



NEW ECONOMY DEVELOPMENT GROUP
Le Groupe Éconov Développement

Research ICT Africa – DECI-2 Collaboration

Evaluation Report

Prepared by

New Economy Development Group

Ricardo Ramirez

Wendy Quarry

Charles Dhewa

Julius Nyangaga

Dal Brodhead

Prepared for

Research ICT Africa

Cape Town

&

International Development Research Centre

Cairo

April, 2014

Table of Contents

Executive summary	i
Acronyms	iv
A. INTRODUCTION	1
A.1 About this report.....	1
A.2 RIA's protagonism in African ICTs.....	1
A.3 Evaluation methodology.....	2
A.4 Steps & key evaluation question	2
A.5 About the data collection process	5
A.6 Structure of this report	5
B. FINDINGS	6
B.1 Affecting policy regimes.....	6
B.2 Broadening policy horizons.....	8
Informing debates & setting/resetting agenda	8
Stimulating dialogue with decision makers.....	11
Networking	12
B.3 Broadening policy capacities.....	15
Improving knowledge & data of key actors.....	15
Improving capabilities to give key actors more agency.....	16
Improving communication & creating communication capacity	19
B.4 How the evidence fits with the key evaluation questions.....	23
C. ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS	24
C.1 The Rapid Framework as template.....	24
C.2 Context: Politics and Institutions.....	25
C.3 Evidence: Approach, Credibility and Communication	26
C.4 Links: Influence and legitimacy	29
C.5 External Influences	31
D. MAKING SENSE OF THE FINDINGS.....	33
USE 1: To Validate RIA Outcomes for IDRC.....	33
USE 2: To provide evidence of, and document outcomes/relevance for other funders	34
USES 4 & 5: To chart outcome pathways & communication strategy outcomes	35
Uses 3 & 6: Inform transition for leadership, funding sources and sustainability of the organization	39
E. APPENDICES (Separate volume).....	41
E.1 Documents reviewed.....	41
E.2 People met & interviewed	41
E.3 Uses and Key Evaluation Questions.....	41
E.4 Websites visited	41
E.5 CPR South Survey findings	41
E.6 Summary of the Knowledge Map of Communication Policy Research Africa	41
E.7 Theory of Change diagrams.....	41

Executive summary

Research ICT Africa (RIA) seeks to build an African evidence and knowledge base in support of ICT policy and regulatory processes, and to monitor and review policy and regulatory developments on the continent. In so doing, the RIA network has generated considerable evidence-based information for policy makers and regulators. In 2013, RIA contracted the DECI-2 team to help them ‘look back’ and assess the actual impact of their research to policy work in order to look forward and prepare the ground for future activities.

The evaluation incorporated a 12 step Utilization-Focused Evaluation (UFE) approach that hinges on whether the findings of the evaluation are actually used (Patton, 2008; 2012). Data collection and report writing took place between October 2013 and March 2014 and included: document review; focus group discussions; semi-structured interviews (face to face and Skype); observation and an on-line survey. The report is divided into three main sections: Findings; Analysis of Findings and Making Sense of Findings. The Findings section is organized on the basis of Lindquist’s (2001)¹ typology: affecting policy regimes; broadening policy horizons, and expanding policy capabilities. The Analysis of Findings follows the ODI RAPID framework.

Affecting policy regimes refers to those rare areas where an organization can claim to have direct attribution to policy change. Evidence has shown, for example that RIA has directly influenced the broadband policy in South Africa; reduced the mobile termination rates (MTR) in South Africa and Namibia and resulted in the reform of Kenya’s ICT Institutional set up.

Broadening policy horizons: There are numerous instances where RIA’s influence both on research and policy has *contributed* to policy change at both regional and national levels. RIA introduced data collection techniques including household surveys that collect demand-side data and benchmarking that have now been taken up by others. In addition, its use of local researchers and insistence on ‘quality’ research has raised the profile of African ICT researchers both in national and international fora and has indirectly contributed to policy change across the continent.

Broadening policy capacities: RIA views capacity building both for local researchers and young scholars as a long-term investment in future policy influence. At first working through universities, RIA now builds capacity of individual researchers several of who have gone on to policy and regulatory positions in their particular countries. Some of the more prominent ICT researchers in Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and Ethiopia are either graduates of RIA training or part of the RIA network who have graduated to positions of policy influence.

¹ Lindquist, E.A. 2001. *Discerning Policy Influence: a Framework for Strategic Evaluation of IDRC-Supported Research*. University of Victoria

The ODI RAPID Framework concludes that research to policy links often fall into four main clusters: context (politics and institutions); Evidence (approach and credibility); links (influence and legitimacy) and External influences.

Context: RAPID recognizes that research-to-policy links are shaped by the political context and that the state of civil and political freedoms makes a difference in bridging the gap. RIA has proven to be particularly adept at keeping close to the policy making centre particularly in its home base in South Africa and in neighbouring, Namibia. In addition, RIA's research partners' success is based on the degree to which they are engaged with decision makers in their home country.

Evidence: Approach, Credibility and Communication: RAPID acknowledges that quality research is important to research uptake, a point that is clearly embedded in the RIA ethos. RIA has worked for 10 years to build a database of rigorous quality data and positions itself to be ready when a policy need comes to light. The RIA insistence on quality data and introduction of 'demand side' data collection, that allows for gender, income, education disaggregated for household surveys, has raised the level of research on the continent which in turn has contributed to the policy agenda. This evaluation confirmed the need for an explicit communications strategy that could be derived from the existing communication practices. Without such a strategy, from time to time RIA may fall short, for instance, in the packaging of that data in ways that can be easily read by people outside of the research world. This will involve doing some audience research to confirm how policy makers access evidence and what media they prefer.

Links: Influence and legitimacy: RAPID emphasizes the importance of links between communities, networks and intermediaries in effecting policy change. While RIA does not officially work through intermediaries, there are people who use RIA research to influence policy. At the same time, the RIA networks within Africa are a clear part of the process for policy change as are the RIA sister networks in other regions: DIRSI and LIRNEasia.

External Influences: RAPID emphasizes that external forces and donor actions have a strong impact on research to policy actions. This dimension emphasizes the importance of having profound knowledge of the broad policy, regulatory and economic regimes affecting ICTs in a region and country. This is certainly the case for RIA situated in South Africa and promoting ICT for Development across the continent.

Evaluation uses & Recommendations

1 & 2: To validate outcomes for IDRC and to document outcomes for other donors

- Donors interested in RIA research should be invited to sponsor more than one element of the RIA strategy and RIA should refer to the Theory of Change (ToC) to ensure that individual donors appreciate how their support belongs in the overall project logic.
- It is recommended that current and future projects supported by IDRC's Information & Networks (I&N) Program be encouraged to review and rationalize their research communication strategies through RAPID and that the allocation of

financial and human resources to communication activities should address the RAPID components.

USES 4 & 5: To chart outcome pathways and communication strategy outcomes

The Theory of Change (ToC) diagram produced for this report highlights four strategic elements of the RIA brand (research; capacity building; networking and credibility); it summarizes the range of internal outcomes; that are operationalized in each context to affect policy regimes, broaden policy horizons, and expand policy capabilities.

- The four strategic elements should be used to explain the major features and interventions that funders can support, or policy audiences understand.
- The internal outcomes should be used to exemplify the range of products and services that make up the RIA reputation.
- The RIA practice should be explained with reference to the RAPID framework.
- It is important that RIA adopt basic communication principles to guide its decision making on its future communication directions and to rationalize its spending on publications and other documents.
- The RIA website should be improved to include a search capacity. It will also be important to determine the main target audiences for the website and consider the practical implications for consulting those audiences on website redesign.

USES 3 & 6: Inform transition for leadership, funding sources and sustainability of the organization.

- It may not be possible to find all qualities in one person but it may be necessary to ensure the presence of these qualities across the research team.
- RIA to pay attention to providing a medium for any new leader to fulfill her/his professional ambitions as per that person's style while keeping true to project objectives.

This evaluation confirmed the value of a decade of funding to the RIA network by IDRC. Research does not yield policy outcomes overnight and the strategic elements that underlie this approach take time to work as a system. RIA's main contribution to the African continent has been its commitment to rigorous research in the public interest. As it shifts to attract other sources of revenue, a balancing act between commercial survival and public interest research will require careful stewardship.

Acronyms

ADB	African Development Bank
APC	Association for Progressive Communications
ACACIA	An IDRC-funded program to promote ICTs in Africa
CCK	Communication Commission of Kenya
CPR	Communication Policy Research (conferences)
CRAN	Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia
DECI-2	Developing Evaluation and Communication Capacity in Information Society Research, the second phase of an IDRC-funded research project
DIRSI	Diálogo Regional sobre Sociedad de la Información, the sister network to RIA in Latin America and the Caribbean
DOC	Department of Communication
GITS	Government Information Technology Services
ICASA	Independent Communications Authority of South Africa
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ICT4D	Information and Communication Technology for Development
ICANN	Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers
ICTA	Kenya Information and Communications Technology Authority
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
I & N	Information and Networks, an IDRC Program
INASP	A UK charity dedicated to improve access, production and use of research information and knowledge
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
KEQ	Key Evaluation Question
K-ICT	The new ICT authority in Kenya http://www.icta.go.ke
LIRNEasia	A regional ICT policy and regulation think tank, the sister network to RIA in Asia and the Pacific
MTR	Mobile termination rates
MTN	GSM cellular network operator delivering service in South Africa and other African countries
NCC	Namibia Communications Commission
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NCC	Nigerian Communications Commission
OSI	Open Society Institute
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PIUs	Primary Intended Users
RAPID	Research and Policy in Development, and ODI program
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
ToC	Theory of Change
UCT	University of Cape Town
UFE	Utilization Focused Evaluation
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 About this report

Research ICT Africa (RIA) seeks to build an African evidence and knowledge base in support of ICT policy and regulatory processes, and to monitor and review policy and regulatory developments on the continent. Part of this effort is the generation of evidence-based information for policy makers and regulators.² RIA embodies a crucial nexus between research, evidence, policy and advocacy in ICT through an active role in research communication. Through this effort, the RIA team has taken a 'look back' at its achievements and lessons that could be used for going 'forward' into developing the evaluation and communication dimensions of a second phase. The DECI-2³ PROJECT Team supported RIA in this effort to document and 'tell the story', as well as assisting them as they prepare the ground for future activities.

Given the shift in the nature of its work from individual and university capacity building towards more of a Think Tank profile, RIA will move to seek out donor funded resources to undertake research that will inform policy work. Their work with networks will likely continue, but on a selective, case by case basis through the use of flexible teams drawn from a matrix of skills and experience best able to deal with particular issues. To support this change in orientation, there is a strong interest in opening up future opportunities by capturing what has happened to date, understanding the outcomes and identifying promising future areas upon which to concentrate.

This evaluation process has offered an opportunity to work with network members in looking at the past efforts, especially in research communication and its impact on policy. In contrast, looking forward could mean working on a case-by-case basis with some projects – a loose network that fits the approach RIA desires with its members in the future. RIA's recent Technical Report to IDRC noted that to this end, the Executive Director would finalize the design of a comprehensive evaluation of this phase of the project in the near future so that it can be planned to take place while the projects are still underway if at all possible.⁴

A.2 RIA's protagonism in African ICTs

“RIA conducts research on ICT policy and regulation that facilitates evidence-based and informed policy making for improved access, use and application of ICTs for social development and economic growth in Africa. Its purpose is

² Research ICT Africa, Evidence-based ICT Policy and Development and Innovation, Fourth Interim Technical and Financial Report for IDRC, February, 2013, page 2

³ Developing Evaluation and Communication Capacity in Information Society Research (DECI) an IDRC funded research project

⁴ Ibid, page 21.

to develop the data and analysis necessary for evidence-based ICT policy and effective regulation in the continent. It provides African researchers, governments, regulators, operators, multilateral institutions, development agencies, community organizations and trade unions with the information and analysis required to develop innovative and appropriate policies, effective implementation and successful network operations that can contribute to sustainable development.” (Deans, 2011: 33)

A.3 Evaluation methodology

This evaluation incorporated a Utilization-focused Evaluation (UFE) approach. The success of UFE hinges on whether the findings and processes of the evaluation are actually used (Patton, 2008; 2012). As simple as this concept sounds, it calls for a commitment by ‘primary intended users’ to drive the process from beginning to end on the basis of self-identified concrete ‘uses’. In UFE, the evaluators take on the role of facilitators of learning, as opposed to neutral outsider judges. The two most important premises of UFE are that no evaluation should go forward unless there are users who will actually take action on the information that the evaluation will produce and that they are involved in the process of the evaluation.

