WACSI
WEST AFRICA CIVIL SOCIETY INSTITUTE

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STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

POLICY RESEARCH METHODOLOGY TRAINING WORKSHOP FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS IN WEST AFRICA

ORGANIZED BY WACSI IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SIPRI

VENUE: WACSI SECRETARIAT, ACCRA GHANA

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About WACSI

WACSI is a spin-off of the Open Society Initiative for West Africa and the George Soros Foundation. WACSI is a civil society resource centre engaged in training, research, documentation, and policy dialogue for civil society organisations (CSOs) in West Africa. The focus of the Institute is to create strategic opportunities for dialogue and to strengthen the operational structures of CSOs. The Institute's activities provide a forum for exchanging ideas, sharing experiences and bridging differences between policy makers and CSOs.

The institute has built a reputation for reducing the gap between policy makers and civil society

www.wacsi.org

About SIPRI

SIPRI is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament. Established in 1966, SIPRI provides data, analysis and recommendations which open a source of latest information and guidelines to policy makers, researchers, media and the interested public.

Since SIPRI was established on the basis of a decision by the Swedish Parliament, a substantial part of its funding comes in the form of an annual grant from the Swedish Government. The Institute also seeks financial support from other organizations in order to carry out its broad research programme.

Located in Stockholm, Sweden, SIPRI offers a unique platform for researchers from different countries to work in close cooperation. The Institute also hosts guest researchers and interns who work on issues related to the SIPRI research programme.

www.sipri.org

Introduction

West Africa Civil Society Organizations are largely lacking the ability to conduct serious policy research and documentation. This deficit was highlighted in the regional training needs assessment survey the Institute conducted and in the outcomes of the pilot research methodology training undertaken by WACSI in 2008.

Therefore, the West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) in partnership with the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) organized a 3 day Policy Research Methodology Training Workshop for Civil Society Organizations in the West Africa.

The overall objective of the policy research methodology course was to train civil society practitioners in research and documentation skills, communicating evidence-based research, research methodologies and field research techniques amongst others. The workshop was geared towards enhancing the participants' skills in policy research design and report writing; improving the participants' knowledge in qualitative research methods and techniques of data collection and analysis; providing participants with the requisite knowledge and skill for communicating research outcomes.

The training workshop attracted civil society actors from across the sub region and was facilitated by three Research Fellows from SIPRI. The workshop exposed the participants' to both theoretical and practical approaches used in conducting efficient and effective research.

Opening Remarks

Charles Vandyck, Capacity Building Officer, WACSI

Charles Vandyck introduced the facilitators to the participants and gave a brief background of WACSI's mandate. Mr. Vandyck stated that, it was evidential in 2007 after the regional needs assessment exercise that civil society in West Africa was lacking behind in the area of research and documentation. According to the report, this affected the credibility of CSOs and their impact on policy decisions by governments in the region.

WACSI was established by OSIWA to help reduce these operational and technical deficits. The Institute designed this course to contribute to the development and strengthening of CSOs both institutionally and the human resource to improve their research and documentations skills.

WACSI has thus partnered with SIPRI to deliver the course and will work towards developing a certification process in the near future. Mr. Vandyck acknowledged the resourcefulness of the facilitators and urged participants to utilize this opportunity and make the best out of the workshop.

Session One: Doing Policy Research

Facilitator: Dr. Olawale Ismail

Introduction

This session introduced the participants to the fundamentals of doing a research. It distinguished between policy and research and explained the meaning of each concept.

What is Policy Research?

The facilitator introduced the participants' to the meaning and objectives of Policy Research. In defining Policy Research, the term has to be simplified into two- "Policy" and "Research". Simplifying the terminology, Dr. Ismail explained the meaning of Policy and Research. There are several policies existing both at the individual and institutional level. The facilitator cited examples of daily institutional and personal level policies such as: responding to mails, daily interactions, and dealing with individual strengths and weaknesses. Policy is a way of guiding our action.

What is Research?

Research is a methodical system of inquiry; a way of getting into the unknown from the know and vice-versa; a way of gaining knowledge and a new frame work for using knowledge; investigative inquiry following a logical process; coherent interconnection of different elements; collection of data or evidence linked to a specific phenomenon.

Participants' were engaged in a discussion on the differences between "data", "evidence" and "information". Many participants' shared their views on the concepts. After having acknowledged these opinions, the facilitator clarified the differences between the aforementioned concepts stating explicitly their meaning. Information may be converted into data if the researcher is guided by a specific research question. There are two key elements of research- Epistemological: how do you know what knowledge is? And Ontological: the nature of knowledge, i.e. body of findings that has followed a systematic process.

Epistemological is basically about methodology. That is, how to acquire knowledge and which are the rules and steps involved.

