

# How to build research capacity in Myanmar

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# Role of research

- Idea
- Data
- Argumentation

# Role of research in negotiations

- Analysis of negotiating alternatives
- Analysis of negotiating linkages
- Critical analysis of research by “authoritative sources”
- Understanding distributional impacts
- Analyses of BATNAs

# Research influencing policy

- Macdonald Commission (Canada)
- Argentina- Brazil Capital Goods Protocol (1985-88) and Programme of Economic Cooperation and Integration
- Nigeria: CET for ECOWAS

# Building research capacity in Myanmar

- Create a core group comprising economists, legal experts and trade policy experts
- Access to trade-related databases
- Access to domestic production and employment databases or plan to create these databases
- Access to case law on trade disputes

# Create basic research capacity

- Should be determined by priorities and key areas of interest of the government
- Analysis of trade-related databases
  - Indicators-based analysis
- Econometric analysis of impact of trade measures/ trade policy options
- Legal analysis of measures from the perspective of WTO-consistency
- Legal analysis of investment agreements
- Monitor economic developments in major economies

# Building research capacity: medium term

- Orient and encourage academicians to research trade issues
- Nurture young researchers
  - Mentoring programmes
  - Joint research
  - 'Scholar in residence' schemes
  - International training

# Research uptake: 5 dimension framework for success

- When can research succeed in influencing trade policy formulation?
- 5 dimensions identified
  - Problem dimension
  - Research Institution dimension
  - Research dimension
  - Communication and outreach dimension
  - User dimension



# Problem Dimension

- The Problem dimension captures different factors having a bearing on -
  - initiation of the research;
  - locating the trigger and stimulus for research;
  - nature of problem being addressed; and
  - timing of the research request.
- Overall, the underlying factors in this dimension provide the context in which demand for research is made.

# Problem Dimension: Trigger for Research

- When can trigger for research positively influence policy uptake -
  - For addressing an *emergent situation for dealing with new issues* in the context of international negotiations
  - Uptake likely when there is considerable *cost to the government*, in terms of lost opportunity for seeking concessions in negotiations, *if pressure* created by the trigger is *ignored* or uninformed decisions taken – **WTO** and **FTA** research
- *Trigger* for research *which lies outside the context of trade negotiations*, reduces the possibility of policy uptake.

## Problem dimension: Nature of problem addressed

- Need for *balancing conflicting interests* may motivate government to request for research and its subsequent uptake.
- Governments may find it easier to resist pressures from different lobby groups, if their decisions can be explained on the basis of technically sound research, as was the case in the **FTA** episode.
- As shown in the trade facilitation research, uptake can take place if *large segments of stakeholders are affected by the research problem*.

# Problem dimension: Timing of research request

- Timing of the request for research can play a crucial role in determining whether the research influences trade policy.
- *Research uptake high when requested at a time decisive in the negotiating process.*
- *Premature research request might reduce the possibility of uptake.*

# Research Institution Dimension

- Research Institution dimension captures certain features of the organisation linked to its credibility, which have a bearing on uptake of the research.

# Research Institution : Issues of credibility

- For the research to be effective in influencing trade policy, the organisation undertaking the research should be viewed by both, the government and other stakeholders, as being *technically competent in the problem area*.
- *Honest broker role* of the research organisation becomes crucial when research output is used by the government to mediate between different interest groups and balance conflicting interests.

# Research Dimension

- Research dimension is perhaps the most important element in determining whether research will influence trade policy. High quality, objective and relevant research produced in a timely manner is important in this context.
- This dimension subsumes those factors which finally affect the quality of research output through *methodology used, nature of supporting evidence generated* and *timeliness* of results.

# Research dimension: Issues relating to methodology

- Perception regarding the quality of research and possible uptake may be determined by:
  - *rigour in the methodology* used in research;
  - *sound analysis* of the problem, producing *tangible data which can form the basis of trade policy change*.
- Research which *addresses distributional effects*, like the **FTA** initiative, has better chances of uptake.



# Research dimension: Nature of supporting evidence (i)

- *Nature of evidence* used to support the findings may be crucial in determining the quality of research, as perceived by the stakeholders, and its acceptability.
- *Evidence which is based primarily on actual experience* of stakeholders can enhance the possibility of uptake.
- *Theoretical evidence, which is modified in light of practical experience* of stakeholders, may result in perception of high quality research and be acceptable for policy uptake.

# Research dimension: Nature of supporting evidence (ii)

- *Representative evidence* drawn from a wide range of stakeholders in diverse geographical locations, across different segments and from different industry sectors, improves the possibility of research uptake by the government.
- Evidence which is *endorsed by wide range of stakeholders*, has the power to convince government to make relevant trade policy changes.
- *Lack of consensus on the evidence*, may be a pointer towards absence of uptake.

# Research dimension: Adherence to timelines

- Academic and research organisations may be tempted to undertake research which meets very high standards, but at the cost of breaching the deadlines set by the government.
- If research has to achieve the objective of influencing trade policy, a balance would need to be struck between the quality of research on the one hand and *need to adhere to timelines* on the other.

# Communication and Outreach Dimension

- Communication and Outreach Dimension concerns itself with how the research is disseminated to the government and other stakeholders.
- This dimension also determines how stakeholders interact with the researchers for influencing the final research outcome.
- How the negotiating proposal is prepared and conveyed to other countries is another aspect of this dimension.

# Communication and Outreach Dimension:

## Important elements (i)

- Effective communication between researchers, policy makers and other stakeholders, requires:
  - researchers *to understand the expectations of policy makers from research*
  - researchers have to first *reach the relevant stakeholders*
  - disseminate findings to the stakeholders in the form of *easy-to-understand briefs*,
  - *face-to-face open meetings between the researchers and those likely to get affected by its results*

# Communication and Outreach Dimension:

## Important elements (ii)

- *Creating a feedback loop* whereby the views of stakeholders can be utilised to validate research findings and further refine the results.
- Gives the stakeholders the *perception of influencing the research, builds consensus* and may lead to *ownership of results by stakeholder* and enhancing its acceptability

# Communication and Outreach Dimension:

## Assistance in drafting proposals

- In case there is uptake by the government of research for purposes of making negotiating proposals, it may be useful *to involve the researchers in the subsequent process of drafting of proposals.*
- This ensures that the results of research and the concerns of stakeholders are reflected in the negotiating proposals, as was done in the case of trade facilitation episode.

## User Dimension: Close involvement of policy makers in research process

- User Dimension encompasses those factors which are specific to the government for determining the chances of uptake of research.
- *Continued interest of government*, at all stages of research can assist in keeping the research relevant and also facilitating better understanding of the research results



## User Dimension: Role of change agents

- *Presence of change agents* in the government with *willingness to use research results* and having the *authority to push results into policy action*, can be a determining factor in uptake for influencing policy.

# Research – Trade policy change linkages:

## Conclusions

- Formulation of trade policy and life of policy is a chaos of purposes and accidents.
- No single factor in isolation is sufficient to explain uptake of research
- Focusing on the five dimensions highlighted may help improve our understanding of when results of research will be used by the government to influence its trade policy and procedures leading to policy formulation.
- The five dimensions would need to be tested further for possible refinements.

*Thank You*