UFE has two key advantages: first, there is continuous attention placed on utilization, hence it is practical. Second, the ‘primary intended users’ (PIUs) take ownership over the design and implementation of the evaluation; in doing so, the process becomes as important as the findings in shaping future learning mechanisms and creating momentum for implementing the findings. In UFE, methods and data collection instruments are selected on the basis of the Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) that are elicited from the users.

A.4 Steps & key evaluation question

Patton’s⁵ original UFE lists twelve steps. The steps are listed in a linear fashion but actually work in an iterative manner in practice. Figure 1 summarizes the steps and their inter-relationships. The orange-coloured steps emphasize the need to ascertain readiness of the project, the organization, the funder and the evaluators. They also place a focus on the identification of users who will drive the process and on the specific uses where they wish to focus. Steps 6-8, in blue, cover the design phase, where the purposes or ‘uses’ of the evaluation are translated into ‘key evaluation questions’ as a key stage in the process. Step 11 refers to the facilitation of use, when the evaluators assist the client in harnessing the findings and converting them into actions and strategies.

⁵ Patton, M. Q. (2008) *Utilization Focused Evaluation* 4th. Edition: Sage.

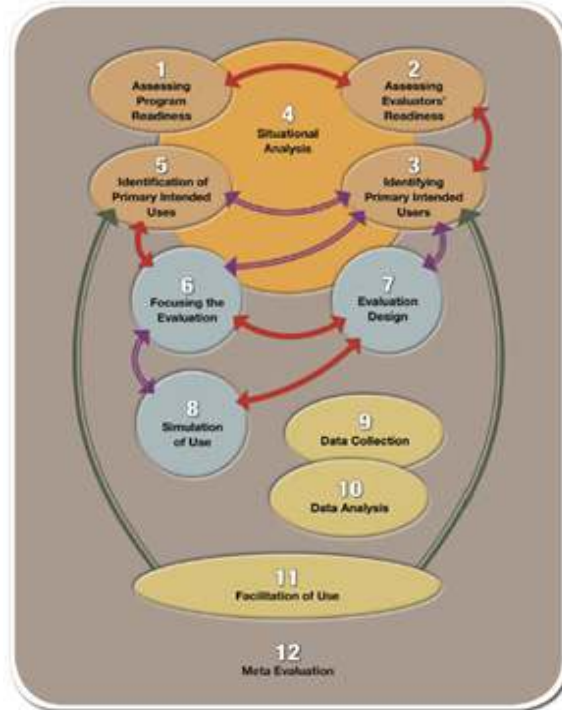


Figure 1 - UFE Steps (from Ramírez & Brodhead, 2013)

With RIA, Steps 1, 2 and 4 took place over several months of discussions. Two members of DECI-2 participated in a workshop with RIA in June of 2013 to verify whether the project readiness lent itself to being supported by DECI-2. It became clear early on that, rather than being mentored in UFE and Research Communication (ResCom) as is the focus of the usual DECI-2 process, RIA needed instead to complete an evaluation in the short term (starting in late 2013 and ending in the first quarter of 2014).

Once the contract for the evaluation was in place, a second DECI-2 team meeting took place in Cape Town in October 2013. The meeting covered Step 3 (identification of primary intended users), Step 4 (definition of uses), and initiated Step 5 (focusing the evaluation) and Step 6 (evaluation design) subsequently completed via Skype and email communication.

The Primary Intended Users (PIUs) included: Alison Gillwald, Executive Director; Christoph Stork, Senior Researcher; Ondine Bello, Coordinator & Administrator; Enrico Calandro, Research Fellow; and Khaled Fourati, IDRC Program Officer, Cairo⁶.

The USES were summarized as follows:

1. To validate RIA outcomes for IDRC

⁶ Khaled's departure from IDRC in early 2014 meant the loss of a PIU from the main donor organization; we sought to replace him with Laurent Elder, Program Leader, though such a late change means the new user has not been part of the early exploration.

2. To provide evidence of, and document outcomes/ relevance for other funders (OSI)
3. To Inform RIA transition (leadership, skills, funding)
4. To chart outcome pathways
5. To chart communication strategy outcomes
6. To inform organizational sustainability

On the basis of the USES, the PIUs drafted a set of key evaluation questions (KEQs):

- 1) To what extent did RIA influence policy at national, regional and international levels [outputs/ outcomes]?
- 2) How does RIA use research to challenge dominant international policy and practice?
- 3) To what extent did RIA build capacity (generation and utilization of local knowledge) among: i) individual researchers; ii) universities; and iii) policy makers & regulators?
- 4) To what extent did RIA networking modalities support their outcomes (policy and capacity building)? a) RIA network (peer network) versus b) CPR conference (peer and mentoring review process – individuals)
- 5.a) What approach did RIA use to position itself to influence policy in different countries and through what processes and systems (tell the story) [outcomes/ process]?
- 5.b) How effective has RIA been in understanding the local context or taking up opportunities to influence local discourse?
- 6.a) What would be the funding modalities that best fit RIA's values?
- 6.b) What are the consequences, incentives, disincentives for RIA as an independent public interest research entity in pursuing a hybrid funding model?⁷

The evaluators then matched the KEQs with the type of data and evidence needed to answer them, along with identifying the data sources and data collection methods (see Appendix 3). During some of the early data collection events in December 2013 in Cape Town, some refinement took place, namely of the last KEQ which had initially focused on documenting the willingness to pay for services and/or support by some partners and clients. This process of revision reflected to some extent the use of Step 8 where a simulation of findings is used to review the merits of the KEQ and its use.

The main data collection methods included:

- Documentation review
- Focus group discussions
- Semi-structured interviews
- Observation
- An on-line survey

⁷ RIA is pursuing core funding from IDRC and funding from other sources for individual projects or programs.

A.5 About the data collection process

The evidence gathered in response to the KEQs during the data collecting process can be summarized as follows:

There is evidence of both policy influence and challenges to dominant policies and practices. The examples are reported elsewhere in this report. Informants were asked about their views on the significance and relevance of those policy changes and the mechanisms that underpinned these achievements, as well as RIA's role in these processes. There is evidence of capacity development at different levels which the evaluators sought to make explicit and tangible. Also, there was an effort to document the enabling environment and the constraining factors that explain and qualify the changes achieved. The networking, community and theory of change issues were addressed as elements of a system, and as complementary metaphors to explain and communicate the essence of RIA.⁸ Each element appears to feed and complement the other. Attention was focussed on capturing and 'telling the RIA story'. Much of the RIA approach is based on the 'practical wisdom' of the team – something that is not always simple to describe, let alone replicate.⁹

A.6 Structure of this report

The report that follows is divided into three main sections with a series of appendices at the end:

- Section B reports on the findings of the study and is organized according to the Lindquist's (2001)¹⁰ typology of policy influence: B.1 Affecting policy regimes; B.2 Broadening policy horizons and B.3 Expanding policy capabilities
- Section C is an analysis of the findings seen through the lens of the ODI RAPID Framework research to policy template
- Section D, 'Making Sense of Findings' contains the RIA Theory of Change along with some Recommendations stemming from the evaluation findings
- Section E is the list of Appendices indicating names of people interviewed; documents reviewed etc.

⁸ Gareth Morgan (1997) writes about the need to use multiple metaphors to explain any single organization.

⁹ According to Swartz, B. & Sharpe, K. (2011. *Practical wisdom: The right way to do the right thing*. New York: Riverhead.) this wisdom as an acquired skill that allows one to make quick decisions by 'reading' a dynamic context and responding strategically and immediately; this notion contrasts with 'best practices' in that practical wisdom decisions are unique, one-time responses.

¹⁰ Lindquist, E.A. 2001. *Discerning Policy Influence: a Framework for Strategic Evaluation of IDRC-Supported Research*. University of Victoria.

B. FINDINGS

The findings have been grouped into three categories following Lindquist's (2001) typology of policy influence:

- B.1 Affecting policy regimes
- B.2 Broadening policy horizons
- B.3 Expanding policy capabilities

The section concludes with a review of the evidence in the context of the key evaluation questions (KEQs).

B.1 Affecting policy regimes

Advocates of increasing research for development policy make a mistake when they take for granted the availability of hard data as the foundation of policy advice. In fact, developing countries often suffer a shortage of basic statistical and other data fundamental to drawing reliable conclusions. Without an agreed fact base, policy arguments are more likely to turn on issues of power and prejudice than on evidence. Verifiable evidence is the researchers stock in trade; without it, researchers have little claim to policy influence. (Carden, 2009: 6)¹¹

Policy-making is a messy, non-linear business making it very difficult to give direct attribution to any one change in policy or development of a new policy. With this consideration in mind, there are examples of policy arenas where RIA's influence can be directly attributed:

- Drafting of the Broadband Policy for South Africa where the Minister of Communications and the regulator, invited the RIA Executive Director (ED) to work on the policy document production. This involvement presented a window of opportunity for the ED to apply her practical wisdom gained through RIA work.
- Reduction of the mobile termination rates (MTRs) in South Africa, following a similar RIA outcome in Namibia.

Namibia received favourable publicity in international fora such as the ITU. For a country that wants to be seen as the Silicon Valley of Southern Africa, it was bad news for South Africa to be ranked behind a country with a small population such as Namibia on ICT issues.

¹¹ Knowledge to Policy; Making the Most of Development Research, Fred Carden (2009)

- RIA was instrumental in bringing about the transition of the Namibian Communications Commission (NCC) into the current Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia (CRAN) through an Act of Parliament. Evidence and facts were needed in this process. Former CRAN Board Chairperson Dr. Catherine Margaret Beuke-Amiss explained: *“If the Act of Parliament had been older than 2010, it could not have guided us through sophisticated issues like number portability. The quality of RIA’s documents made a difference all over. Through RIA assistance, the NCC was able to articulate direct feedback sessions with the Minister of ICTs who is the line Minister and this data empowered the minister to argue on behalf of the Ministry.”*
- The engagement with the Competition Commission of South Africa provides another example. Here RIA data was used to build the case against the leading operator that ended in the largest fine in SA’s competition history at the time, but was later negotiated down to include financial penalty and behavioural requirements. This result in turn, enabled the entry of small Internet companies into the market. On the mobile pricing side, the RIA Executive Director was asked to appear as a friend of the SA Parliament to lead evidence to illustrate how the operating environment had been skewed in favour of dominant players like MTN and Vodacom, and how this prevented fair competition that would drive down prices.

Kenya: The ICT national institutional reform

The final formation of the Kenya ICT Authority was announced on January 25, 2014). It constitutes an amalgamation of the former KICT Board, Department of e-Government and the Government Information Technology Services (GITS), that is supposed to *‘rationalize and streamline the management of all Government of Kenya ICT institutions and advise the government on sectoral development and ICT project implementation and investment’* (<http://cpanel.treasury.go.ke>) Some informants suggested this action was the result of RIA work done in 2009/2010 (*Regulatory Review, Household Survey, Sector Review*) that recommended the merging of the many ICT bodies dealing with ICT issues. **The RIA study highlighted how different communication and ICT departments were duplicating each other creating inefficiencies. The reform documents themselves quote the RIA-led Kenya ICT Sector Reviews, starting with the first done in 2009 and a similar recommendation in the one done in 2012 that justifies the coming together of separate organizations.** The RIA network kept highlighting these duplications and inefficiencies in papers and different discussion fora

(Margaret Ndungu, Muriuki Muriithi and Tim Waema).

Policy regimes will often shift in a nuanced manner, with ‘behind the scene’ changes where researchers are rarely present. One of the contributing factors is that policy research tends to focus on the nature of the evidence and relationships between researchers and policy makers with less emphasis placed on the political contexts in which the policy making process happens. When a change in policy or program does become public, the trajectory of change is close to impossible to elucidate. This

situation is the context of politics; hence the need to demonstrate direct attribution needs to be balanced with the reality. It is recognized that research to policy influence tends to happen in nuanced ways, often by reshaping the context and resetting the agenda. It is in this area [next section] where there is a wider collection of evidence of RIA's influence.

