

As we say goodbye to a very good 2015 and we look with inspiration and enthusiasm into this brand new 2016, we'd like to share our achievements, and what we have learned and enjoyed as well as our hopes for the New Year.

Celebrating our achievements

During 2015 we have been inspired by the following challenges:

1) Help think tanks strengthen their capacity in what we consider three of the most crucial organisational issues: funding, monitoring, evaluation and learning on policy influence, and designing a policy relevant agenda.

2) Engage policymakers in the co-production of relevant knowledge to strengthen the interaction between knowledge and policy, with a special emphasis on agents of change.

3) Enhance our understanding on how context at the level of government institutions enables or hinders chance to use knowledge to inform policy.

4) Commit ourselves to improve how we collaborate with others and how we share our thinking and experience with a wider community.

Achievements

To address these challenges, we have successfully developed the following activities, thanks to good partnerships with others inspired by similar intentions:

1) We worked with Southern Hemisphere and Kristie Evenson to deliver new rounds of two online courses with the support of the Think Tank Fund and the Think Tank Initiative:

- [“Re thinking your funding model”](#). 33 members of 22 think tanks in Africa, Central and Eastern Europe and Latin America reflected on their own funding model and learned from alternative experiences in order to strengthen their long term sustainability.
- [“Online training to strengthen Monitoring & Evaluation & Learning on policy influence”](#). 22 think tankers in Africa, Asia and Central and Eastern Europe assessed and enhanced their capacity to monitor, evaluate and learn how their research informs public policies.

‘Our organisation is reflecting upon the exercises and materials read throughout the course: we have started a discussion on how to diversify our funding model so as to become more sustainable and not entirely dependent on foreign donors.’ (Participant of “Re thinking your funding model” course)

- Designed the innovative and promising [“Online course on doing policy relevant research”](#), aimed at helping think tanks enhance their current capacity to design and implement research agendas that are policy relevant, to be delivered in February 2016.

The three efforts counted with the support of the Think Tank Fund and the Think Tank Initiative.

We provided personal mentoring to members of six thinktanks in Central and Eastern Europe to develop new funding strategies that will enable them to walk away from their comfort ones and try out new sources of support, and to design, pilot and implement realistic and strategic MEL plans to enhance their policy influence efforts.

We worked with Southern Hemisphere to deliver the webinar *Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning of policy influence: are the results worth the effort?* Here we shared our lessons learned as well as pending questions/dilemmas and new ideas to enhance this field.

We worked with Steve Vosti to conduct the [External Review of the Chilean think tank Rimisp’s Territorial Cohesion for Development Program](#), with emphasis on Scientific Contributions, Policy Influence and Organisational Development.

‘It was extremely interesting to see that even though we come from different countries and different organizations we had similar as much as different challenges. I learned a lot from others experiences.’ (Participant of “Re thinking your funding model” course)

‘I managed to engage my colleagues in discussions and exercises, which was a welcome pause to reflect on some issues, but also provided me with an external look of the potentials of having this kind of evaluatory talks more often.’ (Participant of the “Online training to strengthen MEL on policy influence”)

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We designed a new online course for Latin American mid-level policy makers, with support of the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications and the contributions of a very solid Content Strategy Group made up of eight former or current senior policymakers with a significant academic or research background from different countries in the region:

- We delivered this online course [“Leaders of change: developing Latin American policymakers’ capacity to promote the use of knowledge in policy”](#) to 24 policy makers in 11 countries in Latin America interested in improving their capacity to use and promote the use of knowledge in policy making and public management.
- With the collaboration of the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP), the course has been adapted to Africa, and will be delivered in the region in March 2016.
- With the collaboration of policy makers in Argentina and Honduras, [two case studies on the use of knowledge in policy making](#) were produced.
- We shared lessons of the capacity building activity through [a case study on the experience of the course](#).

‘One of the most interesting points of the course was that the content enabled the discussion and analysis in our workplaces.’ (Participant of “Leaders of change” course)

‘I was able to improve my knowledge of some theoretical aspects related to the use of evidence and also recognize some useful tools like the stakeholders map or ideas to gather and disseminate information.’ (Participant of “Leaders of change” course)

3)

We embarked on the study [“Going beyond ‘Context matters’”](#), supported by INASP, which will be available by 2016. This knowledge systematization effort is being carried out with the crucial help of others: four mentors from Africa, Canada and Latin America, and more than 50 policy makers, practitioners and donors worldwide that have been interviewed by the research team.

