



INTERNATIONAL
FOOD POLICY
RESEARCH
INSTITUTE

IFPRI

Evidence to Policy Linkages: The Quest for Impact

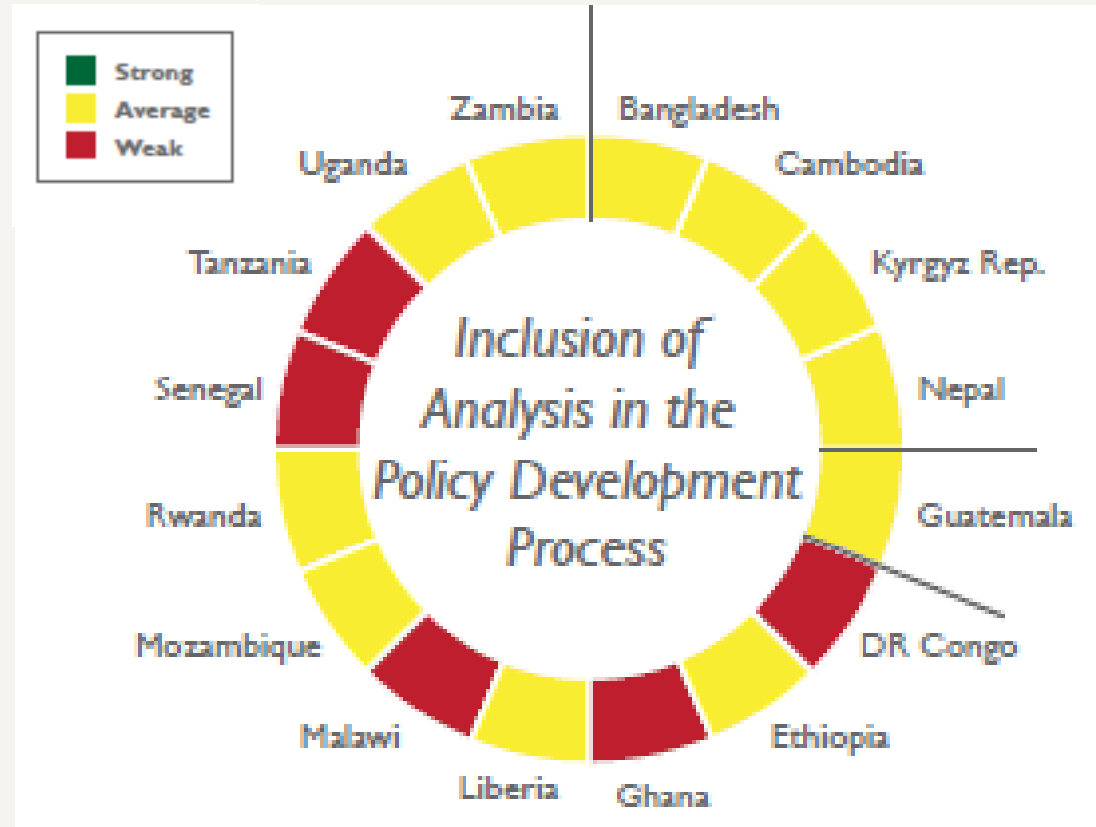
Danielle Resnick
USAID Partners Meeting
December 14, 2015

Rhetoric versus Reality



“Despite growing political commitment by governments to evidence-based analysis, country assessments show that the practice of evidence-based policy remains limited”

(Quinn 2015, Cross-Country Analysis of Institutional Architecture Assessments)