The facilitator defined policy research and identified the key words, i.e. research, pragmatic, action-oriented recommendations for alleviating the problem. Below is an outline of key steps to note in conducting a policy research:

- Policy research is geared towards addressing a public good;
- Linking/feeding into a policy making process;
- Pragmatic- what will work and what will not work;
- Specify the needs to be addressed at every stage. (action-oriented)
- Moving away from abstraction to real life action. Policy research becomes effective if it is well communicated. Dr. Ismail compared effective communication to the speech of a 6-year old child, who is clear about what he wants and does not complicates issues like adults do.
- The next step is putting knowledge to power. That is, using knowledge to influence decision makers. The facilitator cited several examples of policy research.

The facilitator introduced participants' to the elements of policy research:

- Focus on contemporary public/social phenomenon;
- Tailor according to the needs of policy makers- policy process does not happen in a vacuum;
- Fast-paced, little time, needs quick thinking, quick action;
- Pragmatic, actionable, doable, practical recommendations;
- Aim to resolve, alleviate;
- Bridge the gap between research and policy- theory, policy and practice.

Purpose of Policy Research

- Advising and influencing policy making, policy content and the overall policy process;
- To alert /generate a new policy on a public issue;
- Bridge the gap between research and policy;
- Provide evidence and justification for policy assumptions and biases. It is difficult to move away from abstraction into reality;
- To alert new challenges.

Typologies of Policy Research

Demand-Driven: when there is a demand for advice from policy makers/institutions on a particular need.

Supply-Driven: unsolicited, interest-driven, agenda driven etc. This is carried out by most CSOs based on their interest on a particular issue.

Purposive Policy Research- associated with a specific issue of action from the beginning to the end.

Accidental Policy Research- unintended, adaptation of regular research to policy needs or proceeds, teasing out policy in implications from a study. Here, the facilitator cited an example of a student dissertation which is aimed at getting a degree and is eventually revised to be published as a book or an article or even as a policy paper.

Stages of Policy Research

The next step in this session focused on the various stages in Policy Research. These include:

First Stage: Negotiation

Citing Harold Laswel's definition of Politics- "who gets what, and who wins", the facilitator stated that "research is a political process". Negotiation is the entry stage where knowledge needs to be shared in order to create an agreement to avoid discrepancies. In the negotiation, time line and relevance of the research are also specified. The negotiating stage aims at creating a common ground for the researcher and the policy maker, provide a clear understanding of the needs and expectations of policy makers, building a relationship, clarifying the policy issue to be addressed and posing the research problem. This stage sets out the general path to the research.

Second Stage: Analytical stage

This is the stage where the actual research takes place- gathering data, surveys, interviews, questionnaire administration, and analyzing data to generate findings. This is termed as the street rolling stage or ethnological study.

Research differentiates from information/opinion in that it has been scientifically conducted. It is a crucial stage for convincing policy makers. The facilitator indicated the perception of CSOs in Africa as "noise makers" simply because they do not undertake thorough research to back their agitation and advocacy. This is also the stage where objectives and purposes are fulfilled and recommendations teased out. The overall output is a research report.

Third stage: Communication Stage

This stage presents the findings to the policy makers. The process is not merely about presenting a report but rather engagement and dialogue. This implies seeking to meet and influence the process through advocacy. This is done by convincing policy makers on the applicability and relevance of the recommendations. Most policy makers are interested in the Executive Summary. Establishing networks with the pivots of actions and using multiple strategies. The facilitator used relevant everyday advocacy policies to buttress the point on the communication stage. The facilitator stressed on the need for political networking, since networking helps and generates public interest. Adding that, to influence policy there is the need to engage policy makers.

Caveats in Policy Research

Remember that a researcher does not have legislative power and the policy maker is king. Therefore the researcher must acknowledge the power of decision makers and do as they wish. Engage rather than confront. In order to arouse the interest, the language of communicating key findings and recommendation is very important. Use persuasion instead of condemnation; and awareness of being one of several influences on policy makers and the policy making process. In short, there are many contenders, which must be borne in mind and factored in communication. Policy making is not straight forward; it is very political and often defies logic. Oftentimes, it is a sheer waste of time.

One participant inquired whether the typologies of policy research mentioned influence the actions of decision makers. Another participant reiterated that the research findings of CSOs are often contradictory to that of government and thus raise suspicion. Ultimately, how do CSOs bridge the gap in order to reduce suspicion?