The result of this initiative will be two main knowledge products:

- A framework that will help policymakers, researchers, practitioners and donors better define which could be the most attractive windows of opportunity in different contexts and thus focus efforts to promote a better interaction between knowledge and policy.
- An action paper that proposes concrete ways in which the framework can be used. To this end, it proposes a set of practical implications and shares emergent practices based on a systematization of existing experiences of organisations and individuals working in different regions to promote a more solid interaction between research and policy.

‘Working with Politics and Ideas as part of their ‘Going Beyond “Context Matters”’ project has been a fantastic learning experience. Although the framework is still being developed, I have already incorporated their early findings into training sessions with policymakers from Kenya and Malawi.’
(Shahenda Suliman, Programme Assistant, Evidence-Informed Policy Making, INASP)

4)

We participated and moderated two sessions in the Think Tank Initiative Exchange 2015. We also reflected on the meeting and invited other participants to share their thoughts [collaboration](#), [research quality](#) and [communications](#) at P&I’s website.

We published [more than 60 blog posts at P&I’s website](#) on a broad spectrum of issues: Research and Ideas, Politics, Funding, Communications, Policy Influence, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning, and Capacity development. 43 of these blog posts were written by [individual contributors and organisations](#) (think tanks, donors, NGOs, public institutions) worldwide.

“P&I is a lab for experimenting with new ideas. In 2015 we have been working on a new course on policy relevant research. From discussing a very broad idea, to finalizing the details of the contents and methods, we have followed a participatory approach. Listening to diverse perspectives on the course has improving our approach every step of the way. I am very excited of launching the course and continue developing new ideas on how to better plan and develop policy-relevant research.” (Andrea Ordoñez, Researcher Coordinator of Southern Voice)

‘Working with P&I has been a lovely way to share knowledge and to learn in the process. They have a fantastic network of people who are motivated and inspiring. Vanesa and Leandro offer great insights and they are well organized.’ (Dena Lomofsky, Partner and senior consultant at Southern Hemisphere, South Africa)

We strengthened partnerships with the Think Tank Fund, the Think Tank Initiative, the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications, On Think Tanks, Southern Hemisphere, Transparify, the Center for Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP) in India, and many more organisations around the world.

“Cooperating with P&I colleagues has provided me with a broader global perspective on challenges we all face in developing and using policy research effectively. I have enjoyed the collegial sharing of experiences and the joint learning we have had as we have worked together to design learning tools for a global set of practitioners.” (Kristie Evenson, Researcher and Practitioner on Democratic Governance and Civil Society, Central and Eastern Europe)

Connecting with our desires for 2016

A new year is always a good moment to refresh our commitments and be more clear about our intentions. This is what we will look for in 2016:

- Increase our work with policymakers for jointly building cultures and capacities for a more solid interaction between knowledge and policy.
- Deepen our collaboration with policy research institutes and help them strengthen key organizational decisions and actions that enable a larger policy influence.
- Enhance how we incorporate complexity and systemic thinking into our thinking and work, by giving special emphasis to articulation with others and paying more attention to emerging opportunities
- Continue to work with policymakers, researchers and experts who are truly committed to co-building of relevant and useful knowledge on the interaction between politics and ideas.

‘P&I’s concern with co-construction of knowledge with researchers, practitioners, policy makers and donors worldwide is a remarkable effort that makes it a very prominent space from where study, discuss, learn and promote better links between policy and research.’ (Leandro Echt, member of P&I)

P&I’s strategic agenda is inspired by everyone who participates in our discussions and activities. We are just catalyzers: without the objectives, interests, expertise, knowledge and innovative ideas or others our work would not be possible. Promoting a fruitful interaction between knowledge and policy is definitely a collective endeavor and we permanently seek to become the best piece of the puzzle that we can. So thanks to all! (Vanessa Weyrauch, co-founder of P&I)