sequentially, sometimes simultaneously, depending upon the particular features of a given buy-in. Team members can serve as:

- Data collectors and recorders
- Preparers of country case studies

- Analysts of policy implementation issues
- Participants in joint reflection with host country managers and researchers, and with IPC consortium members
- Coaches and trainers in data collection, analysis, and reflection with host country managers and researchers
- Innovators on new and/or revised research approaches and methods

Prior to, and following, a technical cooperation assignment, team members can expect to spend time with core IPC consortium staff discussing their specific research roles, products, and results. A questionnaire, the “IPC Data Collection Protocol,” has been developed to serve as the basic tool for recording information gathered by technical cooperation teams. For more information on IPC research, contact Dr. Derick W. Brinkerhoff at IDMC (301/314-7731).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Crosby, Benjamin L. "Strategic Planning and Strategic Management: What are they and how are they different?" IPC Technical Notes, No. 1, October 1991.

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