The facilitator responded to the questions by stating that, CSOs need to redefine their strategies in order to influence policy. The facilitator also identified a general weakness of CSOs in Nigeria as fighting and advocating for democracy without being prepared for democracy. Using Liberia as an example, the weakness among the Liberian youth organization (FLAG) was identified. Dr. Ismail pointed out the inability of the youth organization to translate the policy before parliament into action. Adding to the above, vivid examples of policies to exclude youths from decision making at the National, ECOWAS, and AU levels were cited. Data on Africa are hardly written by Africans. African governments rely on international institutions for data concerning the status of the economy. If data on policy research improves, leaders will recognize it and fund the attempts to influence the policy process. It is not about doing research but explicitly communicating research findings.

A participant highlighted on the disjointed nature of CSOs research, which plays a role in their inability to influence the policy process. The participant further stated that this research is better for a demand-driven rather than interest-driven research. Thus, at what point can CSOs organize themselves to conduct a united policy research? Another requested for clarification on defining the policy problem.

The facilitator pointed out that there are systemic failures and inadequacies in CSOs in West Africa. For instance in Liberia, President Ellen Johnson Sir-Leaf killed the CSOs after appointing key civil society actors into government creating a vacuum and thereby weakening the sector.

Session Two- Research Design

The facilitator explained research design as a logical sequence- an arrangement between two or more sentences, which must follow a definitive logic according to which research is carried out. It was acknowledged that giving a title for the research is in itself a task. Academically, research titles should not be more than 16 words. A research design contains the following: a research problem, research question, research objectives, types of data, types of method, and analytical logic. The research design contextualizes these concepts by linking theory, methods and evidence. It provides the leverage to articulate the research content.

There are three ways of justifying research- what has not been said before; what has been said in a different way; and what has been said in a different level. The methodology is essential in outlining the means of acquiring data and defining the type of data namely qualitative or quantitative. This helps to identify which technique of analyses to adopt. A concept paper establishes the theoretical underpinning of the research.

Elements of a good research design

1. Transparent in terms of clear definition between theory, evidence and methods. For example one cannot study maternal health without employing gender friendly methods.
2. Clarity- research problem must be clearly stated, that is language should be simplified.
3. Methodological precision- this must be informed by the reality on the ground that consists of social, economic and political phenomena.
4. It should be theory driven. This is more academic rather than a policy research.
5. The research must be practical and realistic in terms of risks, resources, manpower, and legality.

Why a Research Design?

1. To show what is to be learnt that is not already known, that is, justification and contribution to knowledge;
2. To show why it is worth knowing;
3. To show the validity of potential findings by outlining a consistent manner of evaluation;
4. To show consistency and logical connections;
5. To be able to bring flexibility and adaptability of tools and methods to the research process, which ensures continuity; and
6. Sets parameters or boundaries.

Research Problem

The central problem that the analysis aims to tackle is at the heart of scientific inquiry. Although this is a difficult task, once the main unit of analysis is clarified, research objectives are easier to achieve. The research problem is the main interest that attracts attention; it is an intelligible, observable and worthy phenomenon. It must be of relevance given the context at the time, in as

much as it must be disputed, unclear, controversial and unknown. The research problem must also involve challenging assumptions, accepted norms and querying.

The facilitator engaged participants to debate on the issue of whether there is one truth or multiple truths. Participants' shared their views on the questions- some agreed that there are multiple truths and that it was a matter of subjectivity and objectivity, since in social sciences there are different views on issues. Others shared the view of one truth, stating that "after aggregating all the truths, you end up with one truth." The contradiction here was the notion of truth resulting in another truth, as the facilitator indicated. After having acknowledged the views of the participants', the facilitator stated that, the question was posed because it was at the heart of research and it was both ontological and epistemological. Social sciences accept a wider range of truths as compared to the natural sciences.

Developing a Research Question

This is the "why", "what", "how" and "when" issue. This is a derivative of the research problem. To derive the question, one has to break the problem down. It forms the basis for evaluating research; it is an operational version of the problem; it resolves and dissolves the research problem; it poses the questions that need to be answered; and it is a sentence summary of the research that follows.

A participant inquired of what informs the "how" or using either, "how", "when", "why" or "what". In response the facilitator stated that, deriving questions is based on the objectives set. There is the need to prioritize. In order to clarify earlier points in the understanding of the participants', the facilitator engaged them in an exercise called "the link between political violence and elections in developing countries: a study of Kenya." Participants' were tasked to derive research questions from the above research problem. The following were the questions derived:

1. What is the link between political violence and elections?
2. How do elections promote violence in developing countries?

The ‘how’ question, brings out the key issues to be addressed. The facilitator introduced the participants’ to the concepts of dependent and independent variables and intervening/exogenous variables. Dependent variables are varying whiles the independent variable is static, hence can be held constant. Assisted by the facilitator, the participants’ analyzed the research problem by identifying the dependent and independent variables. It was also emphasized that both variables affect each other, which establishes a symbiotic relationship between the two. Therefore, neither of the variables can be said to be independent.

