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IFPRI Country Programs
Lessons from Case Study Successes

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Director General’s Office
INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken as part of a larger learning exercise to assess the outcomes and impacts of the International Food Policy Research Institute’s country programs. It reports on in-depth probing of selected successful research contributions to policy outcomes in order to determine if there are any common approaches and actions taken by country program leaders that helped to foster the successes. The selection of case studies was not comprehensive—there were many more identified by country program leaders—nor random, because we desired to have samples from all the countries with country programs. A semi-structured interview approach was followed by the authors and guided by a list of questions (found in Appendix B). The results showed that important factors making successful contributions to policy were building high credibility with local policy makers and donors, having direct access to senior policy makers, partnering with the right people, conducting research on issues over the longer term and not just responding to crises, organizing conferences and meetings around research evidence, and strengthening national capacity for policy research.

Keywords: policy research, impact assessment, country programs
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) was established in 1975 following a world food crisis in the early 1970s, with a remit to conduct research on policies to improve the food situation for developing countries. Initial work focused on analyzing the current and future world food situation and its implications for developing countries, and analyzing policies for improving the production, trade, and distribution of food to make it more available to all people (von Braun and Pandya-Lorch 2005). Much of the early work on global food prospects, international agricultural trade, international mechanisms for supporting food security, and the role of agriculture in economic development led to research outcomes that were truly international public goods (IPGs) and that appealed to a broad audience, including international development agencies; academia; and policy makers in a few, mostly large, developing countries (for example, India).

As the world food situation improved and the agriculture-related challenges facing developing countries evolved and diversified, and with greater emphasis on poverty reduction, nutrition, and other social and environmental goals, IFPRI’s work also broadened and deepened to include more regional and country-specific issues. This shift toward the production of more regional and national public goods was offset by clustering countries around research themes and designing in-country research projects as case studies within a broader multicountry research design that would still lead to broad IPGs (Hazell and Slade 2015). Inevitably, the growing diversity of country issues exceeded the capacity to cluster in this way, while at the same time increasing demands from donor agencies for IFPRI to show greater development impact at the country level led to more country-specific research. This change was reflected in IFPRI’s staffing arrangements. Prior to 2002, IFPRI’s research staff worked primarily from headquarters in Washington, D.C., working mainly on global issues or on selected policy issues common to many countries through multicountry research programs. The staff that were outposted mainly worked on regional issues—for example, the 2020 Vision policy networks (Paarlberg 2005)—or on individual country projects that were case studies within the framework of multicountry research programs. The few exceptions were the staff leading broader programs that operated for periods of time in Malawi, Ghana, Mozambique, and Bangladesh. Shortly after 2002, IFPRI began to decentralize many more of its staff, and much of the increased decentralization was associated with a deliberate plan to place staff where they could engage more closely with individual countries on their own policy issues and in more interactive, demand-driven ways (IFPRI 2005). Most of these outposted staff were housed in country program (CP) offices that were established within the host countries.

Given more than a decade of IFPRI experience with CPs, this study, which forms part of a larger evaluation of IFPRI’s experience with Country Programs, seeks to determine what lessons can be drawn about good practices for CP teams in seeking to contribute to successful policy outcomes in their host countries. This study is not intended as a rigorous evaluation of the impact of CPs; rather, it is envisaged as an internal learning exercise to help IFPRI’s CP leaders draw and share lessons from their own insights and experiences. To this end, the study draws on a set of “success stories” nominated by the CP team leaders themselves, who were interrogated about the details of those successes, the reasons why they think the programs succeeded, and what Given more than a decade of IFPRI experience with CPs, this study, what distinguished these programs from other lines of CP work that the leaders perceive to have been less successful.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides a generic impact pathway to show how a CP might inform and influence host country policy decisions. Section 3 provides insights
from the available literature on the factors that help determine the impact of policy research, especially by country-based teams. Section 4 describes the study design, followed by a brief which forms part of a larger evaluation of IFPRI’s experience with CPs,\(^1\) seeks to determine description of the set of case studies in Section 5, and then an analysis of the factors that contributed to those successes in Section 6. Section 7 concludes the paper.

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\(^1\) This study is part of a joint study by IFPRI and the CGIAR Research Program on Policies, Institutions, and Markets, titled Taking Stock of IFPRI’s Experience with Country Programs. In addition to this study on success stories, there is a stocktaking assessment by Eric Tollens on the experience with the country strategy support programs led by IFPRI’s Development Strategy and Governance Division in Africa south of the Sahara, as well as a cross-country, time series econometric analysis by San Benin, Frank Place, and Peter Hazell (2018) of the impact of IFPRI’s policy of outposting staff on country policy and development outcomes.
2. AN IMPACT PATHWAY FOR A COUNTRY PROGRAM

There are various pathways by which a CP can inform and influence national policies and strategies. These include working directly with national policy makers and research partners involved in the policy process, and communicating IFPRI research findings to a broader audience to feed into the national debate. CPs can also seek to build national capacity for undertaking and using evidence-based policy analysis, which can create additional pathways for influence over a longer time frame. Obviously, a CP needs to pick pathways that are appropriate to its country context, but a generic impact pathway can be portrayed, as in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. A generic impact pathway for a country program**

A CP needs to set its work priorities through a priority-setting process that is generally expected to involve key national partners and stakeholders. Once set, this agenda leads to research, the results of which then can be communicated in various ways to policy makers, donors, and other stakeholders. The work agenda will generally include some capacity-building and technical assistance activities, both of which can lead to additional outputs for communicating to policy makers. The net result should be evidence-based policy improvements and an enhanced national capacity for generating and using evidence-based policy analysis. These outcomes should lead, in turn, to identification of new priorities for the CP and to a new round of activities and outcomes. In practice, however, the process is not so linear, and feedback may lead to adjustments in more interactive ways. For example, a drought might mean some existing work priorities must be delayed to make room for a quick analytical response to the crisis.
The different nodes in Figure 1—priority setting, research, capacity strengthening, technical assistance, and communications—can involve different types of activities, or ways of doing things (Table 1). CP teams have the flexibility to combine activities in different ways to engage in the most appropriate ways given the country context and in view of the specific research or policy analysis being undertaken.