B.2 Broadening policy horizons

...The advent of new and pervasive technologies encourages policy makers to explore new questions, and to try new answers. The revolutions in information and communication technologies – from cellular phones to web-based commerce and education – have caused policy makers to search out knowledgeable advice. When a problem or solution is so obviously unprecedented, policymakers can more safely admit ignorance. Again, researchers who already have helpful findings in hand are best placed to answer policy makers in a form that contributes to timely and pragmatic decisions. (Carden, 2009: 7).¹²

Interviewees close to RIA acknowledged the difficulty of direct attribution of policy change to any one influence or action (or to gauge the extent). They do however, point to numerous instances where the RIA influence both on research and policy has *contributed* to tangible policy changes at both the regional and national levels. These examples illustrate outcomes that are still in evolution, or that are informing debates and shifting agendas.

Informing debates & setting/resetting agenda

RIA has introduced data collection methodologies – such as household surveys that collect demand side data- and benchmarking studies, and has made these data sets available at no cost to users such as regulators and researchers. The use of a consistent, statistically significant method, combined with a tight turn around for publication of the findings, inform debates and set agendas. Since the same tools are applied throughout the continent, this consistency allows for cross-country comparisons that several informants referred to as strategically important in positioning themselves for future policy influence. As a methodology, benchmarking has shown how it can be used not just to reveal what is hidden, but also to create reality in so far as comparing one country's progress against another's can be used as a prod to set new agendas.

- A researcher (Dr. Margaret Ndungu) in Kenya commented that it might even be possible to state that the **RIA approach to data collection** and analysis has been a valuable contribution to the policy process to the extent that when the Communication Commission of Kenya (CCK) did a Quality of Service review they used benchmarks adopted from the RIA methodology.

¹² Knowledge to Policy; Making the Most of Development Research, Fred Carden (2009)

- Another researcher Dr. Lishan Adem in Ethiopia commented that **RIA may have influenced the manner of gathering ICT information in Ethiopia** given that the government is now collecting and analyzing data because they saw what RIA did to produce the country's sector performance review. *'It means that they read these documents and they see that these are very influential.'*
- In Namibia, the CRAN effort to convince operators to reduce interconnection rates was **accepted by the industry**. Here the process was far quicker than, say, in South Africa where the proposal took time to be accepted. In Namibia, demand side data and research evidence from RIA was compelling enough to convince operators and other players quickly. In addition, some of the RIA **Household Survey questions have been introduced into the South Africa census**. RIA has also provided direct advice to StatsSA and to the Department of Communication over many years in an effort to get more depth to the ICT component of the national survey. This action represents an achievement in that the data sets will be **maintained independently of RIA's work**.

The East African *End of Roaming* study was initiated to investigate which factors led to the removal of roaming tariffs, and why these conditions may or may not be present in other jurisdictions/regions. **"We tried to influence a way of thinking rather than a policy"** (Rohan Samarajiva, RIA Board member.). RIA analyzed the roaming rate developments in East Africa and developed a case study on the dropping of roaming charges through the initiative of 'One Network'. 'One Network' started by Zain (formerly Celtel), provided a borderless mobile phone network service where customers across 17 countries in Africa and the Middle East enjoy uniform termination rates. Later, Safaricom in Kenya adopted this approach when it developed business relationships with other operators in the East African countries providing the same advantage to its clients. RIA's study showed that consumer-favoured roaming rates could be established by what can be described as 'disruptive competition'¹³ in the market. This practice was unusual because there had been a tendency to 'emulate European "best practice" regulation', where the governments set fixed roaming rates limits. However, the research demonstrated how critical the creation of an enabling environment for market innovation was – in this case the opening up of international gateways for operators to treat their networks in contiguous countries as one. (Mentioned by Rohan Samarajiva, Helani Galpaya, Muriuki Muriithi, Alison Gilwald, and Joseph Ogutu).

¹³ The theory of disruptive competition and innovation was pioneered by Clayton Christensen. The theory explains how and when a business model is likely to succeed through innovation and disruption of the market (Regulatory Intervention or Disruptive Competition, Alison Gilwald and Muriuki Mureithi, 2010).

Mapping *multistakeholderism* in Internet Governance from an African perspective

The Internet governance research project was initially funded with Google seed funds (2012 and 2013) and has been picked up in 2014 by the Center for Global Communication Studies at the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, by its Internet Policy Observatory, but draws extensively on the IDRC funded access and pricing databases and affordability research undertaken over the last decade. The research seeks to understand how the notion of *multistakeholderism* as a form of deliberative democracy for Internet governance is informed by assumptions from more mature markets and Western democracies and considers how this concept has been applied to African Internet governance structures and processes. It does so by exploring the evolution of *multistakeholderism* through the mapping of the main international and regional instruments of the Internet governance ecosystem in Africa.

An initial discussion paper was prepared by Enrico Calandro in collaboration with Nicolo Zingales, a Google fellow working with RIA in winter 2013. Subsequently, a research proposal based on the discussion paper was submitted to the Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania and RIA received a research grant to expand this research on Internet governance and *multistakeholderism* from an African perspective.

Research findings have been discussed at the first African school on Internet governance organized by APC and NEPAD in conjunction with the ICANN47 meeting in Durban in July 2013. Afterwards, it was presented at the Southern African IGF held in Luanda, Angola, in August 2013. The same study has been included in the references for the 6 person ICANN Strategy Panel on Multistakeholder Innovation, an ICANN Presidency initiative to reform and design a 21st Century ICANN, on which Alison Gillwald sits.

In May 2014, this research will be discussed with a selected group of international cyber governance experts and policymakers and will be presented at The Hague Institute's Global Governance Reform Initiative (Enrico Calandro).

- The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) Market Review. **RIA provided data plus a portal** to facilitate the regulator's capacity to access and make use of evidence: <http://ictindicatorportal.icasa.org.za/Portal/index.php?p=24> RIA's data is available from the Indicator's tab as "3rd party ICT surveys."
- Several examples were mentioned where the RIA research was harnessed to provide supporting evidence. **In Mauritius, a RIA-led project generated information used in the first national ICT strategy.** The strategy enhanced liberalization of the sector. Case studies in Botswana may have resulted from the same influence. (Tim Kelly, World Bank).

- A representative of UNCTAD affirmed that they welcome RIA's statistical work: for example their enterprise surveys on use of ICTs in different African countries. For them **RIA fills large gaps, and most National Statistical Offices have yet to include ICT in their surveys**, let alone detailed, demand side data. (Torbjorn Fredriksson, UNCTAD).
- Several informants mentioned the relevance of RIA's sister networks in Asia (LIRNEasia) in Latin America and the Caribbean (DIRSI). **Having compatible methodologies, and sharing networks and capacity development efforts gives each region a global credibility.** The recent IDRC *In-Focus* publication reports this story with ample detail and highlights the contributions by the three sister organizations (Elder et al., 2013).

Stimulating dialogue with decision makers

Data produced by RIA contributes to planning and decision-making. However, the linkage of influence to policy and regulation is not easy to pinpoint due to a number of factors. *"Use of RIA information by policy makers is sometimes ad hoc, for instance, when making a speech, the Minister of Communication has cited statistics from RIA. To that extent, RIA work has significant influence,"* [Ernest Ndukwe, RIA Board Member and Vice Chairperson of Nigeria's Broadband Commission]. Several instances where RIA had become part of a dialogue with decision-makers both within the region and beyond Africa have been documented:

- In Nigeria, RIA has been influential by **working with local champions** and producing primary data on ICT Usage at the household level. In addition, the availability of more than 10 years' statistical data on the African telecoms market (e.g., pricing information) has also enabled RIA to be influential at regional and international levels. Policy briefs and issue papers based on national information have also been useful evidence-based inputs. *"In Nigeria, RIA influence has been an evolving process with a lot of promise in changing practices in government,"* [Fola Odufuwa, researcher, consultant and RIA partner in Nigeria].
- Governments and regulators often have policy documents and strategies that are difficult to align without user-friendly data such as that provided by RIA. ICTs and broadcasting used to be under separate ministries. Information from RIA showed that these agencies could, in fact, be bundled into one ministry. That change has happened in Namibia, thanks to insights from RIA.
- There have been various ICT policy developments in Kenya (e-Government (<http://www.e-government.go.ke/>) to increase public access to official documents and information). There is also the country's new ICT Act (The Kenya Information and Communications Technology Authority (ICTA) Legal Notice No.183 of 2013). The Regulator says that **RIA research information played a big role in the thinking and dialogues – driving discussions** (Monica Kerrets, Board Member of Kenya's new ICTA).

RIA works with local researchers

The RIA practice to work with local researchers is unlike most international organizations that rely on armchair research and is a benefit to local researchers and RIA together. The main challenge for most Nigerian and African researchers and institutions is that they don't have budgets for research. As a result, they end up relying on information from the World Bank, the UNDP and other international organizations rather than local institutions that are part of the local context. Americans know more about what is happening in Africa than African organizations because their research institutions are well funded. The World Bank and other foreign institutions take lack of information as a vacuum to be filled. If you don't provide information someone will do so. However, information from foreign sources is often wrong. During the introduction of telecoms in Nigeria, operators hired foreign research organizations who looked at salary levels in the formal sector and predicted that the demand for mobile phone usage would be at least 200 000 people. However, because they had not considered the informal sector where there are is no salary figure available, mobile operators were shocked when demand for mobile phones and SIM cards clocked 1.7 million in six months. This is an instance where research from localized institutions like RIA becomes very important. To try and use information from institutions on the ground, the ITU is now quoting figures from RIA.

- Tim Kelly (World Bank) points out that RIA has valuable and unique data on broadband and this has been used in developing the Broadband Policy in South Africa. ***"We can get broadband prices from ITU but it is not as detailed, or as up to date as what RIA produces."***

Networking

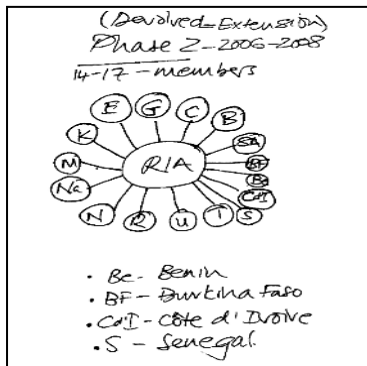
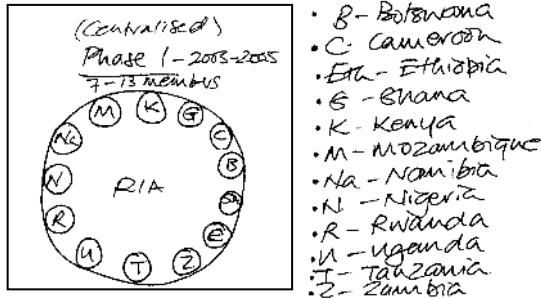
According to ODI's RAPID program, existing theory emphasizes the role of translators and communicators. ODI has indicated that there is often an *"under-appreciation of the extent and ways that intermediary organizations and networks impact on formal policy guidance documents, which in turn influence officials."* In many ways the RIA team, through its networks of trust, creates networking opportunities that appear to be strategic, and yet they are difficult to document. Some such strategies and events are noted below:

- RIA has made a point of presenting papers (and themselves) at international fora, as well as **finding spots for other African researchers to participate**. This participation has served to raise African issues to international attention. It has led to policy influencers such as the World Bank and the African Development Bank to both fund further research and/or to lean on African ICT policy makers.
- In South Africa, RIA has developed short training courses for new regulators and operators and encourages young scholars to view ICT research in a new light. Several of these regulators have gone on to positions where they are able to influence policy as exemplified by the RIA point person in Kenya. Professor Tim

Waema's appointment to the Kenya ICT Authority is a case in point (January 25, 2014). This strategy is an example of combining capacity development with networking, and relies on a long-term view as such changes take time (Tim Kelly).