Research Purpose and Objectives

The facilitator reiterated that the purpose of research has to be stated unambiguously. This point was buttressed using vivid examples of research objectives and purposes. In addition, it is important to constantly relate the outcome of the research to the objectives. There are two ways of doing this- indicating the interests and dislikes. There are two types of information namely, “useful” information and “relevant” information. “Useful” information is not necessarily “relevant” information and the researcher needs to set limits as for which type of data to include in the final analysis and research report. All in all, the ultimate research objective aids in setting the basis for this evaluation.

Methodology

The methodology defines the pathway of research- the choice of logically connected types of data, methods and analysis adopted. That is, answering the significant questions ‘where’, ‘how’ and ‘when’ you go about the research.

Methods

This stands for collecting information, turning into data and transforming into evidence, that is, the technique used in gathering data.

Analytical Mode

This implies making the sense out of data, that is, the manner of deriving evidence based on research that involves both qualitative and quantitative data. The classic distinction is made between Deductive and Inductive analytical modes:

Table 1.0: Distinction between Deductive and Inductive Analytical Modes

Deductive	Inductive
Enumerative logic used by the natural sciences. It is about what causes what and what leads to what- Decoding causal relationship between two variables. That is, studying populations to make generalized conclusions.	This is grounded in qualitative approach and interpretive/phenomenological analytical frameworks. Favouring logic over statistics, The objective is to get a case study relative to the research.

Communicating and Reporting

Ethical considerations are embedded in reporting. The publicity of information must not endanger the livelihood of the respondents and the researcher. This can be ensured by doing a scenario mapping or speculating. The researcher needs to be alert and bear in mind that he is responsible for the outcome of the research. When communicating the report, the objectives and purposes set for the research must be crystallized, the essence is to write what is "relevant" and not what is "useful."

Context in research Design

Context refers to the series of setting that texture research process namely, physical, geographical, temporal, historical, cultural, aesthetic, values and belief systems. Observation also known as "walk through the town" is one of the techniques of research. One needs to understand the context of research since it is essential for interpreting experience, deepening actions, uncovering motives, understanding inner/hidden meanings.

The facilitator clarified the following terminologies: concept vs. theory, methodology vs. method, and objectivity vs. subjectivity and inter-subjectivity. Participants' were given the opportunity to ask questions at the end of the presentation.

In response to a participant's inquiry as to how to reconcile between perspectives of the respondents and that of the researcher, the facilitator indicated that one must be faithful to the worldview/perspective of the respondents. In the stage of presenting the research outcome as a

researcher one analyzes in order to make meaning. Other questions asked include the following: how the different features can be put together and determine what is of relevance; how should CSOs presents a research outcome to influence policy makers; how does the form of research, defines the design; how does one avoid deriving several research questions that might pose a challenge to the research process?

The facilitator responded to questions by first soliciting the views of the participants' on the issues raised.

Session Three: Quantitative Methods in Economic and Social Research

Facilitator: Dr. Sam Perlo-Freeman

To kick start the presentation on quantitative research methodology, Dr. Perlo-Freeman first inquired from the participants whether they have and/or regularly use spreadsheet and Ms Excel in their offices. This question gave a fair idea of the participants' level in data analysis. An appreciable number of the participants' gave a positive response. Participants' were introduced to a brief insight of the presentation before moving on to the actual lesson.

Why Quantitative Research methods?

The facilitator indicated that using quantitative data is not relevant in all research. In as much as it can be overtly used for relevant purposes, it can also be underutilized. Quantitative methods are hardly useful for analyzing complex political processes but highly instructive for comparing a large number of cases with similar measure. There is a complementarity between qualitative and quantitative methods. Statistical analysis is necessary when financial and economic information constitutes most significant part of the pool of data. Qualitative methods are used in the broad sense worldwide, for example, high levels of economic stagnation. The facilitator cited relevant case studies, such as how conflict analysts often use ethnicity as a major cause of civil war. He also explained the relevance of quantitative methods in such analysis.

The facilitator acknowledged that using qualitative methods can confuse people who do not understand figures which may result in misperception of the validity of the research. Participants' were introduced to websites where they can source relevant data for free. The websites include: World Bank (www.data.worldbank.org), International Monetary Fund World

Economic Outlook database (www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2010/02/weodata/index.aspx), SIPRI (www.sipri.org/databases), Uppsala conflict database www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/search.php, Correlates of War (COW) (www.correlatesofwar.org), Polity IV (www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm), National statistical offices (www.statsghana.gov.gh/participants.html) and Transparency International (www.transparency.org). It is worth noting that the facilitator did not merely cite the websites but opened the web pages and demonstrated to the participants' on how to source for the data. In addition to this, Dr. Perlo-Freeman stated that the best source of economic data can be sourced from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) website. Finally, he showed the participant where to obtained relevant quantitative and qualitative data, namely from Uppsala Conflict Database, Transparency International, Correlates of War, and Politics IV.