**Table 1. Some common types of country program activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Node</th>
<th>Type of activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Priority setting</td>
<td>- Agreeing with government advisory or steering committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Using inputs from donor group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Responding to urgent government or donor demand (for example, a ministerial request)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- IFPRI self-identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>- Quick policy studies / desk reviews responding to urgent requests from government or donors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Data collection, including household surveys and remote sensing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Research analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Impact assessment of policies and programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity strengthening</td>
<td>- Research collaboration with individuals and organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Institutional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Formal training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Policy networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Support to university degree programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical assistance</td>
<td>- Development of strategies / investment plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Project/program design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Monitoring and evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>- Direct personal contact with high-level policy makers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Indirect contact with high-level policy makers through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o local champions,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o research collaborators,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o donors, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o advocacy groups (nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, farmer organizations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Conferences, policy events, workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Publications, blogs, newsletters</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Websites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Local and international media</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ analysis
3. INSIGHTS FROM THE LITERATURE

There have been very few studies of the determinants of success (or derivation of good practice guidelines) within similar types of country-based staff models undertaken by organizations other than IFPRI, but there is a larger literature on factors that help determine the success of policy research more generally. We begin with the latter.

Studies of How Policy-Oriented Research Can Have More Impact within a Country

Timmer (1998) provides an early reflection of how policy research can achieve more influence, based on his own experience in Indonesia assisting on rice policy development. He attributes his own research influence success, inter alia, to establishing a long-term relationship with policy makers and a willingness to balance confidential analysis and advising with public disclosure in publications. Start and Hovland (2004) draw lessons from implementation (during the late 1990s and early 2000s) of the Research and Policy for Development program of the London-based Overseas Development Institute. They develop a framework that incorporates themes of cooperation versus confrontation and evidence-based versus interest-based approaches to develop four main means of engagement: advising, advocacy, lobbying, and activism. Evidence is a critical element for advising and advocacy. The authors discuss a number of important actions for researchers to take, including identifying potential supporters and opponents; forming partnerships with policy makers, researchers, and policy end users; and developing a communication plan from the start. The longer-term building of credibility, legitimacy, and trust is also highlighted. The authors then offer a number of tools that researchers can use to implement actions.

Young and others (2014) showcase their rapid outcome mapping approach, which details important steps for policy researchers to take to enhance the prospects for their evidence to be used. The first step consists of actions around diagnosis of the problem, including the underlying objective to be addressed as well as the policy challenge and the context within which the policy decision is to be made. They next outline an approach that includes identifying an objective, a set of realistic outcomes, a theory of change, and a communications strategy; assessing resource and capacity needs; and finally, developing an engagement strategy.

Massett and others (2013) produced a rare study that tries to measure the impact of a popular policy outreach tool, the policy brief. They developed three types of policy briefs around evidence of the effectiveness of interventions in different subject areas (varying by whether comments from researchers or institute directors were included) against a “placebo” brief that was more generally framed. They randomly assigned these to more than 800 people who had responded to a baseline questionnaire and an offer of a modest payment to participate. Through difference-in-differences estimation, they found that although the “real” briefs did have an effect on the formation of an opinion on the topic of the brief, they did not have an impact on shaping perceptions of the strength of evidence on the interventions discussed in the brief, or in shifting positions from prior beliefs held.

Barugahara and Harber (2017) tested the effectiveness of embedding policy researchers within Ugandan government ministries. They placed a policy research fellow in each of three ministries and interviewed ministry staff before the placement and two years later, at the end of the project. There was no control group and therefore the analysis is limited to a before-after assessment. They found that the placement of a research fellow greatly increased the frequency of communication with the individual placed in the ministry, that person’s university, and all academic institutions in the country. It also increased policy makers’ use of research evidence.
It is widely understood that research evidence is just one input into policy processes and that it is often a minor factor in comparison with other political economy variables. Resnick and others (2015) draw upon existing studies to develop a framework, called the *kaleidoscope model*, that captures the key factors that affect policy change and is therefore a useful guideline for policy researchers at the planning or design stages of their work. The framework divides the policy cycle into five elements—agenda setting, design, adoption, implementation, and evaluation and reform—and identifies key variables that define the important conditions for policy change to occur or be blocked. These include the relevance and urgency of the policy problem, existence of advocacy coalitions or veto players, strength of prior beliefs, commitment of policy champions or opportunities for change, and institutional capacity to implement policy change. Individually, the factors are not to be interpreted as necessary or sufficient, but jointly they strongly affect the probability of policy change. If many factors indicate that policy change is highly unlikely, the model predicts that policy researchers will not have much influence, regardless of how much they may invest in outreach activities.

**Studies of Other Organizations with a Country-Based Staff Model**

Apart from IFPRI, there have not been very many occurrences of a medium- to long-term presence in developing countries of agricultural or economic policy research organizations based elsewhere, exceptions being the Harvard Institute of International Development (HIID) in the 1990s and the country offices of Michigan State University, several of which are still in operation. On the other hand, there are many instances in which international research organizations establish country offices as part of projects that focus on specific time-bound outputs. Regardless of the type, the effectiveness of the country presence has not been formally evaluated, to our knowledge. The only relevant literature found consisted of two studies pertaining to Indonesia. Artjan (2011) discusses the history of technical assistance to the Indonesian Ministry of Finance, including the involvement of HIID, which had a large presence for over two decades. The HIID office conducted research, provided policy advice with a large in-country staff, undertook capacity strengthening in-country, and eventually helped to establish the Overseas Training Office and the Professional Human Resources Development Project with the government. That project trained hundreds of ministry staff in master’s or doctorate programs in the United States. A study by Stern (2000) highlights several important policy and capacity achievements of the program (in areas such as price stabilization and tax reform). Key features of the engagement that led to the successes included broadly defined contracting arrangements that allowed flexibility to address emerging issues; host country funding of the program for most of its duration; hosting within the Ministry of Finance, which facilitated communications with senior policy makers; and the ability to attract top-caliber experts with international experience to work for the country.

**Previous External Evaluations with Focus on IFPRI Country Programs**

IFPRI has commissioned a number of external impact assessments of various aspects of its work (Hazell and Slade 2015), and a few of them have focused on the performance of CPs. Ryan (1999) conducted the earliest evaluation, examining the policy research and capacity strengthening impacts of IFPRI’s Malawi program from the late 1980s into the mid-1990s. Ryan cited a number of achievements, including the case study analyzed in this paper of the government’s response to the 1992 drought and famine. He concluded that many of the achievements were possible only because of a sustained in-country presence and noted that the visitor mode of operation that succeeded the CP was perceived by many stakeholders as being inferior.

Babu (2000) assessed IFPRI’s research impact on public resource allocation and food security in Bangladesh. The two most significant contributions were toward the abolishment of the
rural rationing program and the establishment of the Food for Education Program for addressing food insecurity (this case study is included among our interviews). Frequent dialogues with the government and capacity strengthening tied to communication of results were found to be important factors behind the research success.

Renkow’s (2010) impact assessment of IFPRI’s research program on priorities for pro-poor public expenditure explored research and outcomes related to China, India, and Africa (the latter through the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme process). Without focusing on CPs per se, Renkow nevertheless found that “IFPRI in-country staff were universally praised for their efforts as intermediaries between the US-based IFPRI researchers on the one hand and donors and local officials on the other, sometimes in trying circumstances. IFPRI has greatly increased its in-country presence over the last decade. By all indications, this decentralization has paid substantial dividends in terms of the effectiveness with which research and outreach functions have been melded together” (2010, p. 23).