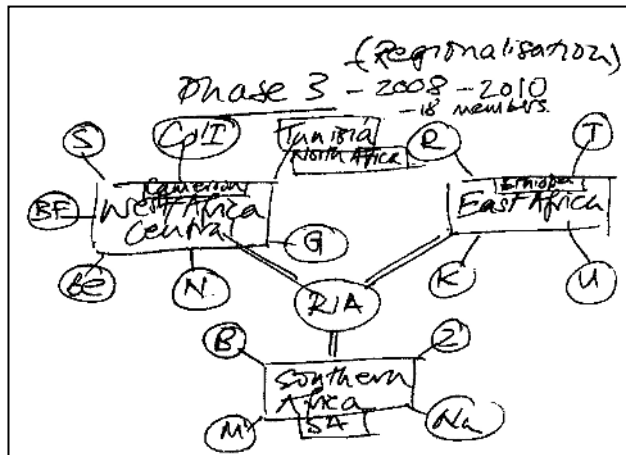
Networks are living organisms and often require vigorous efforts to keep them alive. Some people inevitably fall off the grid (e.g. a few people declined to be interviewed for this reason) while others are more active – RIA has corralled some of its more active members onto the RIA board¹⁴ and has managed to keep the country level of the RIA team (Ghana, Nigeria, Namibia, Ethiopia, Kenya) alive through funded projects.

The following diagrams depict the RIA networks over time. During Phase 1 they worked with 7-13 country partners.



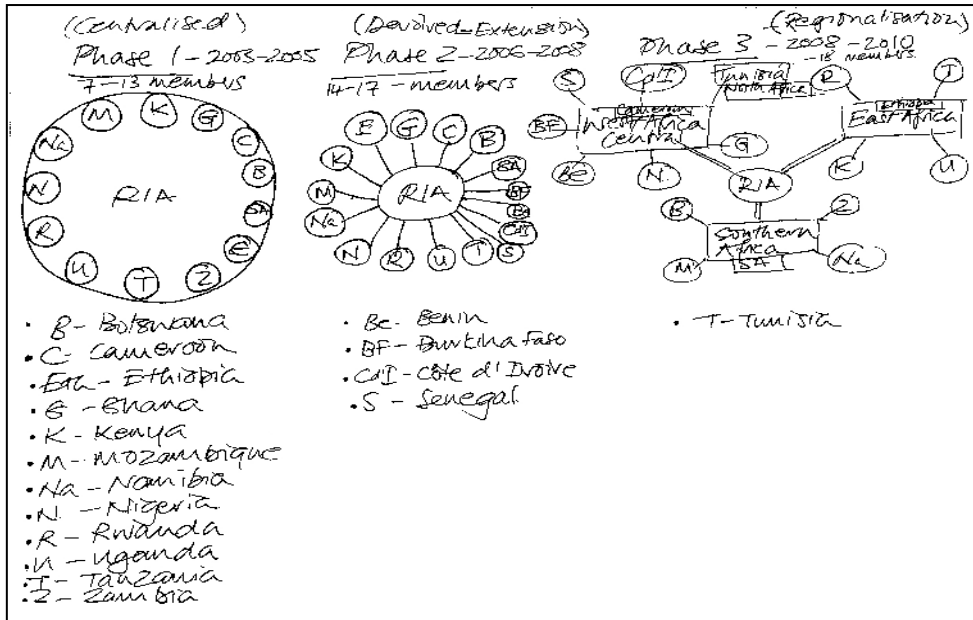
During Phase 2 RIA enlarged the network to include partners in 14-17 countries.

During Phase 3 they shifted towards regional hubs.

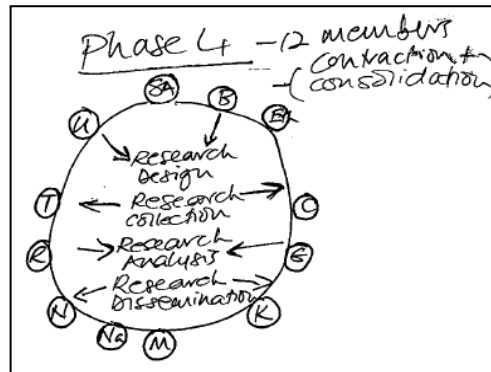


¹⁴ For example, RIA invited Dr. Ernest Ndukwe, a former regulator with a wide range of experience onto the RIA board

If the three phases are viewed together, a shift from expansion to devolution and towards regionalization can be seen.¹⁵



In the current phase, there has been a contraction of RIA to 12 countries. This change has meant a centralization of several functions (research, design, collection, analysis, templates dissemination) with a few countries receiving more intense support: South Africa, Namibia, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Ghana, Cameroun and Kenya. Some of these changes have taken place via the IDRC projects (solid lines) while others were made possible through consultancies and contracts (dotted lines). Evolving donor priorities mostly drives changes in network modalities.



The original point of RIA networking was driven by IDRC's mandate to build regulatory and African research capabilities – at first within universities and later within individual researchers. The IDRC ACACIA program and the Regional offices drove networking as well, resulting in RIA extending its work to West and North Africa.

¹⁵ It is important to note that the expansion or contraction of networks often took place more as a result of funding demands or funding constraints than by design.

When commenting on the whole notion of networks, one informant replied:

Networks begin as one centre with a whole lot of points where the communication is one way from the centre out. Over time you start getting feedback from the outlining points to the centre – by the time the feedback is strong enough you get interaction – eventually the sum of the points get strong enough to get independent on its own. Out of all those countries there may be about 6 where there might be some dynamism and ongoing exchange but a long way to go before being really self- driven and interactive partner. The rest are there to respond and that's it.

The choice of who is eligible to become a member of the RIA network is not explicit. Initially RIA chose its partners by virtue of their being among the very few people working on ICT policy in Africa, but now RIA tends to select members who have dependable research qualities and are close to the policy-making process.

RIA learns of potential members through peer referencing where a veteran RIA member identifies a person they deem capable of joining the group.¹⁶ The criteria for this selection tends to be three fold:

- Ability to prioritize RIA research work among the many other research portfolios (Tim Waema, Muriuki Muriithi)
- Competency and ability to convene and invite significant policy makers to forums for information dissemination (Tim Waema)
- People who continue to stay with neutral academic interests and who do not get involved in the commercial ICT industry (Muriuki Muriithi)

B.3 Broadening policy capacities

...researchers should assign themselves the long-term work of building capacity, expanding horizon, and regime improvement. Slowly percolating good and helpful policy approaches through the policy community will test researchers' patience, but it can pay off as minds open and attitudes changes. (Carden, 2009: 22).¹⁷

Improving knowledge & data of key actors

RIA's networking efforts are difficult to disaggregate from its capacity development ones. A **knowledge mapping exercise** was carried out by Sujata N. Gamage on CPR Africa, a separately IDRC funded policy research conference to answer the following questions:

1. What type of community is RIA in terms of mode, discipline and research interests of community members?

¹⁶ Lishan Adem (Ethiopia); Monica Kerrets (Kenya); Nana-Nxepa, Cameroun, Americo in Mozambique (now head of the regulators there); Amos Beda, Ghana

¹⁷ Ibid

2. Is RIA a research network in terms of collaborations and citations to each other in their CPR Africa papers?
3. Is RIA a community of practitioners in terms of their research practice? That is 1) do community members consistently consult each other and use RIA as a platform to improve their practice; 2) has RIA as a community developed a body of knowledge relating to their research; and, 3) does the community access and use those resources?

Appendix 6 provides a summary of the findings of the knowledge mapping exercise.

Improving capabilities to give key actors more agency

Initially RIA planned to work directly through universities to develop courses and curricula on ICT issues. The aim was to interest university administrators in a sector without roots within the academic world. Although successful in some instances – the Link Centre, founded by the RIA Executive Director (ED) at the University of Witwatersrand in 1999 now has a masters in ICT policy and regulation.¹⁸ RIA abandoned this effort when they found the bureaucratic needs of a university too cumbersome for the speedy innovative thinking necessary in the ICT domain. RIA now focuses on lending support to individual ICT researchers across the continent sometimes through institutional structures, but not necessarily, and focuses on executive professional development and a doctoral programme through the University of Cape Town, where the executive director is Adjunct Professor. RIA also provides fee and research support to PhD candidates studying with the RIA partners, most notably Prof. Tim Waema, University of Nairobi.

Several of the RIA trained regulators are now in positions to have some influence on policy outcomes. Stanley Shanapinda is now the Chief Executive Officer of CRAN after he had worked with RIA as a consultant in the ICT sector in Namibia and subsequently undergone executive training at UCT. Dr. Americo Muchanga, former RIA Mozambican nodal partner is the Director General of the regulator. Some of the more prominent ICT lead researchers in Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and Ethiopia are either graduates of RIA training; part of the RIA network or have already graduated to positions of policy influence. Albert Nsengiyumva is Minister of Infrastructure in Rwanda.

- **Regulators who have attended RIA courses continue to access RIA data to inform their work** (Keith Weeks, Margaret Ndungu, Muriuki Muriithi).
- Validation comes in where policy makers and regulators have, through working with RIA, gained the comfort that they are actually on the right path. For example, Abi Jagun said, **“Relationships with RIA reinforces what we do.”**

¹⁸ There is the Polytechnic in Namibia offering a certificate program and PNDM with a masters in policy and regulation.

- RIA has joined with one of their sister networks, LIRNEasia to **support young African scholars** to attend the annual CPR South conference. Here they are given the opportunity to present papers that are peer reviewed (offering an opportunity to publish) and they become known within the networks of other Asian and African researchers.
- Fei Ajai, a young scholar based in Nigeria has become more determined as a player in the field of public policy following exposure to CPR South. Her organization, The Nigerian Economic Summit Group (www.nesgroup.org), provides a firm bridge between the public and private sectors & government; advocating for good policies that enable sustainability. According to Fei, CPR South will enhance her interaction capacity & move her beyond focusing on a national think tank, towards working with international organizations which have a bigger picture, for example the World Economic Forum where the focus is Africa as a whole, not just one country. **It will give her greater depth in merging ICTs with advocacy.**
- The **CPR South program is the most significant strategy that RIA applies to support capacity development**, especially for young scholars. By providing bursaries for the scholars to attend the forums, the events present them with opportunities for accessing senior peer support with the potential to publish their work (Rohan, Helani, Claire, Margaret, Tim Waema and Tim Kelly). RIA has sponsored a few researchers in tertiary degree programmes; an example being Dr. Margaret Ndungu whose PhD study was funded either by RIA or through RIA (Margaret Ndungu, Tim Waema).
- The following table summarizes **findings from an on-line survey** conducted for this evaluation. A total of 131 e-mails were sent out, with 16 rejects; we obtained a 23.5% response rate (27 out of 115).

Highlights from the CPR survey

1. Participants **heard about the event** mainly via email alerts or emails from a contact (40.7%), or from the RIA website (18.5%).
2. Our original 131 emails went to 66 young scholars & 65 presenters; in Question 2 the role they played at the conference was confirmed as **77.8% for young scholars and 55.6% paper presenters** (some may be both).
3. The **main reason to apply to attend CPR** was “My area of research is ICT policy and I wanted to deepen my knowledge” (70.4%), followed by “Gaining skills in policy design and policy interventions” (55.6%) and “I was seeking examples of effective knowledge transfer methods to link ICT research with policy making” (22.2%).’
4. With regards to **expectations**, the following were the most popular: “I met experienced researchers willing to mentor me”; “I confirmed my passion for my research area”; and “I gained a sense of community” & “I was able to expand my networks”. These findings confirm the networking value of the event.
5. In terms of **knowledge gains**: the top two items selected were: “Policy and regulation” (70.4%) and “ICT for development (applications & tools for medical, agriculture, engineering, transportation, etc.)” (59.3%). Three categories came together in third place (33.3% each): “Econometrics”, “Indicators and metrics”, and Technology & Networking”.
6. The top three reported **skill gains** included: “Qualitative methodologies” (70.4%); “Quantitative methodologies” (48.1%); and “Proposal design and preparation” (37%).
7. In terms of **professional development**, the top four selections included: “Gained confidence in disseminating and publishing my work (63%); “Enlarged my research focus to other fields, and/or integrating more thematic dimensions” (59.3%); Joined a community of practice with peers who share my research interest (59.3%); and “ More grounded in my research, confirmed my interest and commitment” (55.6%).
8. The last question (**Imagine you were invited to help organize the next CPR conference**) elicited many responses. We highlight the more popular themes:
 - Extending access to people who are not able to travel to the conference.
 - Add sessions on: accessing research funding, more practical sessions on methodology, more mentoring and interaction with senior researchers, more time for informal exchanges, more exposure to regulators and policy makers, more sessions on policy & regulatory influence.