The web serves as a good source of data collection for various researches. The first most significant questions concern the source: Is it a reliable, systematic source of data collection? How accurate? There is the need to check and cross-check the sources and methods because, lack of evidence defies credibility. Equally important is to be sure of what is being measured.

Qualitative vs. Quantitative Data

For instance, data on corruption are basically a subjective perception being turned into numerical judgments. This does not defy its usefulness but needs to be understood. Data comes in different forms in terms of its dimension. In some points you can look at the cross-sectional or the time-series, and panel data which combines time-series and cross-section.

Key Economic Data Analysis Tools

The facilitator introduced participants' to some of the basic economic data indicators such as:

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is used to measure the total value of productive economic activity that takes place within the country. It can be measured by the total income (wages and salaries + profit + interest etc), total expenditure (by consumers, government, businesses, investments, foreigners) or total output (total "value added" of all industry and services). The easiest measure in terms of expenditure, GDP= Consumer spending + Business investment + Government expenditure (Exports – Imports) which is represented by: {Y= C+I+G+X-M}.

Gross National Income (GNI): this adds the net financial income from abroad, for example, repatriated profits or remittances and Aid.

GDP does not take account of unpaid work but productive work. For example, if families do not pay each other for rendering services, their productivity does not show in GDP. If there is a payment involved then it adds up to the GDP. Therefore, GDP does not take account of the informal economy neither does it pay attention to the damage or destruction of natural resources and environmental damage (externalities). GDP thus, does not provide a good measure of economic well being. It is useful first information but should be accompanied with knowledge beyond numbers and the desire to know more about the realities on the ground.

Handling Percentages in Research

A percentage is a fraction turned into an amount of 100 for example: 23/50 = 46/100 which implies that 23 is 46% of 50. The facilitator explained the meaning of percentages, and then used figures in order to engage participants' in a calculating exercise with the intent of getting them to understand how to work out calculations. The facilitator related percentages to GDP calculation which added relevance to the exercise. The Excel spreadsheet was introduced to the participants', who were showed how to work out percentages or GDP calculations using Excel.

To ensure a deeper understanding of the lesson on percentages and calculating GDP, the facilitator recapitulated the lesson and inquired from the participants' whether they had any questions or need for a further clarification. The participants' gave a positive feedback which indicated their understanding and appreciation of the lesson.

Price Indices

The most widely used price measure is the Consumer Price Index (CPI). This measures the rate of price increase for a typical basket of consumer goods and services in a country. CPI is calculated by taking the base year which is given a value of 100. The value of CPI in a given year is based on the increase in price for the basket of goods since the base year. With this backdrop, the facilitator used examples including the Excel spreadsheet to illustrate the point such as, how to calculate current and constant prices.

Basic Data Analysis Tools

The participants' were introduced to some of the basic methods used in data analysis- average (mean), and the median. Using relevant data on a set of income distribution figures for a group of 10, the facilitator involved the participants' in calculating the average and the median respectively. In a question as to why most people in the group were below average, a participant responded that the distribution of income was not symmetrical. Another answered that it was due to higher rents. The facilitator considered the responses appropriate, stating that "the average is more like the pivot of a seesaw." If the mean and the median are not equal the distribution is skewed; when the mean is greater than the median it implies a positive skew; and when the mean is less than the median, it implies a negative skew.

A participant inquired whether there was the possibility for the mean to be equal to the median and if so, how should it be referred to? In response the facilitator stated that, it is very possible, terming the case as "a symmetrical distribution". Furthermore, Dr. Perlo-Freeman explained the meaning of symmetrical distribution and the cases were it occurs.

In response to the question as to whether there are economic theories that reflect current economic trends, the facilitator noted that there is currently none, however, there are several works in other economic areas. Dr. Perlo-Freeman emphasized that economic theories had been taking over by a particular group over the years. Clarification was requested on the point that economic disasters do not add up to the GDP of a country. Economic disasters in some cases add up to GDP specifically when it affects aspects of the economy that requires the government or individuals to pump money into rebuilding it.

How can quantitative methods be an effective analytical tool for the social sciences? First one need to descriptively identify what the research sets out to achieve. Analysis has to do with choosing the right problem or measurable data that could work well. What should not be done is quashing a complex data/issue into a few numbers.

The participants were grouped into five based on their area of expertise and assigned with specific topics to prepare research report. The facilitators guided the groups in their exercises. The group work was carried out throughout the workshop period.