Renkow and Slade (2013) examined the impacts of IFPRI’s work in Ethiopia from 1995 to 2010, including the period since 2004, when IFPRI established a CP office. Significant capacity strengthening activities were noted, but the authors also observed that “relatively few of the wide range of [Ethiopia Strategy Support Program] outputs appear to have produced tangible outcomes in Ethiopia” (2013, P.41). This was in part due to a shift in research emphasis toward issues that the government of Ethiopia had shown disinclination (for example, private-sector market development). As will be noted below in the new case studies (for example, direct seed marketing), there has since been more interest from the government in expanding the role of the private sector.

Finally, a study by Kuyvenhoven (2014) focused on the impacts of IFPRI’s capacity-strengthening efforts, drawing from many country experiences. In relation to IFPRI’s CPs, Kuyvenhoven found that “comparison of the effectiveness of capacity-strengthening activities over time in the selected countries suggests that the local presence of IFPRI staff in a country has an important and positive bearing on the effectiveness of capacity-strengthening activities” (2014, p. xvi). The main mechanism for capacity strengthening is collaborative research. Although this has been widely appreciated, Kuyvenhoven (2014) noted that subsequent policy influence and impact from the strengthened capacity are hard to demonstrate.
4. STUDY DESIGN

This study seeks to draw lessons about good practices that CPs can adopt to improve their performance in informing and influencing country policies and strategies. It is not intended as a rigorous evaluation of the impact of CPs; rather, it is envisaged as an internal learning exercise to help IFPRI’s CP leaders draw and share lessons from their own insights and experiences. The study draws on studies of cases in which CP activities are perceived by CP leaders to have contributed to successful policy outcomes. For comparative purposes, it would have been useful also to elicit some cases in which CP activities were perceived not to have contributed to successful outcomes; however, it is much harder to obtain such information from CP leaders. So although we limited the full interviews to success stories, we also asked the respondents about what, if anything, they had done differently in cases that had been less successful.

If we define a CP as a program of work that provides a sustained and coherent effort to inform and influence a range of food and agriculture–related policies or strategies in a country, then the following can be considered as relevant IFPRI CP experiences for study: ongoing CPs in Africa south of the Sahara (Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, and Uganda); current and recent work in China, India, Bangladesh, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC); and earlier country work in Bangladesh (1992–1994), Pakistan (1985–1986), Egypt (1981–1983), Malawi (1989–1994), Mozambique (1996–1999), and Central America (2003–2008).

To identify the case studies, we solicited nominations of success stories from current and past CP leaders. We did not request a similar list of failures. The request for nominations was made in a letter from IFPRI’s director general and in advance of any other work on the evaluation of their CPs. The CP leaders (listed in Appendix A) were interviewed in person or by Skype mainly between March and June 2017, by one or both of the authors, using a set of structured questions to guide the discussion (Appendix B). The interviews typically took about one hour, and the discussion covered details about the nominated successes, the reasons why the respondents thought they succeeded, and what distinguished these successes from other lines of CP work that the respondents perceived to have been less successful. All interviews were recorded.

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2 Hence we do not attempt to create any control cases, in which CP teams did not undertake supporting activities for a policy change.

3 The Central American program served five countries (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Guatemala) from a base in Costa Rica. Each country was considered too small to justify a CP of its own, but the regional program served as a collective CP, working on strategy issues of common importance.
5. DESCRIPTIONS OF THE SUCCESSES COVERED

Past and current CP leaders had many success stories to suggest, but when we pressed them for their most important one in terms of helping to inform and influence important government policies or programs, we ended up with 18 case studies, which are briefly described below.⁴

1. Bangladesh—Food Rations

In 1992, the government of Bangladesh undertook reforms to suspend and then abolish the food ration system in favor of other approaches. The Food for Education program grew out of that discussion and was later launched. Prior IFPRI research using large household datasets clearly demonstrated that the food ration system was not working due to significant leakage and graft. Other observers had also been aware of the problem, so IFPRI wasn’t alone in recognizing it, but the government did not take immediate action. It took a new government with an interest in reforms to take concrete actions in 1992. IFPRI was involved in the reform discussions, including the convening of a working group in which alternative interventions were proposed.

2. Bangladesh—Food Shortage and Rice Price Stabilization

In 1998, an unusually severe flood caused a drastic reduction in Bangladesh’s rice production. The government had low food stocks in reserve and needed to take quick action to bring more rice and wheat into the country. After considering several options, with an initial bias toward having the public sector procure the imports, mainly through bilateral government-to-government arrangements (for example, with India) or through the World Food Programme (WFP), key policy makers were eventually persuaded by IFPRI research and policy analysts in the Food Planning and Monitoring Unit (FPMU) of the Ministry of Food to promote private-sector rice imports to address the shortfall. IFPRI had previously been involved in research supporting the liberalization of the rice market and cereal imports in Bangladesh, and was able to quickly build on that work to show that the private sector was already performing well and had the capacity to handle the current crisis. The FPMU and IFPRI team also quantified the likely rice production and consumption shortfalls, tracked domestic rice prices against prices in India (the source of most imports), monitored private-sector imports, and investigated the likelihood of success of other options. Ultimately, the policy proved successful, with more than 2 million tons of private-sector rice imports, mainly in the form of numerous small truckloads from India, adding to domestic supplies and preventing domestic rice prices from rising above border price levels.

3. Bangladesh—Social Protection

Bangladesh’s seventh five-year plan (for fiscal years 2016–2020) recommends that a behavioral change communication (BCC) approach be used to improve nutritional outcomes in social protection programs. The country’s social protection strategy also refers to the BCC as a useful approach. This policy arose after IFPRI tested BCC options in a pilot under the Transfer Modality Research Initiative, implemented with the WFP. The Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs incorporated the innovation into its Vulnerable Group Development Program in 2016. The difficulty in extending this policy to all social protection programs is the cost of the BCC approaches used, and new IFPRI research under the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Gender Linkages project aims to test the effectiveness of less expensive BCC interventions. Previous research on nutritional status by IFPRI helped to raise the importance of improving nutritional outcomes in the country.

⁴ We were unable to interview earlier leaders of the Mozambique CP, but some of their successes are already reported in Kuyvenhoven (2014).

Results from a set of micro, regional, and macro studies, most notably of the returns on different types of public expenditures in rural areas, contributed to changes in the Chinese government’s spending priorities to give more emphasis to rural roads, agricultural research, and education. Initial studies were done in the late 1990s, but a more coordinated approach to research on China’s rural areas was undertaken around 2002–2004, when results from formal modeling studies of the impacts of public expenditures were completed. The results were disseminated into public discourse, and national partners became important advocates, but it still was not until several years later, when the government was expanding its investment in rural areas, that the policy and program reforms occurred, beginning in 2008.