Refer to Appendix 5 for the data, summary tables, and the comments received.

Fortune Nwaiwu – Research & IT Administrator for the Nigerian Economic Summit Group

Fortune first attended CPRAfrica in 2010 at UCT as a young scholar. The following year 2011, he also attended as a young scholar in Nairobi. In 2012, he co-produced a paper with two other colleagues from other countries for the Mauritius conference. Then in 2013, he made a presentation in India focusing on ICT use by small businesses. RIA has also financed his participation from 2010/11. He received extensive training on research methodology. Meeting other young people has improved his capacity to research. He leans on RIA researchers Christoph Stork, Enrico Calandro and Mariama Deen-Swarray for professional advice. The Executive Director has provided mainstream help and Fortune thinks it has been her (the ED) long-term goal to scale up the application of ICTs in Africa through strong research. Fortune would not have succeeded in raising his profile without exposure to CPR South. He is about to finish his Masters at the University of Leicester, UK and wants to pursue a PhD focusing on ICT for Development and Social Entrepreneurship. Working with RIA has helped him appreciate the role of policy in society.

Improving communication & creating communication capacity

A study commissioned by IDRC from INASP (Deans, 2011: 38-39) summarized RIA’s communication strengths and weakness as follows:

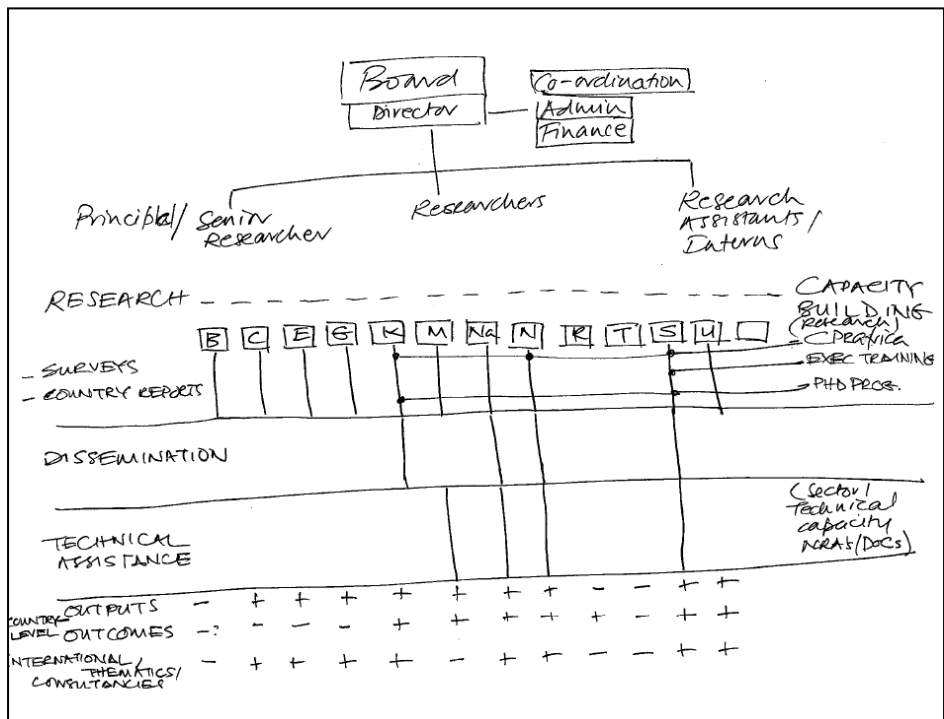
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different products that are produced for different purposes and audiences • Strong international/global communication and international policy influence at hub level • Strong examples of national level policy influence by some of the nodes • Evidence of successful links with policy makers • Actively encouraged sharing between members • Academic rigour • Informative policy briefs • New members who come from different backgrounds from the network founders • A website that is straightforward and easy to use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No communications strategy on paper (though a tacit one clearly exists) • Uneven communication from nodes. The hub has failed in its attempts to encourage nodes to share results Uneven policy influence as this is dependent on personal relationships • Time constraints on improving internal communication • ‘Dry’ researchers unable to communicate effectively with public or policy influencers • Room for improvement in policy briefs • Network members who do not have academic or regulatory backgrounds • Language problems that result in uneven outputs • A website that could be improved, for instance by making the news items section more user friendly

One RIA weakness worth noting is the lack of a communication strategy, yet when assessing current communication practices and products, it appears that a strategy exists *de facto*:

- Using local researchers to understand context
- Building networks and relationships
- Preparing policy papers with credible data
- Familiarity with the media to build public support
- Website
- Publications and papers
- Engaging board members with a strong track record.

A critical component of the *de facto* strategy is the use of local researchers chosen for their access to policy makers that allows the RIA team to understand how the policy process evolves. This comprehension is stronger in select countries: Kenya, Nigeria, Namibia and South Africa. It allows them to detect policy windows of opportunity and to respond in a timely, targeted manner.

In response to the recommendations in the INASP study, this paper attempts to make the *de facto* strategy explicit. The organizational diagram (prepared by RIA) below shows a broad theory of change whereby research findings are disseminated, coupled with technical assistance to enhance uptake. This chart is mainly a summary of country activities and their relative level of achievement. The 12 countries that are active in the current network are active in **Research** and in **Capacity Building**; dissemination is most active in Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria and South Africa (vertical lines); while technical assistance has taken place mainly in Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria and South Africa. The lower part of the chart provides a rough indication of outputs and outcomes achieved.



Policy landscape

“The best first step is to assess how that policy is actually made”
(Carden, 2009: p 4)

One of the strongest arguments for bringing research to policy is to first figure out how policy is actually made. This process is not so difficult for RIA within South Africa, given that the RIA Executive Director used to be a regulator herself and is therefore familiar with the policy making landscape within that country and well known amongst policy makers. Similarly RIA Senior Researcher, Christoph Stork was embedded for some time in the Namibian government. In Kenya, RIA partner Tim Waema was able to offer the same advantage. Naturally, RIA does not have this type of access in all the countries in its network making it harder to affect the policy environment. RIA’s first step to get around this issue is to hire local researchers whose job it is to familiarize themselves with the policy making process within his/her own country. The degree to which the partners are embedded in those processes tells how well they will do. In Uganda, their researcher is a former regulator who has an entry point to policy makers on his own. In Nigeria, it tends to be more complicated.

Nurturing the balancing act by regulators

In Nigeria, influencing regulation is not easy because the job of a regulator is very much at the confluence of many interests (consumers, operators and government). Such work requires diverse sources of evidence and practical wisdom. On the one hand, regulation is not just about protecting consumers, but also encouraging investment. On the other hand, a regulator wants to please government that is the employer. Consumers want the best service for free. Operators want to provide service and make money. Government wants everybody to have a mobile phone. A regulator does the balancing act for the benefit of a strong communication ecosystem. The regulator also helps in creating government policy, e.g., the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) has developed a broadband strategy.

Audiences

RIA is also alert to the need to supply credible data useful to the different audiences who are specifically targeted. Initially RIA worked on providing papers that were accessible and not patronizing, something that an advisor could read on a plane. When they discovered that those documents were sometimes not as rigorous as need be, they realized that they would have to develop more stringent measures before handing them over as ‘truth.’ This recognition led to the development of a more scholarly aspect of the work where RIA did not submit a paper for policy intent before it had passed through a series of different screens for scrutiny (CPR, international conferences, journals). The policy papers were finally prepared in a more accessible form with lots of graphics and colours with extracted *gems* distilled for the media.

Many academics at the University of Namibia quote RIA work. For example, information about entrepreneurship is used on the basis that it comes from thorough and holistic RIA baseline studies. From a regulatory point of view, RIA expertise has been called upon in a consultancy capacity to help in critical decision-making. Through Christoph Stork, RIA assisted CRAN and the Namibian government to regulate the ICT sector on the basis of verifiable evidence. Namibia, as a country, and CRAN, the regulator, have benefitted from the latest ideas provided by RIA. CRAN was able to present cases and scenarios to different operators who needed facts.

Media relations

RIA is also aware of the power of the media and uses it to advantage. It is often important to raise public interest around a specific policy issue particularly when as a research organization you are trying to influence this particular policy. Recently RIA made use of 'flash news' and 'assurance messages' to coincide with efforts to strengthen the broadband policy.

But writing for the media requires a different kind of clarity. There is a You-Tube interview with an ICASA spokesperson being interviewed on South African television on the issue of MTRs¹⁹. At the end of the interview, the host thanked the interviewee and commented that he was still not clear on what termination rates were all about. Making technical matters accessible to lay people requires skills, visual tools, and examples; an area that the INASP study also flagged as needing more attention.

Website and publications

RIA follows a policy of open data and publishes all its research (data and analysis) on its website for free access. Regulators interviewed in South Africa remark on the accessibility of the data, the appreciation on the part of ICASA and the Department of Communication of the portal put together by RIA. It has helped them readily access ICT data and they commented on the fact that RIA data is cited in many of the DOC and ICASA documents.

Making the communication strategy explicit via a set of Theory of Change diagrams

As the findings were put together, there is a growing appreciation of the implicit RIA theory of change (ToC). The following are illustrations of it:

- Having a dossier of hard data on various topics ready to access when windows of opportunity with policy makers become apparent.
- Developing demand side data collection methodologies through household surveys and benchmarking to balance supply side data produced by operators.
- Making a point of presenting the research at international fora that, in turn, builds RIA presence and credibility and influences participants from World Bank, ADB etc. who in turn fund research and influence policy.

¹⁹ <http://www.cnbcfrica.com/video/?bctid=2725287323001> (viewed 5Jan'14)

- Taking a long term view and building capacity amongst young scholars and regulators who go on to be in positions to influence policy.

The ToC can be seen as a communication tool in that it exposes what is done, how, and with what outcomes in mind. Theories of Change are easier to produce when dealing with smaller components, like a policy process (MTRs) or an overall project component, like capacity development. (Appendix 7 contains two draft Theories of Change diagrams specific to two kinds of RIA activities.) Towards the end of this evaluation process (once the essence of the project had been captured), the team produced an overall RIA Theory of Change. For this reason the TOC appears later, in Section D.

B.4 How the evidence fits with the key evaluation questions

To close this section, the Key Evaluation Questions were revisited and they show the linkages to the above findings. In some cases, some findings were judged as being better documented than others.

KEQ	Findings
1) To what extent did RIA influence policy at national, regional and international levels [outputs/ outcomes]?	Sections B.1 Affecting policy regimes , & B.2 Broadening policy horizons provide examples in the form of outcomes and in some cases policy change impacts
2) How does RIA use research to challenge dominant international policy and practice ?	
3) To what extent did RIA build capacity (generation and utilization of local knowledge) among: i) individual researchers; ii) universities; and iii) policy makers & regulators?	Section B.3 Expanding policy capabilities covers the changes, with more in-depth evidence from young scholars (CPR), and less from academics or regulators.
4) To what extent did RIA networking modalities support their outcomes (policy and capacity building? a) RIA network (peer network) versus b) CPR conference (peer and mentoring review process – individuals)	Section B.2 Broadening policy includes a section on networking.
5.a) What approach did RIA use to position itself to influence policy in different countries and through what processes and systems (tell the story) [outcomes/ process]	Section B.3 Expanding policy capabilities includes a section on communication.
5.b) How effective has RIA been in understanding local context or taking up opportunities to influence local discourse.	Section B.2 Broadening policy horizons provide examples of how RIA ‘reads’ the local context and responds opportunistically.
6.a) <i>What would be the funding modalities that best fit RIA’s values</i>	We received tangential opinions on these [otherwise ‘parked’] questions and we touch on them at the end of Section C.
6.b) <i>What are the consequences, incentives, disincentives for RIA as an independent public interest research entity in pursuing a hybrid funding model?</i>	

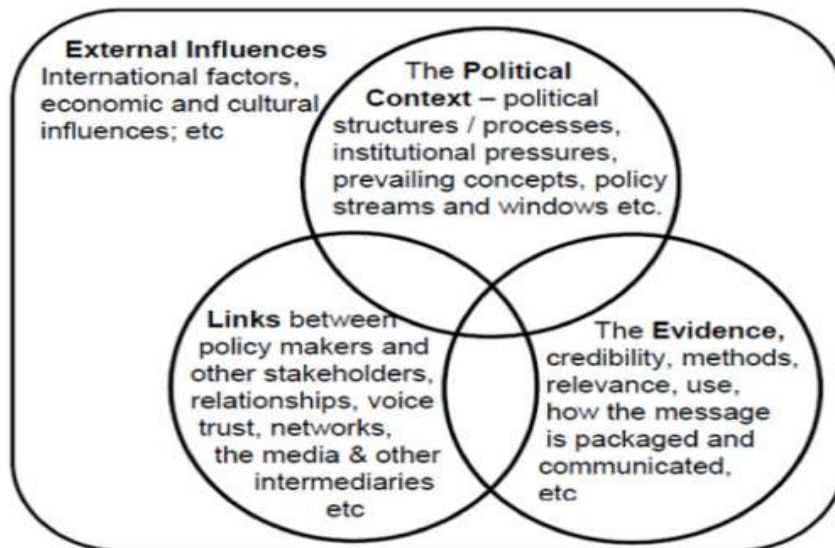
C. ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

“If RIA didn’t exist I think the ICT sector in Africa would be a much poorer place.” (Tim Kelly, World Bank)

This section provides an analysis of the evaluation findings and serves as a bridge to the final section on broad themes leading to recommendations. The analytical framework used is the ODI RAPID framework that addresses the research-to-policy bridge that is central to the RIA mandate.