Session Four- Data Processes/Analysis Techniques

Topic: Quartiles, Deciles and Percentiles

This session introduced the participants' to the meaning and usage of data analysis tools such as quartiles, deciles and percentiles. The concepts were explained with reference to the previous lesson on the mean and median. Using the same distribution, participants' were involved in calculating the quartiles, deciles and percentiles after a detailed explanation on how to calculate each tool. Percentiles could be used in calculating text scores and income distribution.

Measure of Variation

The facilitator explained the meaning of standard deviation, stating that it was a complicated concept but would be simplified according to the understanding of the participants. Dr. Perlo-Freeman stated that the standard deviation has the same dimension and explained the steps involved in its calculation. Participants' could practically try the calculation of Standard Deviation as the facilitator gave them more examples to try their hands on. Afterwards they analyzed the distribution assisted by the facilitator. The facilitator clarified the matter further by employing the Excel spreadsheet. Dr. Perlo-Freeman explained that the spreadsheet is designed with the formulas for calculating the Standard Deviation and thus, does not require the step by step method. The skew of the distribution is indicated by the gaps that drop between the percentiles. The next presentation captured on how to plot the data distribution on to graphs. Histograms and bar graphs were used to illustrate to the participants how the data could be plotted.

As the floor was opened for questions, a participant sought for clarification on the mean, median and the Standard Deviation, and suggested that the facilitator use local examples in enabling them to acquire a better understanding of the techniques. Another participant acknowledged the importance of using the spreadsheet and requested for the formulas and clarifications.

As a response, the facilitator stated that any data could be generated, but first the data has to be recorded. Afterwards the numbers should be keyed onto a spreadsheet, which ultimately allows the researcher to start with the calculations. He indicated that a good point of starting the calculation, namely from the mean and the median before finally calculating the Standard

Deviation. Furthermore, the facilitator summarized the formulas on a slide and informed the participants that they will be made available to them at the end of the workshop together with the rest of the training materials.

Following the requests to simplify the techniques, the facilitator adopted a more straightforward approach to explain the techniques to the participants. By generating raw data, the facilitator engaged the participants' in calculating the mean and median and analyzing the results of the distribution. A similar approach was adopted in explaining the Standard deviation.

Relationship between Variables

This stage established the relationship between variables used in research- dependent and independent variables. The scatter plots and correlation was introduced, and a list of world indicators database was keyed unto a spreadsheet. The variables were plotted unto a scatter plot for the participants' to understand and know how it is done. The same spreadsheet was used in calculating the correlation as well. The participants were tasked to interpret the data on the scatter plots and the spreadsheet with assistance from the facilitator. Laying emphasis on correlation, the facilitator identified that a correlation is not causation. This implies that, establishing a relationship between two variables does not give the ultimate answer rather lays out the question to be probed.

It is essential to look out for the relevant control variables. For instance, to investigate how health affects life expectancy, one needs to include in variables to analyze such as HIV.

Test of Significance

In Statistical analysis the key question to bear in mind concerns the significance of changes, differences, and relationships. An observation is deemed significant if it were unlikely to occur by chance.

Session Five: What is Qualitative Research?

This session presented a detailed explanation on the meaning and context of qualitative research. The facilitator indicated that the objective is to describe and explain what happens, placing emphasis on the complex nature of social reality which requires multiple methods or analytical tools. Applying two or more approaches may be of advantage. This method emphasizes on the

subjective and constructed nature of reality through symbolic and cultural interpretation. The facilitator pin-pointed some of the research haunches, such as, views and believes. Instead of denying the existence of haunches and it effect on the research, the best is to acknowledge their presence by accounting for them and turning them into variables.

Participants' were introduced to the key steps in Qualitative research which does not differ from the steps used in a research design. The title should inform the research problem and be defined in a sentence. The essence is to generate assumption (a hypothesis) on the research problem and test the hypothesis.

The next step introduced the elements of qualitative research which include:

- Construct validity- conceptual underpinning;
- Concept- framework for explaining reality;
- Internal Validity- logical relationship between variables and events;
- External Validity- generalizing findings, this implies ensuring consistency in different contexts; and
- Reliability- the research must be clear enough to be replicated.

Participants' debated on the differences between a theory and concept.

Differences between Qualitative and Quantitative Research

The difference between qualitative and quantitative research methodologies were identified as follows:

- Description vs. causality;
- Qualitative depends on theory- it uses theory to generate hypothesis, whereas quantitative uses hypothesis to generate theory;
- Qualitative emphasizes on logical connections whereas quantitative uses correlation;
- Similarly there is the difference of the validity to theory as against representativeness of quantitative;
- Logical inference vs. statistical inference; and
- Qualitative emphasizes "on depth" whiles quantitative emphasize on spread".