5. Costa Rica—Central America Free Trade Agreement

The CP team undertook research and outreach activities to help inform a national debate in Costa Rica about joining the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). Success was measured by a yes vote in a national referendum on October 1, 2007, leading to eventual CAFTA membership later that year. Negotiations had begun in 2002, and Costa Rica, unlike other Central American countries, was still sitting on the fence in 2004. There was a contested national debate on the issue, but both sides lacked hard evidence on what the agreement would mean for different stakeholders. In 2004, IFPRI launched a study that involved a social accounting matrix (SAM)–based model for each Central American country, linked to a regional trade model, to simulate the likely impacts of CAFTA. The study also looked at specific agricultural value chains (of both crops and livestock), especially those important to the poor. In addition, individual country case studies on the allocation of public expenditures (and their marginal returns in terms of their impact on growth and poverty) were carried out for each country. The studies identified key bottlenecks that would need to be overcome to ensure more equitable outcomes within Costa Rica, and showed how public investments complementary to joining CAFTA could help overcome those bottlenecks. The team and its national collaborators presented their findings directly to policy makers but also engaged in public outreach efforts in order to help inform voters before the referendum. Besides clearly influencing the CAFTA referendum in Costa Rica, the IFPRI-led work on CAFTA made important contributions to informing the public in other Central American countries regarding the true contents and likely impact of CAFTA.

6. Democratic Republic of the Congo—Agricultural Business Parks

In 2009, high government officials in DRC were dissatisfied with progress in the agricultural sector, particularly with smallholder farmers. IFPRI had outposted a country advisor, who worked closely with the minister of finance (who later became prime minister) to support country policy decisions. That person was given the mandate to develop a new approach to transforming the smallholder sector, which became the concept of agricultural business parks as regional focal points for agricultural development. The concept was to have a broader, integrated approach to developing geographical areas for high-production agriculture and processing. Three agricultural business parks were launched in 2014 in western DRC, but 24 are planned in total. IFPRI prepared background studies and coordinated the development of the concept and detailed planning, through consultations with professionals experienced with this approach in other countries. Impact assessments are being conducted to inform a potential scale-up of the approach.

7. Egypt—Food Subsidy Program

The key success of the IFPRI research in Egypt, beginning around 2010, was to improve the nutritional value of the food subsidy program, which previously focused on grains. Specifically, in 2014, the number of items eligible under the ration card made available to
consumers increased from 5 to more than 30, to include more nutritious and healthier options, and the government adopted use of a smart card system. The timing followed closely on the period in which food prices spiked, attracting the attention of policy makers. IFPRI’s role was to undertake national surveys to determine the nutritional status and deficiencies of the population, and to present options for addressing those through the food subsidy program. The team developed a brief and held a major conference where the findings were conveyed to policy makers and other influential stakeholders. The IFPRI team also undertook research to show the benefits from better targeting of the subsidies, but those findings have not yet been taken up by the government.

8. Ethiopia—Agricultural Transformation Agency and Agricultural Input Distribution

IFPRI contributed to the creation and setting up of the Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA) in 2010, through diagnostic studies undertaken at the request of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Once the ATA was established, IFPRI was also asked to provide long-term support in the form of research and policy analysis. This has included work on reforms to the fertilizer and seed distribution systems. IFPRI’s research on fertilizers helped inform a more liberalized approach to the way fertilizers were imported and distributed. It also helped lead to a shift away from blanket recommendations for diammonium phosphate and urea application to a system of recommending balanced fertilizers adapted to the soil nutrient needs of different regions. To implement the changes, the ATA developed new soil maps and established fertilizer blending plants in some regions. IFPRI helped to train personnel at ATA and the Ethiopian statistical agency on geographic information system techniques to be able to undertake the soil mapping exercise. The ATA also expanded two new input distribution programs in 2015–2016 following their successful piloting in collaboration with IFPRI researchers: an input voucher system that involves the issuance of cash or credit vouchers to farmers from microfinance institutions or savings cooperatives, which can then be used to acquire inputs at cooperative stores; and a direct seed marketing approach through the private sector to produce and market certified seed. The seed marketing approach represents a major policy shift in Ethiopia, which had hitherto relied on public mechanisms for seed distribution.

9. Ethiopia—Productive Safety Net Program

Ethiopia’s Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) covers about 8 million people, and there have been numerous findings from IFPRI research that have led to improvements in the program. Two specific ones were improvements in the targeting (eligibility criteria) of the program, and improvements in timing and payment mechanisms. IFPRI has had a long-term relationship with the PSNP program since 2006, mainly through analysis of panel data that enable the assessment of program modifications. In the examples above, research found that payments were late for many households and that payments had been made to many non-poor households. Researchers have cultivated good relationships with program leaders and found that face-to-face meetings, where results can first be discussed internally, are the most effective in influencing program adjustments.

10. Ghana—Agricultural Input Policy

The Ghana Strategy Support Program (GSSP) has shaped debates and influenced program investments in the area of agricultural inputs since the food price crisis of 2008. This includes seed programs, fertilizer subsidies and distribution, and farm mechanization. IFPRI research has continued to raise concerns about the adequacy of existing distribution mechanisms for quality seed, about current public-sector approaches to farm mechanization, and about government interest in continuing subsidies for fertilizers in their present form. Changing these approaches is slow, in part because they are entrenched through donor-funded projects as well as government policies, but there have been small shifts in programmatic approaches
and in funding priorities. The GSSP is one of the few organizations convening evidence-based events on important agricultural development issues in Ghana, and the quality of its research is well recognized.

11. India—Pulses Policies and Programs

In 2014–2016, India experienced a national shortage of pulses, an important staple food for the poor, which led to widespread demonstrations. The government urgently needed to act, and IFPRI had an opportunity to input findings from an ongoing research program on the pulses subsector. The outcome was a new policy program that reversed some previously introduced and counterproductive measures in the pulses sector. The changes included a change in the calculation of the minimum support price for pulses and a multipronged investment plan for the sector. IFPRI had for some years been conducting extensive research on pulses in India, demonstrating their importance to nutrition, the characteristics of consumer demand, production trends, bottlenecks in the pulse seed system, and the contribution of pulses to soil health. The IFPRI team was therefore well positioned to advise quickly on appropriate policy responses when the crisis occurred, and had already established a reputation for its expertise in the area with relevant policy makers and national partners.