Nature of Evidence-Policy Pathways

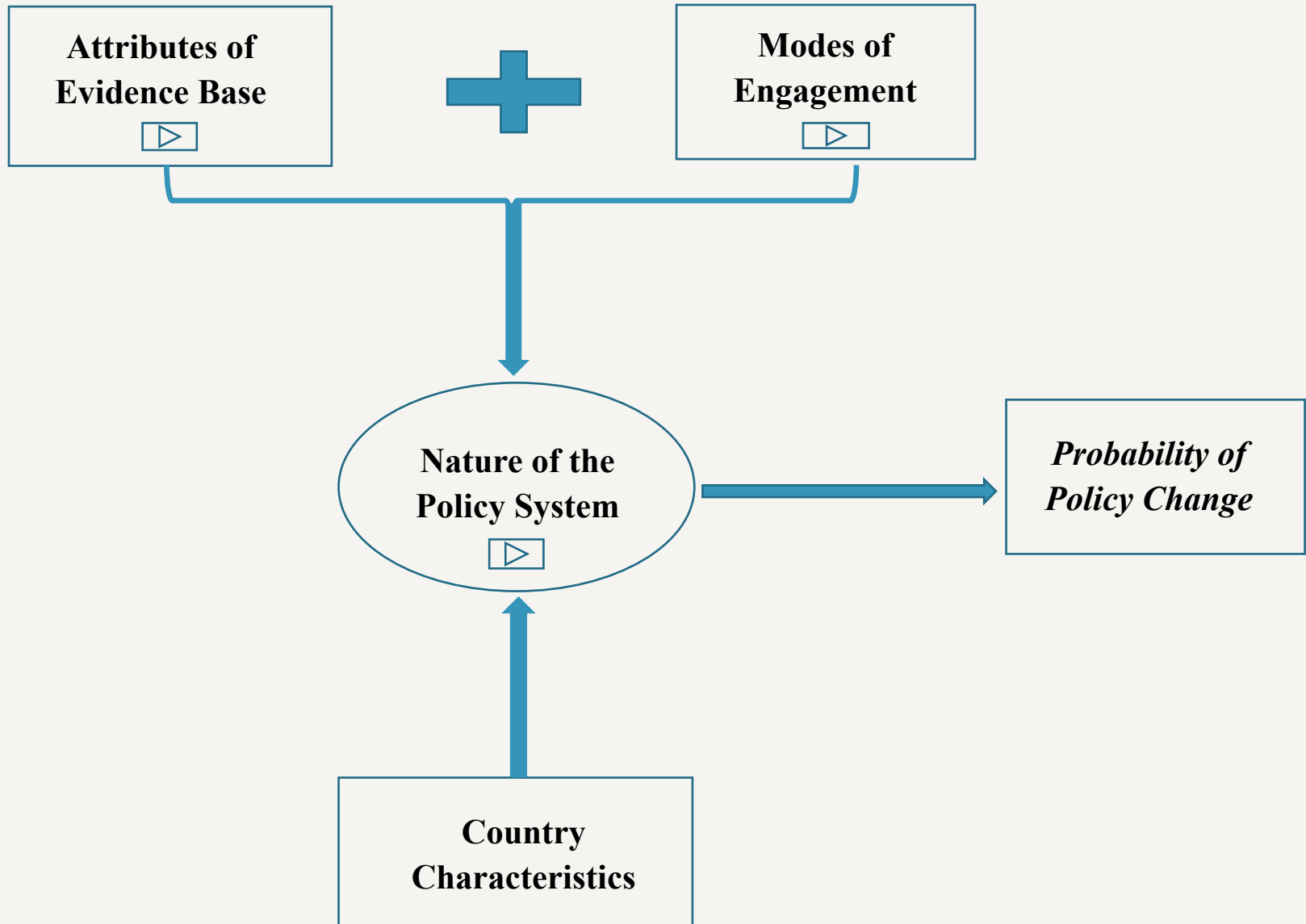
		Has there been policy change?	
		Yes	No
Was there evidence to support the policy change?	Yes	Effective <i>(E-voucher in Zambia)</i>	Blocked <i>(Insufficient investment in ag R&D)</i>
	No	Volatile <i>(Pigeon pea export ban in Mozambique; One Cow, One Household in Malawi)</i>	Dormant

Inventory of Projects on Evidence-Policy Links



- 1) Institutional Architecture Assessments** (*AfricaLead, EAT*)
- 2) Food Security Project, Global Collaborative Research on Policy Process and Capacity** (*MSU, IFPRI, U. of Pretoria*)
- 3) Political and Public Will** (*Yale/Montana State University*)
- 4) Making Reform Incentives Work** (*Aid Data*)
- 5) Research and Policy in Development (RAPID)**
(*Overseas Development Institute*)
- 6) Political Economy of Agriculture Policy in Africa (PEAPA)** (*Future Agricultures Consortium*)

Underlying Pathway from Evidence to Change



Attributes of Evidence

Legitimacy

- Local evidence and alignment with local priorities carries more weight
- Country-specific diagnostics have more influence than cross-country benchmarking

Credibility

- Research institutes with established reputation have strongest weight
- Organizations with a base in country are seen as more credible