The next step outlined the various types of qualitative research and explained further.

Survey

A survey is a technique used in quantitative research. This is used for reaching large group of respondents but lacking depth: the larger the number population, the closer the answer. This technique is used for polling- opinion polls, social attitudes, for instance. A survey is also about generalizing findings using the statistical inferences.

A survey focuses on representation. It uses stratified data samples to cluster according to gender, age, and social class. The parent population is defined by using random sample while developing a sampling frame and sample size. A survey may take the form of questionnaires, telephone calls, SMS, and other new media. However, this technology works better in Europe and America as compared to West Africa.

Session Six: Writing for Publication

This session identified the steps of producing an efficient and effective research report. An outline for the research is essential when drafting the report, emphasis is on the content. In the stage of reviewing, revising and editing the report, it is important to involve a third person in editing because, there are situations were one gets trapped into a style of writing (language); finally launching and distributing the report.

Aim of the Writer and Editor in Communicating Research Outcomes

The following are things to consider in communicating research outcome, they include:

- Take your reader through logical steps from what they know to what you want them to know. This is because the research is about moving away from your hypothesis and soliciting for information;
- Give readers all the definitions such as operational definition of key words and phrases, as well as background, evidence, and arguments. They need to see how the recommendations and conclusion were reached;
- Leave everything else out; and

- Relevance referring to the relationship between the particular information and the research problem.

Writing Process

Planning refers to the beginning, middle and the end of the research; hence the end must flow logically from the beginning. In explaining this process, the facilitator engaged the participants' in critical thinking and logical reasoning. The facilitator inquired from the participants' their opinion on the relevance they attribute to each stage namely, beginning, middle or the end. Their general response was in favour of the beginning, which the participants expressed their views on. Interestingly, different views were expressed on one answer, which depicted the relativity and multiplicity of thoughts in social sciences.

Writing refers to effective paragraphs and sentences. The essence of writing is communicating. Thus, there is the need to be attentive to punctuations, paragraphing and sentences, as well as prefer short sentences.

Revising, this implies doing it over and over again. The facilitator elaborated on each of the writing process and cited examples of leads in writing.

Session Seven: Strategic Communication- A key to your work

Facilitator: Stephanie Blenckner

This session began with an introduction into strategic communication, highlighting on the key issues to take a note of when communicating research reports. One must ponder on the message that the research will be communicating in. The facilitator acknowledged that researchers normally have a difficulty in this aspect.

Key Communication Tools

- Agents (media, partners, friends) - that is, institutions or people who will carry your message based on their networks or interests.
- Leaflets and brochures
- Newsletters
- Websites

- The researcher in meetings and conferences
- Branding of the Institute or organization

After identifying the communication tools, the facilitator explained how each could be employed. Stephanie Blenckner indicated that the media can play a role as a critical examiner of the research outcome which should not be underestimated. Hence researchers need to have media training in order to relate professionally with the media. The materials should have background information for the media specifically. Issue sheets and position papers should also be prepared with the media perspective in mind and use staff as ambassadors. In short, keep colleagues informed and updated on the research.

Scientific Structure

The facilitator outlined the main structure of a research report to include: Executive Summary/Abstract, Materials/Methods, Results, Discussion and Conclusion. This is a neutral way of presenting a report, the facilitator indicated that, the structure gives the readers the opportunity to construct their judgments.

Being concrete on how to the information was obtained in order to achieve the result is an important component of reporting the material and methods. The presentation of the materials, methods and results are the most crucial occasion depicting the credibility of the work. A participant inquired of the place of recommendations in the report. The recommendations normally form part of the conclusion. In some documents there is a space for recommendations and conclusion in the same chapter, whereas others read conclusion only, there is no difference because both documents have the recommendations attached to the conclusion.

There are differences in referencing styles and different views on the appropriate style. The facilitator identified different referencing styles. Footnotes are mostly used for long reports (16-20pages or more). The facilitator demonstrated how footnotes are used in a report.

In-text citation, this is a scientific way of referencing. This appears in Alphabetical order at the end of the referencing. In demonstrating how to use in-text citation, it looked quite simply and yet complicated in that, participants' were not sure whether the arrangement would not be altered

if a referenced is cited twice in different locations in the report. This was clarified by the facilitator who demonstrated how to manage such referencing challenges.

A participant asked how to manage news paper sources that are later identified as false, and whether it is appropriate to add appendix to reports. Direct sources cited in the news paper are the best to refer, as well as cross-checking the facts. Appendix could be added only when the research report generated a lot of relevant data or graphs that could not be presented as part of the text in the report. Again, if the researcher conducted a survey and administered questionnaires, the questions can be put in appendix for referencing.