12. India—Indian Council for Agricultural Research Capacity

The capacity strengthening component of the National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP), funded by the World Bank to the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), was shown to be effective by an IFPRI study, and this helped ICAR obtain funding approval for a second phase of the project. The IFPRI team was asked by ICAR in 2013–2014 to undertake the evaluation because there was high-level interest within ICAR in knowing whether the spending on sending Indian scientists abroad for training was worthwhile, or if that money might be better be spent on domestic training and research programs. There was some initial disagreement among ICAR’s management and board, so the study results were deemed to be very important. The India team undertook an 18-month study, leading to a cost-benefit analysis that showed the training was very worthwhile. This served as an input into the design of the next phase of the World Bank–funded NAIP.

13. Malawi—Famine Response

Malawi suffered a major drought in 1992, but in considering their response, the government, development agencies, and humanitarian organizations lacked data to know how much of the population was affected in different parts of the country. The IFPRI team was well placed to help because, a couple of years earlier, it had helped set up a national monitoring system on nutrition and food security, and the capacity already developed enabled the rapid implementation of a new household survey. This survey provided timely and district-specific information about emerging food gaps and needs, which helped target assistance. This success also helped establish the government’s acceptance of the monitoring system on nutrition and food security, which highlighted some of the chronic malnutrition problems in the country. This demonstrated the importance of nationally representative household data and the need to regularize data collection. IFPRI also contributed to the longer-term strengthening of institutional and individual capacity in data collection and analysis.

14. Malawi—Input Subsidy

The Malawi Farm Input Subsidy Program (FISP) has evolved in recent years to become smaller in scale and better targeted, and to include an expanded role for the private sector in distributing fertilizer. All these changes are in line with recommendations given by the IFPRI Malawi Strategy Support Program based on its research findings over the 2011–2015 period. FISP has been scaled back from 1.5 million to 0.9 million beneficiaries by improving efforts to exclude the wealthy and the very poorest farmers (who instead receive social protection
coverage) from the program. IFPRI had been involved in research assessing the impact of FISP by using observational data and a SAM-based model to evaluate various policy options. Other external researchers (including Michigan State University) also studied the effects of FISP. Given that there were positive effects of the program, the IFPRI team tried to take a pragmatic approach in nudging policy toward a better program, rather than advocating for its abolishment. One key activity was the convening of a national symposium in 2014, where some steps toward reform were agreed upon by a range of key stakeholders.

15. Malawi—Maize Export Ban

In 2017, the Malawi government lifted a ban on maize exports for the first time in years, in line with IFPRI’s Malawi Strategy Support Program research, which showed that the ban had negative consequences for maize producers. The negative effects of the ban were both short term—foreclosing a market opportunity when there was an abundance of production—and long term—reducing incentives for the private sector to invest in the maize value chain. In 2013–2014, IFPRI had used a SAM-based computable general equilibrium (CGE) model to demonstrate the full effects of the ban. The topic is a sensitive one in Malawi because of the importance of maize as the main staple food, and the government was less than enthusiastic about the research results. An important outreach event for IFPRI was its support to the Farmers Union of Malawi in organizing a public debate on the topic in June 2017, which was broadcast on radio and television, and at which the implications of low maize prices for farmers were highlighted. The government subsequently lifted the maize export ban in October 2017, once it was certain that food reserve stocks were adequate. Despite this success, the ban was then reinstated in February 2018 following dry spells and an infestation of fall armyworm.

16. Nigeria—Agriculture Promotion Policy

The new government that took office in 2016 has used the IFPRI Nigeria Strategy Support Program’s (NSSP’s) research to inform its new Agriculture Promotion Policy (APP), which serves to guide sector investments over 2016–2020. Building on years of research, and following a request from the two co-chairs (the US Agency for International Development and the International Fund for Agricultural Development) of the Agriculture Donor Working Group (ADWG), in May 2015 the NSSP leader prepared an ADWG policy brief titled “Transforming the Agricultural Sector in Nigeria: Challenges and Priorities for 2015 and Beyond.” The brief was shared with the new minister of agriculture and rural development in November 2015 and has been instrumental in influencing the new APP roadmap, released by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) in July 2016. The NSSP has continued to provide technical information to the government in support of implementation of the new policy. For example, recent NSSP research on the nexus between youth employment opportunities and agricultural sector transformation has been particularly appreciated by the government. Furthermore, NSSP was instrumental in supporting FMARD toward the preparation and release of the new Agricultural Sector Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (2016–2025) in May 2017.

17. Pakistan—Agricultural Research Council Reforms

In 2012, the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) designed its Five-Year Business Plan 2013–2018 to guide its work and activities in the years ahead. The IFPRI Pakistan Strategy Support Program (PSSP) made direct inputs into the design of this plan by coordinating and funding an external, independent third-party evaluation of PARC in 2012–2013, and subsequently provided capacity strengthening to PARC for implementation of the plan. The new plan was tailored to the recommendations of PSSP for reorganizing and increasing the institution’s effectiveness in the context of the devolution of many research
functions to the provinces. Through IFPRI’s support, PARC has established a competitive grant program, which is proving to be effective. It also has acquired increased skills in assessing the effectiveness of research outputs.

18. Uganda—Food Price Spike Response

In the wake of the global food price spike of 2008, IFPRI research helped the government of Uganda decide not to adopt protective trade policies that would likely have had negative welfare consequences. The government lacked information on the likely effects of high food prices and turned to IFPRI as the only organization that was capable of quickly implementing a study to provide needed information and analysis. The IFPRI team conducted a set of rapid regional surveys to understand what foods were being consumed, produced, and traded in each place, and made initial descriptive results available in a timely manner. Results showed that the main foods in the national diet were nontradable foods (such as plantains), whose prices were not much affected by world price movements. Given that these foods also had favorable production prospects, it was concluded that introducing protective measures, such as an export ban on maize, would be counterproductive. IFPRI had developed close relationships with the Plan for Modernization of Agriculture, which facilitated dialogue between IFPRI and the key policy makers.
6. ANALYSIS OF FACTORS LEADING TO SUCCESS

Answers to key questions posed to the CP leaders for each case study are summarized in Table 2 and discussed below. The key factors are discussed under the subheadings of Research Undertaken (the nature and contribution of the research), Outreach (the specific outreach actions taken), and Other (other general factors behind the success).

Research Undertaken

In 11 of the 18 cases, the case study analysis was undertaken in response to a specific request for technical assistance from the government, an in-country donor, or an advisory group, and in 2 other cases it was partially in response to such a request. Four of these cases involved urgent decisions about food crises: Bangladesh—rice, India—pulses, Malawi—famine, and Uganda—global price spike. In the case of Costa Rica, the research targeted an urgent decision—a national referendum on CAFTA—but the CP team did not mention receiving a specific request from the government to undertake its study.