C.1 *The Rapid Framework as template*

Mindful of the extensive literature on research to policy links in OECD countries, and a related dearth of this information in the developing world, the Overseas Development Institute’s (ODI) Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) program sought ways of capturing the wide range of possibilities within this diverse cultural, political and economic terrain. The resulting RAPID framework is a useful tool to help situate an organization’s research to policy footprint.



RAPID concludes that research to policy links fall into four main cluster areas:

- Context: Politics and Institutions
- Evidence: Approach and Credibility
- Links: Influence and Legitimacy
- External Influences

The RIA ‘presence’ is evident in all three of the concentric circles and largely occupies the space where all three intersect while consciously attempting to adapt their reach

to the different external environments surrounding their work. This evaluation focuses on RIA work in South Africa; Namibia; Nigeria; Kenya and Ethiopia – all countries with differing contextual environments – political, economical and cultural and all reacting to the international environment through their own particular lens.

C.2 Context: Politics and Institutions

RAPID recognizes that the research/policy link is shaped by the political context and acknowledges: “...the state of civil and political freedoms does make a difference in bridging the gap. The policy process and the production of research is itself a political process, from the initial agenda-setting exercise through to the final negotiation involved in implementation.”²⁰

RIA has made a point of positioning itself as close to the policy making centre as possible within its home base in South Africa and through its partners in the four countries of focus: Nigeria; Namibia; Kenya and Ethiopia. RIA’s strength clearly resides more in South Africa and Namibia where its’ Executive Director (Alison Gillwald) and lead researcher (Christoph Stork) are embedded in the policy making context. The two countries are also economically strong such that they are not totally controlled by international organizations that are influencing policymaking processes. In weaker economies such as Mozambique, Rwanda, Nigeria and Kenya where international agencies collectively have bigger budgets than the whole nation, they tend to wield much more influence. Nevertheless, Tim Waema, like the RIA ED in South Africa, is a well-known and respected ICT researcher and academic in Kenya. His contribution to related policy discourses tends to be given due consideration by key policy making stakeholders (Margaret, Muriithi).

Political differences can make the influence of researchers more difficult to maintain: Lishan Adem in Ethiopia has had difficulties in accessing and influencing a relatively conservative policy making context; for reasons of complexity (Nigeria’s complex policy making environment); and for lack of contact, RIA’s Ghana team member has not been able to get close enough to the policy making context to effect a difference. RIA has made a point of attempting to circumvent these challenges by building an international reputation to help provide an entry point when local circumstances create barriers.

The strength is that RIA is on the map and RIA is recognized not only in Africa, but also in the international networks and conferences such as the Telecommunications Policy Research Conference where RIA research was noticeable on the program. The RIA research is noticeable in international public literature now and it has been an enormous contribution (Bill Melody).

Despite these different country challenges, RIA work protects the public interest; it challenges industry-led pressures by providing rigorous and standardized data sets.

²⁰ The RAPID quotes in this section come from:

<http://www.odi.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/events-documents/2764.pdf>

RIA is committed to sharing the analysis of the data for free and without a bias. This positioning makes it a reference point for regulators, for international organizations and for scholars in the region. Its affiliations with the sister networks in Asia and Latin America have added benefits: they further ground its global reputation that adds to its regional credibility.

The RIA team has also demonstrated a ‘practical wisdom’ when it comes to being able to detect and respond to windows of opportunity within the different policy contexts. It has done this through three complementary strategies:

- Having reliable, rigorous, and timely data;
- Working with champions with an ear to the ground who can flag windows of opportunity;
- Becoming established as a reference point and neutral player in order to ‘lure’ windows of opportunity its way (e.g., being invited by a minister to draft a policy, or provide a targeted research input or meeting with the Nigeria Minister of Communication just before she took up her position) and:
- By providing capacity development to the very stakeholders it seeks to engage.

RIA continues to work hard compiling the data to be ready to provide evidence for relevant policy decisions that may suddenly open up. This early preparation is key given the frequent lack of warning as to when a particular policy issue may surface.

With policy intervention you have to be prepared beforehand – you need to be prepared to have the capabilities and information to be able to make an instant response when a window of opportunity opens – you can’t predict this...we don’t know when it will happen, all we know is that the issue is going to come up so we have to make sure we are fully informed about the policy issue that is coming - so we need to be informed about the issue and the countries’ policy making environments (Bill Melody)

C.3 Evidence: Approach, Credibility and Communication

RAPID restates a RIA credo that “...the quality of the research is clearly important to research uptake and that policy influence is affected both by topical relevance and the operational usefulness of the idea...a critical issue affecting uptake is whether research has provided a solution to a problem. Another key issue is communication. The sources and conveyors of information, the way the new messages are packaged...and targeted can all make a big difference in how the policy document is perceived and utilized.”

Through RIA, policy research and influence has been confirmed as a long-term undertaking. RIA has worked for 10 long years to build a database of rigorous, quality data and to position itself as a research institution that is ready to come up with strong data when a policy need comes to light. In this approach, they embody a research organization that puts the quality of its research front and centre in its research to policy agenda.

I don't think there is any comparable organization with the research on ICT in Africa. Perhaps some universities, but there are no organizations I am aware of that have the same breadth and depth and longevity of research in Africa and I think longevity in this business is very important. (Tim Kelly)

A key RIA contribution to the African ICT research approach and of significant operational usefulness is the introduction of demand-side data collection through door-to-door household surveys. Here (and for the first time) researchers have focused on how people across different African countries were actually using communication technologies as opposed to focusing on the distribution of that technology (2004, HH surveys carried out in 10 countries, 2007-2008 in 17 countries and 2011-2012 in 11 African countries).²¹ In one noteworthy instance, the South African National Statistics Office (NSO) has adopted questions around ICT use in the South African census,²² and as Jonathan Donner points out, set them apart from the norm.“

ICT4D researchers generally focus on the technology and [many] are not nuanced about policy. Having voices like RIA that don't focus exclusively on technology and see the human use element as important is absolutely essential: I would rather be in a country with something like RIA in it than be in a country without. (Jonathan Donner)

The RIA data is gender disaggregated, is reported months after being collected (as opposed to years), its collection methods are cost effective (smaller sample sizes and yet statistically representative),²³ and in contrast with private research, it is available for free. These unique characteristics identify the nature of the evidence that is collected and processed by RIA; it also signals a niche that several informants confirmed is not filled by any other organization in the continent. In addition, RIA's networks offer cross-country comparisons that enrich the data.

RIA is quite unique in its demand side data – there is no other significant demand side research available on access to ICTs in Africa. It is the rigour of their sampling size and their comparisons across countries that count. It is impossible to overstate their importance in this field (Steve Song).

²¹ In-Focus

²² Interview with Willie Currie, ICASA regulator

²³ Stork, C. & Stork, M. 2008. ICT household survey methodology and fieldwork. Research ICT Africa Network, Towards Evidence-based ICT Policy and Regulation 1. Paper no. 1 http://www.researchictafrica.net/publications/Towards_Evidence-based_ICT_Policy_and_Regulation_-_Volume_1/RIA%20Policy%20Paper%20Vol%201%20Paper%201%20-%20Household%20Survey%20Methodology%20and%20Fieldwork%202008.pdf (Accessed 30 March 2014)

A challenge to RIA is maintaining the research capacity up to (their) standards of quality across the network. RIA is not ready to publish research when it deems it not yet ready to publish and it continually struggles to find ways of mentoring and training to maintain its research standard. As a result, there is a perception –among some of the people interviewed – that RIA research is mostly done by RIA team members and not led by researchers in the other countries. A qualification is important here: as a significant amount of data collection and analysis is done by country researchers (e.g., the household surveys); with the RIA team supporting them to ensure the data analysis is rigorous and that the methods remain standardized to allow for cross-country comparisons.

A second, equally important component of the evidence circle is communication. It is not just producing the quality evidence that matters, but the packaging of it. It is what RAPID calls the *sources and conveyors* of this evidence that count in getting this research used to influence policy – it is the *credibility* of both that matter. The need to be a good communicator as a researcher is inescapable, said Steve Song in an interview for this evaluation, and while RIA does not have a written communication strategy its innate communication sense is strong.

Research to policy communication depends on having the evidence to support a particular stance; keeping an ear to the ground as to when a policy might have traction; maintaining relationships with policy makers or those close to policy makers and knowing how best to reach them (what is the best channel of communication). It is also packaging the content in such a way that a policy maker or someone close to a policy maker might actually read or visualize it. It is also wise to have knowledge of and contact with local media to popularize issues in advance of a policy discussion. The following table summarizes the communication needs or issues that RIA seems to cover intuitively, and this list complements the INASP review that was mentioned in section B.

Communication need	RIA
Availability of strong evidence	✓ A RIA trademark
Being clear as to the purpose of the communication – strategy and intent	✓ Not always explicit.
Knowing the audience and when a window of opportunity might open	✓ See above
Understanding the best way to communicate with a particular audience	✓ Intuitive
Using a variety of media to reach the different audience (packaging information in a variety of ways)	✓ Policy briefs; news flash; journal articles; RIA documents communicate a specific brand through colour, format, etc.

Bill Melody observed that documenting the outcomes of RIA work is difficult given that it is opportunistic in the best sense of the word. He added that RIA does not have a communication strategy that is documented given that most of the measures that make a researcher comfortable (stable indicators) are not always available when

evidence is suddenly required. Melody agrees that research for policy influence does require policy papers. His preference is for papers that are 20 pages long with only a page or so of key references, a good abstract, and a title to attract a policy maker. On the other hand, it's important to live the communication strategy, not just to document it. The RIA strategy is visible in its practice and how it responds to opportunities and feedback. Many organizations have mission statements framed and pinned on walls, but employees don't live what the mission statement says. By becoming such a recognized outfit without a communication strategy, RIA has shown that actions can speak louder than words or pictures.

In Song's opinion RIA still could work harder on packaging its material and using its website so that people outside of its community might actually read it.²⁴ This suggestion is compatible with INASPS' recommendation that RIA should reach out to other audiences. There is a limit to which packaging can work given the already prevailing information overload. Perhaps RIA can explore other ways of disseminating its work.

This suggestion, however, is easier said than done in a technical field, especially as RIA sets high standards as a trusted *conveyor* of evidence for policy. This point is particularly strong in South Africa where the Executive Director's former role as regulator and university professor coupled with an innate networking personality have made her a force in the ICT research world. The same could be true for RIA team member, Christoph Stork in Namibia.

The Executive Director has a voice and a perspective that comes from neither government nor the academic world and it is trusted to a level I haven't seen anywhere else. (Donner)

As already noted, the strength of its position is that RIA is on the map and is recognized not only in Africa but also in the international networks and conferences such as Telecommunications Policy Research conference. Bill Melody noted how RIA research was noticeable on the program and, more generally, that RIA research is noticeable in international public literature now and it has been an enormous contribution.

C.4 Links: Influence and legitimacy

The RAPID framework emphasizes the importance of links between communities; networks and intermediaries in effecting policy change. It is these intermediaries that often stand between the researcher and policy maker and step in to act as broker between the groups.