Substance

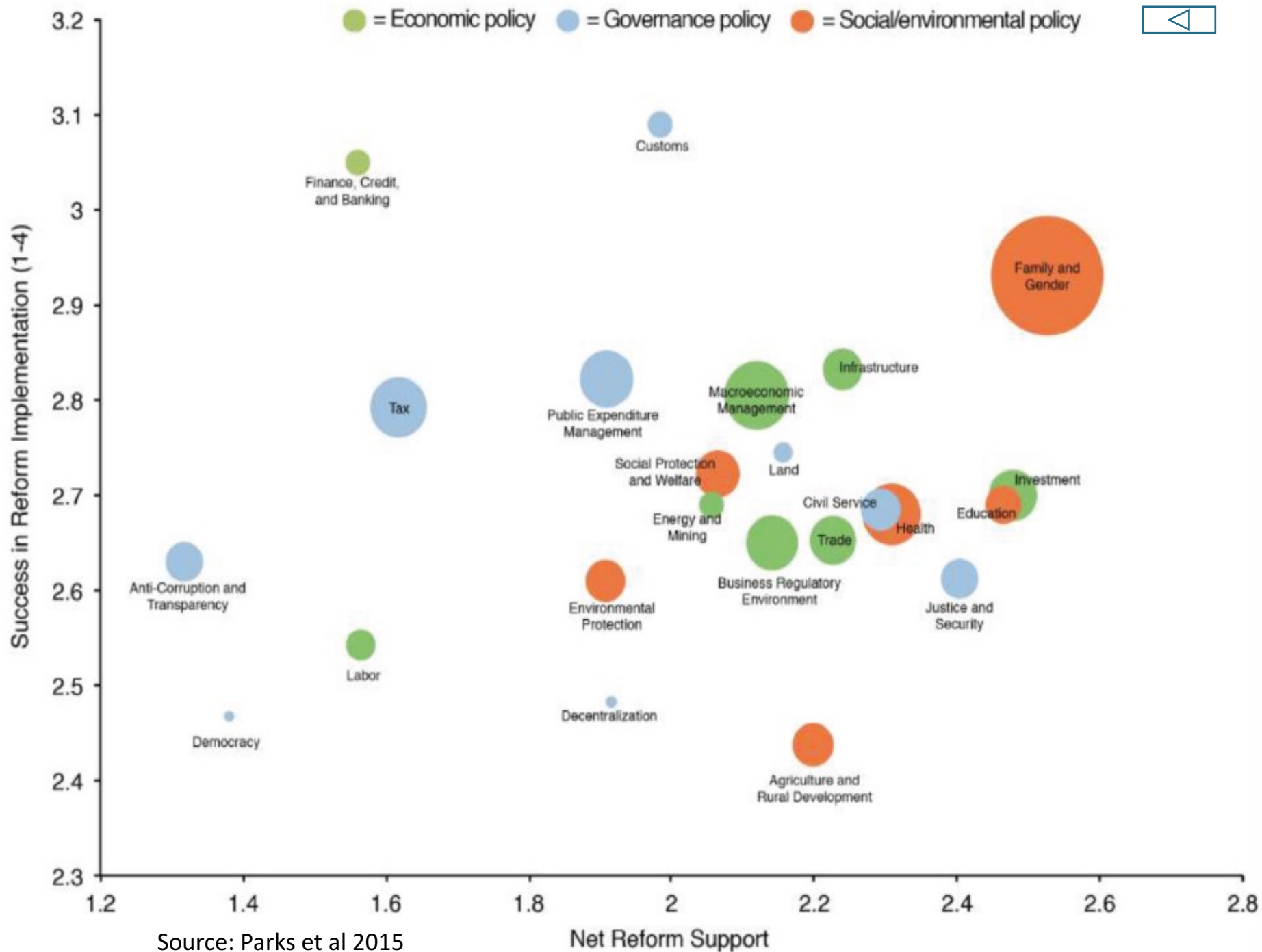
- Specific but flexible recommendations have greater weight, as do pilots
- Need to go beyond just M&E and really focus on financial/economic analysis to inform the full policy process

Density

- Too much evidence, especially if arriving at disparate conclusions, can muddle debate and be interpreted differently

Domain

- Evidence on governance has least impact on change while that on family, health, and gender has most impact
- External agricultural and rural development assessments have low reform impact



Source: Parks et al 2015

Modes of Engagement



Timing

- Most evidence is marshalled at the agenda setting stage, with secondary attention at the design and evaluation stages
- Crisis episodes limit the space for evidence
- Be cognizant of policy, budget, and electoral cycles

Clarity of Message

- Designing communication strategy in tandem with research strategy increases likelihood findings will be recognized and incorporated

Framing

- Policy entrepreneurs can frame evidence in a way that gives them leverage over defining what is the relevant problem and what is the correct solution
- Distortions are more pronounced with “wicked problems”

Length of Engagement

- Long-term engagement builds trust and credibility in accepting findings, especially on issues that take momentum to change

Availability of Data

- Common constraint is lack of a centralized, easily accessible hub for all agriculture and food security data from across government agencies, development partners, and civil society

**Nature of
policy system**

Political Regime

- Democratic countries with a free press are more receptive to external assessments than more autocratic regimes
- Civil and political freedoms play a significant role in bridging research and policy
- “Developmental,” autocratic regimes can be very receptive to sound evidence if it corresponds with existing goals

Institutional Veto Players

- More veto players typically leads to less policy change
- Centralization of power in executive can lead to top-down change regardless of evidence base

Public Sector Capacity and Organization

- Effective public sector institutions are more amenable to analysis and advice due to higher levels of “absorptive capacity”
- Devolved structures may hinder information flows across partners and ministries
- Turnover of ministers interrupts flow of evidence and trust building

Some Concluding Questions



- **Are we generating the “right” evidence for policy change?**
 - If political uncertainty stymies some reforms, then need evidence on public opinion towards food security reforms and the public’s knowledge gaps
 - If limited institutional capacity for implementation hinders policy change, then need evidence on which models of public sector administration improve incentives and performance for food security
- **Are we targeting the “right” audience with our evidence?**
 - Shaping public will for policy change requires that the public has a shared view of the *problem* and the *solution*
 - We may reinforce structural weaknesses in the policy process by repeatedly targeting the “usual suspects” with our findings