The contribution of the CP’s research toward its success was considered very important in all 18 cases. Moreover, in 16 cases, this research involved the collection and analysis of primary data, leading to credible new evidence that was often unique and perceived to be objective. The unique contribution of IFPRI researchers took many forms, such as nationally representative datasets (and panels), national SAMs and companion CGE models, or the generation of several complementary studies. The exceptions were DRC and Pakistan—PARC, where the problems required a different kind of analysis. The DRC case involved designing agricultural business parks based on examples from other countries. The Pakistan—PARC case involved commissioning an independent, third-party evaluation of the organization.

In 11 cases, the CP team was able, to varying degrees, to draw on earlier IFPRI research findings, which either underpinned new research or whose results became relevant when the policy issue arose or re-emerged. In India, for example, the IFPRI team had been conducting research on pulses for several years, and its findings suddenly became highly relevant when pulse prices spiked to crisis levels in 2014–2016 and the government urgently wanted to design a national response. Much the same happened in China. IFPRI had been conducting research on the returns on public investment for some years and had results in hand when the government started asking questions late in the first decade of this century about how it should spend additional resources in rural areas. These are cases in which the IFPRI teams had anticipated emerging issues and had managed to mobilize resources in advance to conduct in-depth analysis on those issues. In Bangladesh, the team had conducted prior research on the liberalization of the rice market, and although it did not anticipate the 1997–1998 rice shortage, its earlier research provided a basis for making quick and relevant recommendations in response to an urgent government demand.

CP teams rarely became directly involved in the implementation of the policies they helped design. Exceptions were DRC, where IFPRI went beyond the design of business parks to help coordinate their implementation and evaluation; Pakistan, where IFPRI provided capacity strengthening to PARC as part of a support project it had helped design; and Bangladesh during the 1998 rice crisis, when IFPRI monitored private-sector performance and prices to reassure the government that sufficient supplies were arriving and the private sector was not exploiting the market. In some other cases, IFPRI became involved in the subsequent monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes of the policy change, but did not have any direct implementation role and remained an objective observer of the outcomes. This was the case, for example, with the PSNP in Ethiopia and the social protection program in Bangladesh.
Table 2. Summary of respondents’ answers to questions about factors contributing to their case study success

| Research Undertaken                                                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Was research done at the specific request of the government, an in-country donor, |   |   |   |   | Y |   |   |   | Y |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| or an advisory group?                                                              |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Was there an urgent decision pending?                                             |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Was primary data collection and analysis an important component of the research?  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Did research go beyond design to implementation?                                  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Did policy influence draw significantly from research conducted over a period of   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| time, used when an opportunity arose?                                             |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Did you get any direct support from IFPRI staff based in Washington, D.C., that   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| contributed to this success story?                                                |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Did the research involve national collaborators?                                   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |

Legend: Y = Yes, N = No
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Outreach</th>
<th>Did you have a formally articulated theory of change or impact pathway?</th>
<th>How important was direct personal contact with high-level policy makers?</th>
<th>How important was communication through national organizations?</th>
<th>How important was communication through international development agencies?</th>
<th>How important was communication through conferences / policy events?</th>
<th>How important was communication through written materials?</th>
<th>How important was communication through media?</th>
<th>Were your recommendations in line with what international development agencies were recommending at the time?</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>How important was the contribution of your research in the success?</th>
<th>Were policy makers particularly receptive to what you were doing/proposing?</th>
<th>How important was it that IFPRI had a country team in place prior to and during the period in which this success occurred?</th>
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<td>Red</td>
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Source: Authors’ tabulation from respondents’ answers to survey conducted March to June 2017.
Note: CAFTA = Central America Free Trade Agreement; DRC = Democratic Republic of the Congo; ICAR = Indian Council for Agricultural Research; PARC = Pakistan Agricultural Research Council; PSNP = Productive Safety Net Program. Key: Green = yes or very important; yellow = yes to some degree; red = no or not important; blank = wasn’t mentioned.
Most (13) of the success stories involved some collaborative research with national partners. This does not mean the other CP teams were not collaborating with national partners more widely, but just that some of the policy work sampled here was less amenable to such partnerships. IFPRI country teams did receive important levels of support from researchers at IFPRI headquarters, which was considered to have contributed to their success. There were only 3 cases in which this was not so, and 2 of these required urgent responses because there was little time to engage with Washington-based staff (the Malawi famine response and the India pulses crisis), or because there was no special expertise at headquarters (DRC). The India team also had its own internal capacity to handle the problem because the ongoing research program on pulses was undertaken by its own Delhi-based staff.

Outreach

In terms of outreach for informing and influencing policies, an important channel of communication in all 18 cases was direct contact with high-level policy makers. These typically were senior government officials or advisors, several of whom championed the policy recommendations that arose from IFPRI’s research. One of the advantages of having in-country researchers is that they can cultivate relationships and interact with senior policy makers on a continuing basis. This direct access helps explain why other communication channels were not used so much, and perhaps why all but 2 of the CP teams, and these only partially (Bangladesh—social protection, and Ghana), had not developed a formal theory of change (TOC) to guide the specific work leading to their successes.

Other important channels of communication included working through national partners who had their own links with senior policy makers (8 cases). This was important in large countries like China, Egypt, and India, where IFPRI is a relatively small player in the national policy ecosystem.

International development agencies played a direct role in communicating results to policy makers in 11 cases, and in 4 of these, the agencies’ role was perceived as very important (for example, the WFP played a key role in transmitting IFPRI’s findings to the government of Egypt in the reform of the food subsidy program and to the Bangladesh government in the case of innovation in the social protection mechanism). In 9 cases, IFPRI’s recommendations were also fully or partly in line with what international development agencies were recommending at the time. As might be expected, the two were generally consistent, with international development agencies helping to communicate the recommendations with which they agreed. However, in the case of the rice shortage in Bangladesh, the WFP played an important intermediary role even though it was initially promoting an alternative policy of using its own food procurement system rather than encouraging the government to rely on private traders.

Conferences and policy events played a role in 11 cases. Written communications were reported as playing a role in 13 cases, but as playing a very important role in only 4 cases. More striking is the relatively small use of the media; it was reported as important in 5 cases, very important in only 2 of these. The latter were cases in which public opinion mattered in changing the policy, as in the run-up to the national referendum on CAFTA in Costa Rica, and in India during the national debate about the government’s strategy for pulses.

In all but one case, the CP leaders thought policy makers had been receptive in varying degrees to their policy recommendations. The exception was the recommendation to remove the export ban on maize in Malawi, on which there was considerable pushback from within the government.

All CP leaders thought it was important to their success that IFPRI had a country-based team in place prior to or during the period in which these successes occurred.

Other Insights

CP leaders were also asked what factors they thought were most important in leading to their successes. The most common answers were as follows:

- Building on IFPRI’s high credibility in the country from previous work as a source of evidence-based policy analysis. This credibility is often key for successful relationships with in-country
donor agencies as well as with government policy makers and national partners.

