

### Strengthening Policy Systems: Enhancing media's capacity to report on food security and nutrition policy issues

Sheryl L Hendriks, Suresh C Babu, Elizabeth Mkandawire and Flora Nankhuni

A major objective of FSP is to strengthen the policy systems at the national levels to respond to food security and nutrition challenges. Policy systems function well when all its stakeholders are empowered to actively participate in the policy process. The media as one of the key stakeholders and contributors of knowledge for policy debate and dialogue, plays a critical role in the policy process. Their role is not restricted to only helping to get issues on the policy agenda, they also play an important role throughout the entire policy process. The media can influence policy change through the way in which they frame certain issues. They can stimulate public demand for change. However, in order to influence policy change the media requires the capacity to critically report on policy issues.

This year, Michigan State University (MSU), International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the University of Pretoria (UP) offered a range of capacity strengthening activities to young journalists and scientists from Malawi, South Africa and Zambia. Four engagements with young journalists were conducted throughout the year. The purpose of these engagements was to familiarise journalists with the food security and nutrition policy process and empower them with tools to critically report on policy issues.

Three of the outreach engagements applied the Kaleidoscope Model for Policy Change as a training tool. The Kaleidoscope Model was used to help participants understand the various stages of the policy process and the key drivers of policy change. The training focused on how the media could apply the Kaleidoscope Model in their various context to develop meaningful stories. The first two engagements were specifically directed toward

#### Key Findings

- The engagements strengthened the capacity of the media to report on food security and nutrition policy related issues.
- They provided journalists with the necessary tools to critically assess and participate in the policy process.
- 23 journal articles and radio reports have been published as a result of the training.
- The journalists in Malawi continue to engage with the networks they have developed as part of an informal network for food and nutrition reporters

familiarising the journalists with policy processes. The first capacity building workshop was held in Blantyre, Malawi in collaboration with the New Alliance Policy Acceleration Support (NAPAS) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development. The workshop focused on improved reporting on issues of food security and



*The participants conducting interviews during a field trip in Malawi, April 2016.*

nutrition. It assisted in helping the journalists identify their role in the policy process. Participants were asked to develop food security stories using the Kaleidoscope Model. Many of the stories they prepared were reported soon after the workshop.

The second workshop was held in Pretoria, South Africa and focused on bridging the communication gap between journalists and researchers. The workshop was an opportunity for journalists to network with researchers who could provide expert opinions on food security and nutrition related issues. Researchers also were introduced to journalists who could assist in translating and disseminating research findings to policymakers and the general public in a user-friendly manner. Journalists and researchers collaborated in the preparation of media pieces. Several of the journalists reported on the workshop process as well as the workshop content. This workshop prepared the journalists for the next two engagements.

Journalists participated in a policy dialogue in Lilongwe, Malawi that focused on gendering Malawi's forthcoming National Nutrition Policy. The journalists not only reported the research findings, but they were able to participate in a policy analysis exercise through which they were further capacitated. Again, it was an opportunity for



the journalists to interact with policymakers involved in the development of nutrition policy.

The final engagement was a workshop held in Pretoria, South Africa and was titled Conceptualizing Drivers of Agriculture and Nutrition Policy Change through the Kaleidoscope Model: Consultative workshop on micronutrient policy change. The purpose of the workshop was to present research findings as well as validate the application of the Kaleidoscope Model. The journalists were able to see the application of the Kaleidoscope Model, which they had been familiarized with in the first workshop. They not only reported the research findings, but were also able to translate the purpose of the Kaleidoscope Model for the public.

These engagements strengthened the capacity of the media to report on food security and nutrition policy related issues. They also provided journalists with the necessary tools to critically assess and participate in the policy process. The successful outcomes of these engagements has been 23 journal articles and radio reports. The journalists in Malawi continue to engage with the networks they have developed as part of an informal network for food and nutrition reporters.

#### Authors' acknowledgment

We thank all the colleagues who participated in the policy dialogue. In particular, we acknowledge the participation of local community members from Ntcheu, including Traditional Authority Kwataine.

*This research is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the Feed the Future initiative. The contents are the responsibility of the study authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government*

**Copyright © 2016, Michigan State University and University of Pretoria. All rights reserved. This material may be reproduced for personal and not-for-profit use without permission but with acknowledgment of MSU and University of Pretoria.**

**Published by the Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics, Michigan State University, Justin S. Morrill Hall of Agriculture, 446 West Circle Dr., Room 202, East Lansing, Michigan 48824**