The next stage focused on the key components of a policy brief. Policy briefs have to be succinct because of the target audience consisting of mainly politicians who have limited time to go through lengthy documents. A brief should not contain all the structures of a scientific inquiry, because the report serves as a back-up. The brief will form part of the report to be communicated to the Politician.

A policy report basically asks the "Whys", sets out the point of political action, identifies who needs to act and forecasts the consequences of inaction. In her presentation, some flaws of CSOs in policy report writing were identified. Participants' were privy to know the mistakes and learn about the best ways to present policy reports. Furthermore, participants' were introduced to the various means of presenting reports and encouraged to use these skills when writing press releases, speaking in events and seminars.

At the end of the presentation, the participants' returned to their groups to finalize their group exercises for presentation. This exercise lasted for one hour and thirty minutes. Each group was given the opportunity to present their research report. See appendix for the tabular presentation of the group exercises.

Conclusion

The training workshop was brought to a close at the end of the presentation. Dr. Olawale Ismail on behalf of his colleagues and SIPRI acknowledged the importance of the workshop and thanked WACSI for the opportunity to share their research knowledge.

Dr. Ismail stated that, it was a ground breaking strategy for SIPRI to move from producing knowledge to transferring knowledge.

The Executive Director of WACSI, Nana Asantewa Afadzinu, thanked the facilitators for an insightful and educative workshop. Nana Afadzinu expressed her appreciation to the participants' for participating in such a rigorous training exercise.

Participants' were presented with certificates, learning materials and souvenirs at the end of the workshop.

Appendix I: list of Participants'

NAME	ORGANISATION	COUNTRY	POSITION	EMAIL/PHONE
Gobah Ahasuerus Anderson	Haven Of Hope Liberia	Liberia	National Program Coordinator	gohasfor@yahoo.com +231 77234 256 / 5499225
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Appendix II- Workshop Agenda

DAY 1 WED 23/03/11

TIME	ACTIVITY	OFFICER RESPONSIBLE
8:00 – 9:00	**Arrival, Registration and Introduction of Resource Persons and Participants**	**WACSI**
9:00-9:30	**Participant expectations** **Introduction to Policy Research**	**SIPRI**
9:30-11:00	**Defining the Policy Research Problem** ▪ Importance of Defining the Research Problem ▪ The Process of Defining a Problem and Developing an Approach ▪ Task involved in problem definition ▪ Environmental context of the problem ▪ Components of an Approach	**SIPRI**
11:00-11:30	**TEA BREAK**	
11:30:1:00	**Research Design** ▪ Definition of Research Design ▪ Classification of Research Design ▪ Exploratory Research ▪ Descriptive Research ▪ Potential Sources of Error	**SIPRI**
1:00-2:00	**LUNCH BREAK**	
2:00-3:30	**Quantitative Methods in Economic and Social Research** ▪ Quantitative Methods ▪ Key Economic data Analysis ▪ Percentage and Price Indices ▪ Basic Data Analysis ▪ Data Processes/Analysis Techniques	**SIPRI**
3:30-5:00	**GROUP EXERCISE**	**SIPRI**
END OF DAY 1		

DAY 2 THURS 24/03/11

TIME	ACTIVITY	OFFICER RESPONSIBLE
9:00-10:30	**Exploratory Research Design: - Qualitative Research** ▪ Qualitative and Quantitative Primary Data ▪ Rational for using Qualitative Procedures ▪ Classification of Qualitative Research Procedures ▪ Focus Group Interviews ▪ In-depth interviews ▪ Projective Techniques	**SIPRI**
10:30-11:00	**TEA BREAK**	
11:00-1:00	**Report Preparation and Presentation** ▪ Importance of the Report and Presentation ▪ Report Preparation ▪ Report Writing ▪ Oral Presentation ▪ Research Follow-up	**SIPRI**
1:00-2:00	**LUNCH BREAK**	
2:00-3:30	**Data Processing** ▪ Quantitative data processing ▪ Qualitative data processing	**SIPRI**
3:30-5:00	**INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE: RESEARCH PROPOSALS**	**SIPRI**
END OF DAY 2		

DAY 3 FRI 25/03/11

TIME	ACTIVITY	OFFICER RESPONSIBLE
9:00-10:30	**Communicating Research to Policy Makers** ▪ Planning for Communication ▪ Preparing your Communication Plan ▪ Communication Products and Activities	**SIPRI**
10:30-11:00	**TEA BREAK**	
11:00-1:00	**INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE: FINILISATION AND PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH PROPOSALS**	**SIPRI**
1:00-2:00	**LUNCH BREAK**	
2:00-3:00	**GROUP EXERCISE**	**SIPRI**
3:00-3:30	**CLOSING CEREMONY**	
END OF DAY 3		