- Having direct access to senior policy makers. Having a presence in the country is very important for this, and also for developing close relationships within key public institutions.
- Seizing an opportunity to influence an important policy or program due to a change in government or the willingness of government to change policies because of a crisis.
- Partnering with the right people.
- Conducting research on issues over the longer term and not just doing quick analysis in response to crises. This is also important for building IFPRI’s credibility on key topics (for example, pulses in India and public investment in China).
- Organizing conferences and meetings around research evidence, rather than the more advocacy-driven agendas of most other conference organizers. This is especially important for addressing the downsides as well as the upsides of new policies.
- Strengthening national capacity for policy research through long-term presence, which also contributes to building trust and developing effective partners for research and outreach.

The long-term presence of country offices was cited as a critical factor enabling the outposted scientists to develop each of these important approaches and actions.

On the other hand, the development of formal TOCs for individual lines of research were not seen as very useful because once embedded in the local policy ecosystem, CP leaders need the flexibility to shift resources between different types of activities to respond to new opportunities that arise for influencing policy, and these can be very hard to predict. However, it could be said that the CP leaders have followed strategic approaches to the building up of trust, the development of partnerships, and engagement in capacity strengthening, all of which are elements of a grand TOC for CPs.

Many of these same factors were also mentioned when CP leaders were asked what lessons they drew from their success stories that could help increase the likelihood of success from their other activities. Most mentioned was the need to have access to and be trusted by key policy makers. It takes time and good research to build up such relationships, but once established, they can open many doors. Sometimes maintaining these relationships requires not going public with research findings, or at least waiting until after they have been accepted and acted on by the government. This is not always compatible with IFPRI’s internal pressure for research staff to publish. It may also help explain why the use of media as a channel of communication was mentioned as important in only a few cases (Table 2).

**How Do These Findings Relate to the Literature?**

Our findings are consistent with most other studies (see Section 3) in finding that placing and embedding policy researchers within countries increases the frequency of their interactions with key policy makers and national partners, and increases policy makers’ use of research evidence. Our results also support the need for establishing and maintaining credibility and trust, and of the importance of working with national partners.

However, our findings do not confirm the need for well-developed TOCs as promoted by Young and others (2014), at least for the pursuit of the sharply focused lines of policy work involved in these success stories. A TOC may not be necessary when a CP team is already embedded in the local policy ecosystem and has well-developed lines of communication with senior policy makers. Perhaps a TOC might be considered more useful for directing the overall research portfolio of a CP team, especially in the early stages, or for researchers who have more transient relationships with a country (for example, those involved in single-project studies).

The kaleidoscope model (KM) (Resnick et al. 2015) suggests that these case studies would not have been successful if they had faced strongly unfavorable political economy conditions. In Table 3, we attempt to put this hypothesis to the test by assessing the case studies against KM factors in the agenda setting, design, and adoption phases (we exclude the implementation phase because few of the studied CP teams remained involved at that stage).
Table 3. Analysis of the case studies through the kaleidoscope model lens

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<th>Agenda-Setting Factors</th>
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Source: Authors’ tabulation from respondents’ answers to survey conducted March to June 2017.

Note: CAFTA = Central America Free Trade Agreement; DRC = Democratic Republic of the Congo; ICAR = Indian Council for Agricultural Research; PARC = Pakistan Agricultural Research Council; PSNP = Productive Safety Net Program. Green = cases in which the factor (row) was favorable for success. ¹ This is difficult to know in some of our cases. Some people held strong beliefs against the reforms in a number of cases, such as the first two Bangladesh cases, the recent Malawi export ban, the DRC business parks, and CAFTA. ² Not able to judge this and would have to assume that opponents were not overly powerful given the successful outcomes, except in the case of the Malawi maize export ban, in which the decision was later reversed.
Highlighted in green in Table 3 are those factors that were favorable for a policy outcome in each of the case studies. As can be seen, three factors were deemed to be present in all cases: the existence of a relevant problem, the importance of cost-benefit calculations (or other types of data analysis quantifying the consequences of policy choices) in the decision-making process, and the integration of knowledge and research in support of policy design. The latter is expected in our case studies because they were nominated by researchers. Focusing events were also common, whether from a climate disaster (drought or flood), the 2008 food price rise, or an opportunity due to a change in government (for example, the Bangladesh rationing case study). Somewhat relatedly, many of the successes benefited from propitious timing, such as when an urgent response to a crisis was needed (for example, the Uganda and Malawi famines), or from the fact that some research was embedded in a decision-making process (for example, the ICAR and PARC cases). Although we are unable to judge the power of coalitions in support of policy change, about half the case studies did mention the importance of government champions, donors, or international organizations in advocacy roles.

We did some further clustering of case studies by type of case to see if that could provide more insight into the variability in importance of certain KM elements. Four categories of case studies were identified: (1) evaluations of ongoing or piloted programs (for example, the Ethiopia PSNP), (2) work on the design of new reforms (for example, the DRC agricultural parks), (3) ex ante analysis on impacts of potential reforms (for example, the Uganda food price case), and (4) general support to agricultural-sector performance (for example, the Nigeria case). After the cases are sorted into their types, only categories (1) and (3) have a reasonable number of cases for which to analyze relationships with the KM elements—7 cases for (1) and 6 cases for (3).

The four KM elements for which Table 3 shows some variation between importance (green cells) and nonimportance (white cells) are focusing events, existence of powerful advocacy groups, existence of veto players, and propitious timing. When these two sets of variables are pitted against each other (Table 4), the following results emerge:

- Providing ex ante analyses of the impacts of potential reforms, and then having those reforms be taken up, always benefited from a focusing event (for example, the Costa Rica vote, Bangladesh rice imports, Uganda food prices), whereas successes related to evaluations of ongoing programs were not related to focusing events.

- Similarly, propitious timing was important for the influence of ex ante impact analyses of potential reforms, but not so much for evaluations of existing programs.

- On the other hand, there was less recognition of veto players as being a factor for the ex-ante impact analysis cases, as compared with the program evaluation cases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model element</th>
<th>Impact evaluations of ongoing or piloted programs ($n = 7$)</th>
<th>Analysis of impacts of potential reforms ($n = 6$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focusing event</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powerful advocacy coalitions</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veto players</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propitious timing</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ tabulation from respondents’ answers to survey conducted March to June 2017.
7. CONCLUSIONS

Our 18 case studies all point to a successful mode of operation in a country in which CP teams have become effectively embedded within the local policy ecosystem, have built up relationships of trust and credibility with key policy makers, and have the financial resources and flexibility to enable them to respond to emergent as well as longer-term policy issues and communicate results back to decision makers. There are many variations in the details of how this basic model works; moreover, the types of research, outreach, and capacity strengthening activities that the teams chose to undertake varied by case and country. This basic model not only underpins the successful cases examined in this paper but, as CP leaders emphasized, is also important for contributing to the success of their other work.