²⁴ Echoed by former CPR student, Claire Pengelly who felt the RIA website could be clearer and restated by Steve Song when he said: RIA still writes in ways that are aimed at their own (research) community

RIA has commented that the organization is not strong in its use of intermediaries in terms of its reliance on knowledge brokers *per se*. It could be said that RIA jumps the gun on the need for this role by directly going to the source and inviting policy makers, regulators and operators to attend RIA training courses to imbibe the RIA approach to understanding the public use of telecommunications and open policy before anyone has even thought of raising the issue.

Steve Song, however, claims that he himself became a self-professed intermediary after he left IDRC when he took RIA data and tried to promote awareness of it by putting it in a narrative form to hammer home a specific point. He used blogging and blog posts to get it into the public domain in a quest to advocate for policy change. He suggested that perhaps RIA could more actively work along the lines of having a community manager (as per Jono Bacon’s book “The art of community” O’Reilly, 2009).

Relationship building and networking is part of this equation and here again RIA stands strong in South Africa and in many of the partner countries. In South Africa, the RIA team and particularly the Executive Director strengthen existing relationships and build new ones through a continual cycle of ‘presence’ at conferences, seminars and gatherings in the ICT regulatory world. The fact that the Minister of Communications invited the Executive Director (ED) to lead the broadband policy discussions is a case in point.

In partner countries, RIA works with people with an eye to their ability to participate in policy fora and they have often been part of the RIA training in research quality and approach. In Nigeria Abi Jagun, a former RIA team member is now a spokesperson for the Minister of Communication and arranged for the Minister to meet with the RIA ED prior to formally taking up her position. In Kenya, Tim Waema, a RIA modal partner from Kenya, was named to the Kenya newly formed ICT board positioning him at a point where he was able to bring RIA thinking to the policy dialogue.

RIA sister networks

LIRNEasia	RIA	DIRSI
Not a network	A hybrid model: a network with a strong hub	Fully decentralized
Creating research capacity is not an objective	Creating research capacity is an objective	Established academic organizations
Use of consultants to do the research	Engages with partners to carry out research	Members are academics already skilled in (economic) research
Uses best research possible to influence policy	Aims to build regulatory capacity	Academics with limited policy influence interest
Household surveys played a strategic role as NSOs do not collect such data	Household surveys played a strategic role as NSOs do not collect such data	Household surveys not needed as NSOs already collect such data

The RIA relationship to its sister networks, LIRNEasia and DIRSI has strongly contributed to its research to policy pathways. Most importantly, the partnership with LIRNEasia has opened opportunities for young African and Asian scholars to collaborate and attend Communication to Policy Research (CPR) seminars. Specifically, RIA has had a strong representation at the CPRsouth conferences at least since 2010 (as demonstrated in our survey findings). This venue offers good opportunities for young scholars to present their research papers, get peer reviewed, which in turn opens the door to future publication. These opportunities lead to young researchers getting a name in the field and gradually moving to the point where their work can contribute to policy influence.

The Mission of CPRafrica is to develop ICT policy research capacity in Africa through an annual conference, which includes tutorials for emerging scholars and opportunities for junior to mid-career scholars to present research papers. The implicit theory of change is that CPRafrica will serve as a platform that brings together scholars from multiple disciplines with an interest in the ICT policy research domain, leading a community of scholars in terms of their research practices. According to a definition of a community of practice, if RIA is a community of practice, members of RIA community would: (1) regularly consult each other and use community as a platform to improve their practice; (2) develop a body of knowledge relating to their research and; (3) access and use those resources.

Judging by the co-authorship and citation patterns, CPRafrica has established itself as a community of researchers with RIA as the Central node and University of Nairobi and University of Cape Town as supporting nodes. CPRafrica is a community largely made up of researchers with Computer Science or Engineering and Commerce backgrounds or interests. Social science expertise seems weaker. The community seems to have converged on the issue of Mobiles and Internet in Africa. The datasets generated by RIA seem to be used by the community to produce research papers. The research to policy role of the community is not evident (Knowledge mapping paper on CPRafrica).

C.5 External Influences

RAPID emphasizes that external forces and donor actions have a strong impact on research to policy interactions. Key issues here are the impact of international policies and processes, as well as the impact of general donor policies and specific research funding instruments on the research agenda. RAPID states that...*a substantial amount of research in the poorest countries is funded by international donors, which also raises a range of issues around ownership, choice of priorities, use of external consultants and perceived legitimacy.*

RIA occupies an interesting space in relation to the 'External Influence' concerns expressed by RAPID above. RIA is based in South Africa and as such occupies both an insider and outsider position *vis-a-vis* its relationship to its partner countries within the RIA constructed network. Inside because it is an African based research

organization, but outside by virtue of its roots in South Africa, long an outsider to the rest of the continent, but brought back in through the political genius of its late leader, Nelson Mandela. In this sense, it cannot be said that RIA prioritizes research more in tune with the international agenda (and that will be dealt with later on), but as already explained, RIA has taken pains to present itself on the international agenda to ensure a space for the African research voice at international fora. In this respect, they have strongly succeeded as witnessed by the wide range of citations in international fora.

In Africa, RIA has set an agenda peculiar to the needs of the continent. Here they have challenged the regular research data established by the technological needs of the industry with its focus on supply side technology while forgetting the actual needs of the people, particularly the needs of those who have been referred to as, 'the bottom of the pyramid'. In this case, RIA's work protects the public interest; it challenges industry led pressures by providing rigorous and standardize data sets on how ICT is actually used by people.

Having existed for more than a decade, RIA is now aware of the hidden negative influences of different types of donor funding. According to the RIA Executive Director, very few funders are keen to fund public interest issues. IDRC is the only funder in this arena. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funding is often prescriptive, US-driven and insists on African institutes partnering with a US recipient of the funds whose role is to 'develop' African institutions. Funds from the European Union (EU) are not very different from USAID in that there is always the need for a senior partner from the EU as part of the grants conditions. UK funding is very project specific with 30% of the funding going to Africa while 70% remains or goes back to the UK. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is interested in health issues and only mentions ICTs to the extent ICTs accelerate programs like immunization.

It is important to bring in a word about IDRC at this point and the critical role it has played in providing core funding to these networks: RIA; LIRNEasia and DIRSI. In Jonathan Donner's words, all three of these groups are extraordinary.

I have always felt that the fact that these groups exist is one of the best things that IDRC has done with the ICT4D space, and I am grateful that they are there. They have played true to their missions and to the reasons that they were set up. They are not ICT4D shops – they are policy shops with something to say about ICT4D. Their voices come from really close to where the real action is taking place (in general ICT policy) and they are very helpful to ICT4D.

Donner is explaining the nuance between people concerned with ICT and all its technology, as opposed to those whose interest lies in what the technology can do for poverty alleviation and development issues. This approach sees technology as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. This position stresses the 'D' in the ICT for D world and RIA is firmly placed in this arena.

D. MAKING SENSE OF THE FINDINGS

Part B ends with a section that links the findings to the Key Evaluation Questions that informed this exercise. This section replicates that notion by reiterating the RIA stated USES for the evaluation and from this considers future recommendations that address the main challenge of these intended USES. It also signals how each USE was often informed by more than one KEQ.

The **USES** were expressed as follows:

1. To validate RIA outcomes for IDRC
2. To provide evidence of, and document outcomes/ relevance for other funders
3. To Inform RIA transition (leadership, skills, funding)
4. To chart outcome pathways
5. To chart communication strategy outcomes
6. To inform organizational sustainability

USE 1: To Validate RIA Outcomes for IDRC

Relevant KEQs:

- 1) To what extent did RIA influence policy at national, regional and international levels [outputs/ outcomes]?
- 2) How does RIA use research to challenge dominant international policy and practice?
- 3) To what extent did RIA build capacity (generation and utilization of local knowledge) among: i) individual researchers; ii) universities; and iii) policy makers & regulators?

Narrative: IDRC’s recent publications (Elder et al., 2013a; Elder et al., 2013b) are a testimony to the Centre’s recognition of RIA’s policy influence and challenge to dominant policies and practice. This evaluation has confirmed these achievements. The Theory of Change (ToC) produced in this report details the nuanced mechanisms through which these changes are enabled. The CPR survey findings confirm significant knowledge, skill, confidence and networking gains by young scholars and paper presenters. Capacity gains among regulators and policy makers were also documented. Similarly, changes were noted at the university level, in the form of the creation of graduate courses and granting of certificates along with increasing numbers of graduates. However, the sustainability of these programs was not verified.

Utilization potential for IDRC: This report confirms the evidence that IDRC already possesses regarding RIA. It provides commentaries from partners and allies that attest to the value of RIA. The analysis of RIA achievements is provided through

the ODI RAPID framework that highlights the essence of the program strategy. These insights are of use for internal reporting, self-assessment and promotion.

Implications & recommendations: The research to policy relationship, while complex, is elaborated in the RAPID framework. The framework communicates the need to work where the three components (packaging evidence, enabling linkages, and seeking policy windows) intersect.

- Current and future I&N projects will be encouraged to review and rationalize their research communication strategies using the RAPID framework as reference
- The allocation of financial and human resources to communication activities should address the three RAPID components.

USE 2: To provide evidence of, and document outcomes/relevance for other funders

Relevant KEQs:

- 1) To what extent did RIA influence policy at national, regional and international levels [outputs/outcomes]?
- 2) How does RIA use research to challenge dominant international policy and practice?
- 3) To what extent did RIA build capacity (generation and utilization of local knowledge) among: i) individual researchers; ii) universities; and iii) policy makers & regulators?

Narrative: IDRC's commitment to funding RIA's public interest research is based on an in-depth understanding of its track record. As RIA seeks complementary funding from other donors, it will need to convey the unique value of RIA, its record of achievements, and the nature of its approach. In one sense, it is impossible to separate the first two Uses given that the Findings section is equally valid for both IDRC and others. What is important is the need to stress that it was largely due to IDRC's willingness to not only provide RIA core funding (and over a number of years), but also to give it the space to select research topics; develop its networks and build its capacity without undue interference from the funding agency. This hands-off approach in turn allowed RIA to produce hard data on the subjects that were relevant in informing policy both in South Africa and other countries across the continent.

Utilization potential to engage other donors: It is clear that the IDRC willingness to fund over a long period of time provided the longevity so important to developing capacity in this new and rapidly expanding field. Despite RIA's ten years of effort, there is still not a large number of well-trained ICT for D researchers in Africa who can provide hard evidence when it is needed, especially along with the skills to influence policy regimes. According to Melody, ten years is the minimum time period given the lack of trained people ready to step forward.

Implications & recommendations: A message to other donors is that RIA has thrived because of receiving long-term core funding, plus having a funder that acts like a supportive partner that does not dictate the research agenda while maintaining a commitment to capacity building. While the odds of obtaining this kind of support from a single funder is small, it may help to highlight the type of funding needed to continue to sustain the current levels of achievement.