We did not directly explore cases of failure, and this is an area for future work. Nevertheless, when viewed through the KM lens, our success stories highlight the key roles played by the existence of a relevant problem and by propitious timing or a focusing event (for example, a food crisis) that creates an opportunity for policy change, as well as the importance of credible research (often involving primary data collection), leading in many cases to unique and quantitative results about the consequence of policy choices (that is, cost-benefit analysis). However, if the basic CP model is not already in place, then successes would seem to be less likely even when these KM conditions occur.

To become successfully embedded in the local policy ecosystem, CP teams need to be in place for the medium to long term. Establishing credibility and trust takes time, good research, and good partnerships. It probably helps at the setup stage if IFPRI has previously worked in the country; for example, in Ethiopia, the CP evolved out of a long period of research engagement in the country, whereby IFPRI was already well known and connected to high-level policy makers and prior research had been established for the CP to build on. CP leaders need the skills to build and nurture these kinds of relationships, as well as to oversee good research and analysis.

Building credibility and relationships within a country is only half the story because, in all cases, the IFPRI CPs undertook unique and high-quality research that filled an important knowledge gap. They often used models or other tools that were at least partly developed by others at IFPRI. Direct research support from staff at IFPRI’s headquarters has also been important in most cases, the exceptions being when a problem was so urgent that there was insufficient time to engage headquarters staff, or when a CP team had a sufficient number of researchers of its own with the right skills.

Although all the success stories involved direct communication between the CP teams and high-level policy makers, other means of communication were also important. The right communication strategy will obviously vary by country context and type of policy issue, and teams seem to have been fairly adept at making choices. But the results do suggest that more might be done through other communication channels such as policy briefs and the media. However, we cannot tell from our results whether these options are being adequately exploited and whether or not CP teams should build stronger skills and greater capacity for communication.
REFERENCES


### Appendix A

**Persons Interviewed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success Story</th>
<th>Name of Interviewee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Bangladesh—Food Rationing</td>
<td>Akhter Ahmed and Steve Haggblade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Bangladesh—Rice Imports</td>
<td>Paul Dorosh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Bangladesh—Social Protection</td>
<td>Akhter Ahmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. China—Public Expenditure</td>
<td>Xiaobo Zhang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Costa Rica—CAFTA</td>
<td>Hans Janssen</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. DRC—Agrobusiness Parks</td>
<td>John Ulimwengu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Egypt—Food Subsidy Program</td>
<td>Clemens Breisinger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Ethiopia—ATA</td>
<td>Shahid Rashid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ethiopia—PSNP</td>
<td>Bart Minten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Ghana—Input Policies</td>
<td>Shashi Kolavalli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. India—Pulses</td>
<td>P. K. Joshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. India—ICAR Capacity</td>
<td>P. K. Joshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Malawi—Famine</td>
<td>Suresh Babu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Malawi—Input Subsidies</td>
<td>Bob Baulch and Karl Pauw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Malawi—Maize Export Ban</td>
<td>Bob Baulch and Karl Pauw</td>
</tr>
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<td>16. Nigeria—Agriculture</td>
<td>George Mavrotas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promotion Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Pakistan—PARC Reforms</td>
<td>Steve Davies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Uganda—Food Price Spike</td>
<td>Todd Benson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors.

Note: ATA = Agricultural Transformation Agency; CAFTA = Central America Free Trade Agreement; DRC = Democratic Republic of the Congo; ICAR = Indian Council for Agricultural Research; PARC = Pakistan Agricultural Research Council; PSNP = Productive Safety Net Program.
Appendix B
Success Story Interview Questionnaire Guideline

Names of country program and leader

Name of respondent

**Influence and Impact**

Briefly describe the success story.

What policy, strategy, or program was influenced? Is there any way we could confirm that influence?

Was there a subsequent change in policy along the lines you recommended?

Was the policy implemented?

Did you get involved in assisting with the implementation in any way (for example, through adaptive research, technical assistance, monitoring and evaluation)?

Was the outcome successful in the way you expected? If not, in what ways did it differ?

What was the time frame from problem identification to a successful outcome? Give dates.

What was your overall role? Were any other key IFPRI persons involved?

**Research Undertaken**

Briefly describe any research or technical analysis that was undertaken and that contributed to the success story. Are there any key publications/reports we could read? Please send those to us.

Why was this research undertaken? For example, was it in response to / driven by
- a specific request from the government or an in-country donor;
- the country program’s advisory or steering committee, if any;
- a specific request by a national research partner;
- IFPRI’s own research priorities; or
- other?

How much time did you have to undertake the research or technical analysis?

Was the research basically a desk review/analysis, or was primary data collection and analysis an important component of the research? If the latter, briefly describe the new data that were collected and analyzed.

Did the research involve national collaborators?

**Outreach**

What policy/strategy were you trying to inform or influence?
Who were the key decision makers who could change the policy?

When you embarked on the research/analysis, what strategy did you have in mind for how the results would be used to influence the key decision makers?

Was this strategy ever formally articulated into a theory of change or an impact pathway? If yes, can we have a copy?

Did that strategy evolve or change over time?

What were the main means of communicating the results to key decision makers? Examples:
- Direct personal contact with high-level policy makers
- Through a local champion
- Through research collaborators
- Through advocacy groups (such as NGOs, the private sector, farmer organizations)
- Conferences / policy events
- Publicly available reports, articles, briefs, blogs, newsletters
- Briefs, letters, and other documents not publicly disseminated
- Local media

What other outreach activities did you undertake to promote the use of your research in decision making?

Were your recommendations in line with what other major players such as the World Bank, US Agency for International Development, UK Department for International Development, and so on, were recommending at the time?

Lessons

How important was the contribution of your research in the success (that is, was the evidence an important contribution to the decision-making process)? Was research undertaken by other institutions also important to this success?

What factors do you think were most important in leading to this success? Did the project succeed because policy makers were particularly receptive to what you were doing, or because of the way the research and outreach were conducted, or because of another factor?

What role did national research or other types of collaborators play? What about international institutions (such as donors, international finance institutions, CGIAR)?

What lessons do you draw for increasing the likelihood of success for other activities conducted by the country program?

How important was it that IFPRI had a country team in place prior to and during the period in which this success occurred? Could it have happened without the country program (that is, could it have been managed from IFPRI headquarters)?

Did you get any direct support from IFPRI staff based in Washington, D.C., that contributed to this success story?
ALL IFPRI DISCUSSION PAPERS

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They can be downloaded free of charge.