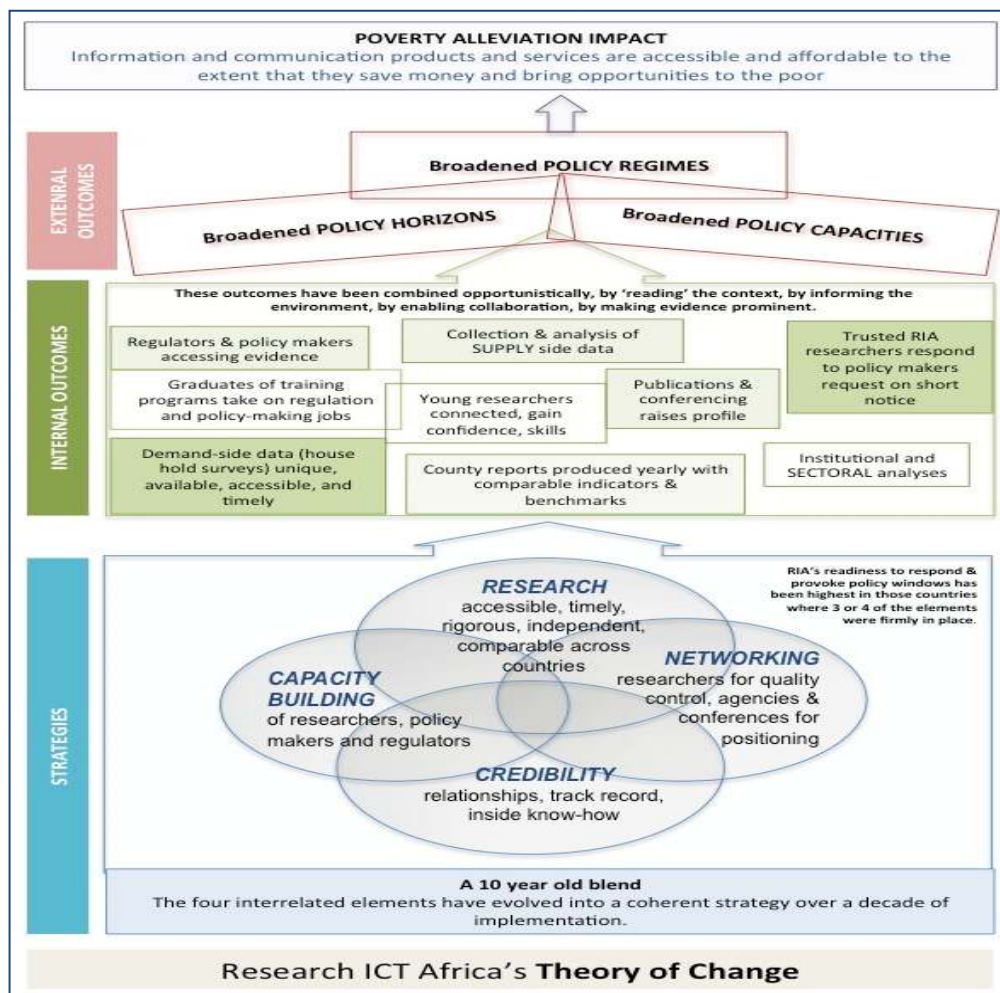
- Donors interested in RIA research should be invited to sponsor more than one element of the strategy.
- RIA should refer to its overall Theory of Change to ensure that individual donors appreciate where their support belongs in the overall project logic.

USES 4 & 5: To chart outcome pathways & communication strategy outcomes

All KEQs were relevant to inform the Theory of Change

Narrative:

The Theory of Change (ToC) diagram below makes the outcome pathways visible.



The integration of the four elements of the strategy defines RIA's approach or brand; they reflect its unique approach in the ICT world.

Research element. If it were possible (or at all necessary) to prioritize the four key elements, RIA would place quality research as the essential element that provides the basis for capacity building; networking and credibility. The research is made **accessible** through a collection of publications and a website made available at no cost. Among the data sets, the release of country reports with household survey data happens in a **timely** manner, which is unique. The methodologies, sampling frameworks and statistical analyses are **rigorous** and vetted in peer reviewed journal articles and conferences. The research is **independent**, which is rare in an environment dominated by industry interests. Lastly, the fact that the data is **comparable across countries** gives it added value, especially in combination with the timeliness factor.

Capacity building element. The attention to enhancing **researcher capacity** is evident through graduate level courses and university programs, and through the CPR conference. The courses for **policy makers and regulators** complement this approach and enhance the demand for evidence; hence the overlap with the research element. Capacity building of network members happens primarily through collaboration on donor funded projects, research design and methodology, dissemination and evaluation workshops.

Networking element. Networking with researchers is a means for **quality control** over all stages of research and is a vehicle to enhance researchers' prominence in their institution, country or even regionally and internationally. Networking with global **agencies** and participation at international **conferences** provides a positioning for RIA, while at the same time cementing its credibility both in Africa and internationally.

Credibility. The combination of a rich set of **relationships**, a **track record** of ten years of work, plus the senior team's **insider know-how** together provide the credibility that is a hallmark of RIA. Nurturing these attributes requires ongoing effort in all the other elements.

The **internal outcomes** are those that RIA can control. They are visualized as a combination of outcomes from the four strategy elements. The findings show that they are combined opportunistically according to **windows of opportunity that are at times detected, and in other cases provoked**. This dimension of the ToC emphasizes the RAPID framework as the operating system that guides the performance towards external outcomes.

The **external outcomes** are flagged according to the Lindquist categories used to organize the findings in Section B. This method signals the importance of **broadening policy horizons and capacities** as a pre-requisite to **broadening policy regimes**. The ToC signals that the poverty alleviation impact is the overriding justification for RIA and, indeed the I&N program.

Utilization potential of the ToC

The ToC is meant as a reference framework to explain the nature of RIA's work. For example:

- *While RIA can manage all four elements in their home base in South Africa and in neighbouring Namibia, RIA necessarily leans on local partners (researchers and knowledge brokers) who, by working together with RIA, are able to offer all four functions in other countries. For example, in Kenya and Uganda RIA has been able to link with local researchers who have, together with RIA, been able to identify policy entry points where relevant research has been brought to bear on the policy environment. In Kenya, the evidence from the RIA sector review contributed to the restructuring of the ICT institutional body by bringing together key actors (local researchers, regulators, operators and policy) into what is expected to become a more efficient and coordinated structure. Some of the regulators and the researchers had participated in RIA led capacity programs.*
- *Success does depend on all four elements being present and in those countries where only two or three of the elements were available, they were not noticeably able to influence policy. Ethiopia, for example has both the capacity and the research (they have completed both Household Surveys and Sector Reviews,) but this fact has not led to a noticeable contribution to policy change mainly due to the policy context. Ghana has been able to cover three of the four functions: strong research; capacity building of researchers and regulators and networking, but has failed in creating policy change through lack of inside contact with the policy environment.*

Implications & recommendations: The design of the ToC is meant to communicate the essence of RIA in two blocks: its four strategic elements that perform in a systemic manner, and the opportunistic and intuitive practice of delivering its products and services to achieve external outcomes made visible through the RAPID lens.

- The **strategic elements** should be used to explain the major features and interventions that funders can support,²⁵ or that policy audiences can understand.
- The **internal outcomes** should be used to exemplify the range of products and services that make up the RIA reputation.
- Third, **the RIA practice** should be explained with reference to the RAPID framework, as it is the opportunistic combination of strategic elements with information products and services that yield external outcomes.

²⁵ For example, one donor could be asked to fund one entire element of the TOC – this would help to prevent fragmentation of RIA work

Use 5: To chart communication strategy outcomes

Relevant KEQ: All KEQ relate to the communication outcomes, however question 5 is specific to this use:

- 5.a) What approach did RIA use to position itself to influence policy in different countries and through what processes and systems (tell the story) [outcomes/process]?
- 5.b) How effective has RIA been in understanding local context or taking up opportunities to influence local discourse?

Narrative: The analysis of findings in Chapter C used the RAPID Framework to show how RIA intuitively has positioned itself in all three of the concentric circles that ODI has identified are essential to getting research to policy: *Credible evidence that is packaged for dissemination; Links between policy makers; relationships; Trust and networks with others as well as media; Understanding of the political context and 'readiness' to take advantage of policy windows when they arise.* As Bill Melody commented, the 'readiness' to jump in when openings arise or to provoke them if need be is what merits attention. The important point to stress is that RIA has done this intuitively, but has not made its communication plan explicit. In fact, for RIA, communication is synonymous with dissemination as evidenced by the budget line items for the packaging of research into publications; policy briefs etc. These products are often well-presented, colourful documents, carefully put together to attract attention. Also RIA's home office has developed a good relationship with the South African media as did RIA's senior researcher, Christoph Stork with the Namibia media prior to moving into his position within the government.

Utilization potential: It will be important for RIA to consider adopting the RAPID framework as a template to help it widen its view of communication (beyond dissemination). The fact that RIA is already doing this work should not make this recommendation difficult. It might make it easier for RIA to help build communication capacity within their partner organizations if they are able to explain and demonstrate their strategy using the model.

Implications & recommendations: It may not be necessary to make the RIA communication strategy explicit, but it would be useful.

- It is important that RIA adopt basic communication principles to guide its decision-making on its future communication directions. These principles simply put are:
 - Articulate what you are trying to communicate (what is the intent);
 - Consider whom you are trying to communicate to (what is the audience – be specific).
 - Learn what a particular audience already knows, feels or thinks about the subject
 - Identify what combination of methods and media each audience is best able to learn and absorb information

- Clarify what is the best means of communication to reach each audience (audience research)

By making the communication strategy explicit, RIA will be able to communicate its decision-making practice, which for now works as a backdrop to the four strategic elements.

- Given the changing funding horizon with its inevitable cut backs, RIA should adopt the key communication principles listed above particularly when it comes to rationalizing spending on publications and other documents.
 - Assess which communication products are worth printing and which are functional as on-line versions
 - Identify what data will be collected to document reach, or immediate outcomes by target audiences.
- RIA website should be improved to include, for example, a search capacity. Other issues arise with regards to differentiating products by audience groups that have different levels of technical know-how or who act as intermediaries and wish to translate information for lay users. It will be important to:
 - Determine the main target audiences that the website is directed towards
 - Consider the practical implications for consulting those audiences on website redesign considerations (to make the website as useful as possible).

Uses 3 & 6: Inform transition for leadership, funding sources and sustainability of the organization

Relevant KEQs:

- 6.a) What would be the funding modalities that best fit RIA's values?
- 6.b) What are the consequences, incentives, disincentives for RIA as an independent public interest research entity in pursuing a hybrid funding model?

Narrative: As in any small organization initiated by one or two advocates whose passion for the subject far outweighs the monetary benefits, RIA is at a tipping point. Within the next ten years, the Executive Director (ED) is likely to step aside and the international funding arena is changing. It is unlikely to be in a position to offer core funds (as in the past), or offer support to ICT for D. The perception by funders is that Africa's ICT sector is relatively wealthy and able to go it alone to fund its ICT research needs. This view presents the organization with two major challenges: First, how to search for and replace the current leader should the need arise and second, how to continue as a research Think Tank devoted to providing data on how ICTs can be used for the public good without sourcing outside funds to make this possible.

It is clear that RIA's public interest research appears to be its most valuable asset. As funding sources become tighter, some informants suggested the need for a more commercial orientation. In fact, there was a tension between interviewees

who valued the public research interest of RIA vs others who felt that a more commercial orientation is necessary and inevitable. This balancing act requires careful thought. RIA has already started the process of transitioning itself to cope with the changing funding environment by setting up an arm's length consulting wing (managed by the former RIA senior researcher, Stephen Esselaar where former senior researcher Christoph Stork consults).²⁶ While this change may be difficult to finesse, the issue of finding a new ED may present a different set of difficulties.

Utilization potential: RIA also considered the skills that might be needed to take on this leadership role. The Theory of Change (Use 4; narrated below) clearly sets out the four key qualities that need to be present to make the research to policy goal succeed: good quality research; an ability to network; strength in capacity building and credibility. These four qualities need to be supported by strong communication and dissemination know-how and are influenced by the political context.

Regardless of background, a key element will be the RIA challenge to identify people with the same passion and tenacity as the current ED and senior researcher. Leadership is not just a question of qualifications, but also of commitment.

Implications & recommendations: The four strategic elements: good quality research; an ability to network; strength in capacity building and credibility, illustrate the skill and experience areas that are necessary for a continued RIA value delivery; in addition, leadership, management and communication expertise will be required.

- Since it may not be possible to find all qualities within one person; it may be necessary to ensure the presence of these qualities across a leadership team.
- If and when a potential team leader is identified, attention should be given to how RIA provides a medium for that person to fulfill his/her professional ambitions as per that person's style, while keeping true to the project objectives.

This evaluation confirmed the value of a decade of funding to the RIA network by IDRC. Research does not yield policy outcomes overnight and the strategic elements that underlie this approach take time to work as a system. RIA's main contribution to the African continent has been its commitment to rigorous research in the public interest. As it shifts to attract other sources of revenue, a balancing act between commercial survival and public interest research will require careful stewardship.

²⁶ The plan is to have the commercial wing pay a small percentage to RIA to help continue with its research to help the public good.

E. APPENDICES (Separate volume)

E.1 Documents reviewed

E.2 People met & interviewed

E.3 Uses and Key Evaluation Questions

E.4 Websites visited

E.5 CPR South Survey findings

***E.6 Summary of the Knowledge Map of Communication Policy Research
Africa***

E.7 Theory of Change diagrams