

# Findings from the D-LIFT Policy Change Learning Review

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# Approach used

- Selected 30 projects based mainly on whether they have contributed to a significant policy change, i.e., we selected success cases
- Carried out 25 semi-structured interviews
- Used interview transcripts and literature review to build 21 cases, which were checked with interviewees and combined to create the learning review dataset
- Used Claude.AI as research assistant, good at extracting and organizing information from transcripts, handling large data sets, pattern recognition, cross-case analysis. Etc.
- Findings drawn from cross-case analysis of the dataset
- Overall learning review question: How have DeSIRA projects contributed to what sorts of policy change?

# Types of policy change considered (from Renkow 2018)

- A. Changes made to laws and regulations (ABEE, BIORISKS)
- B. The creation or strengthening of institutions (ACCESS, CASSECS, MARIGO, ReSINoC, SyRIMAO)
- C. Changes to government sector investment priorities and budget allocations (FAIR-Sahel)
- D. Changes in operations and managements of public sector agencies and programmes (All cases if successful)
- E. The creation or strengthening of international treaties, declarations or agreements among parties reached at major policy conferences (CASSECS)

**Findings:**

# Starting assumption 1

- Significant policy outcomes, like the 21 cases, emerge from outcome trajectories not from individual projects. Projects contribute with other outcome trajectory actors
- An outcome trajectory is a patterned and evolving set of interactions over time between actors, technology, knowledge and institutions, i.e., a complex adaptive system

# Finding 1 on outcome trajectories

- The dataset provides evidence that case policy outcomes did emerge from ‘outcome trajectories.’
- We assume the concept is valid because we find evidence in the dataset that some or most projects:
  - Built on previous projects and relationships – supporting idea of continuous process of interaction and accumulation over time
  - Engaged in multi-stakeholder processes – also supporting emergence from interaction
  - Etc

# Finding 1 is useful because ...

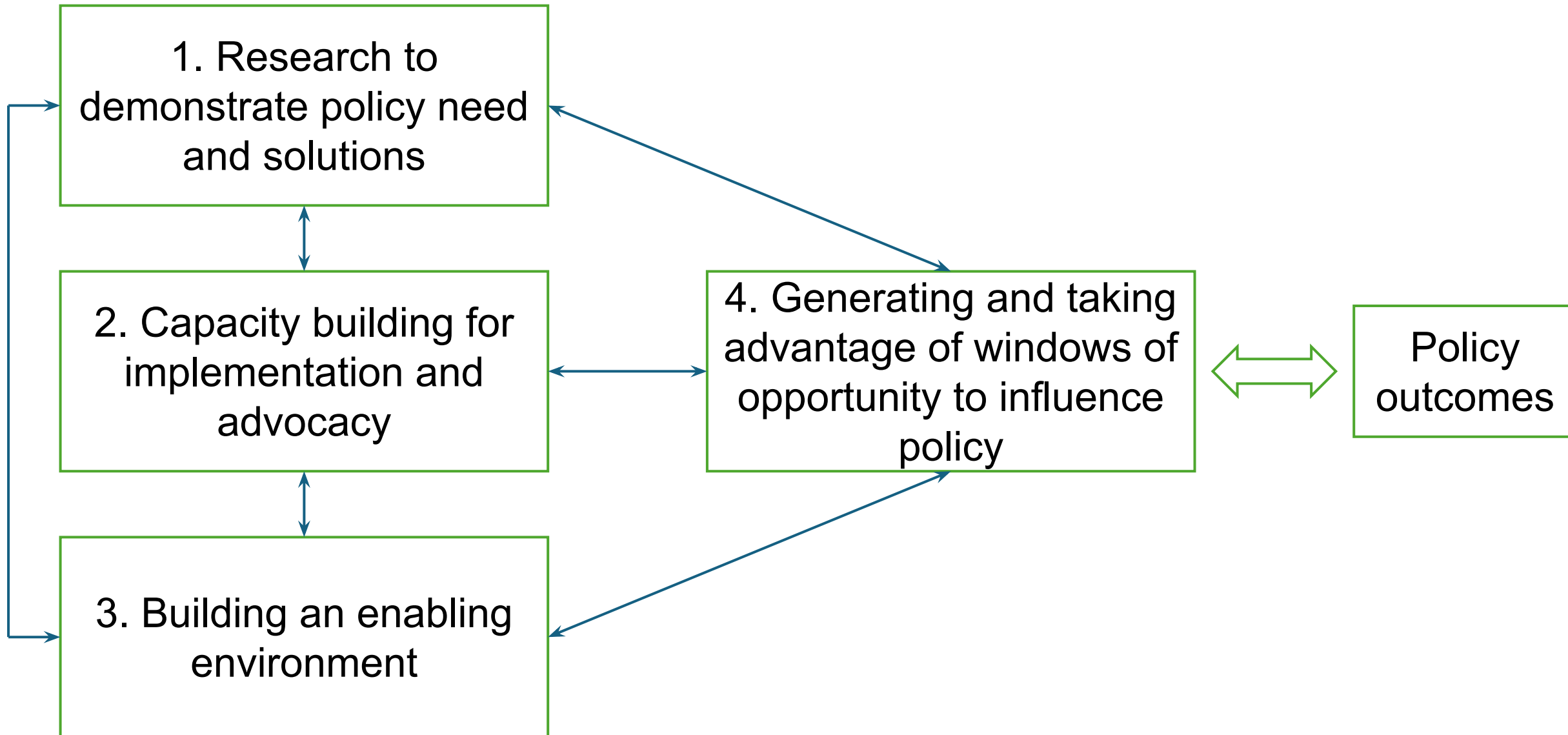
- Opens and helps frame a more realistic view of the policy change process, where the focus is the dynamics at play in the outcome trajectory, not the activities of a project or program

## Starting assumption 2: the dynamic at work within an outcome trajectory can be modelled by Policy Windows theory

- Policy Windows theory is the most applicable of several middle-range theories on how policy change happens (Kingdon, 1984)
- It has been used and adapted in several other agricultural policy outcome reviews and evaluation



# The four Policy Window theory streams and how they work together to bring about policy outcomes



# Finding 2 on Policy Window theory

- We analyzed which of the 21 success cases contributed to each of the four policy window streams, and how
- We infer that Policy Window theory applies because most of our success cases contributed to all four streams in meaningful ways
- For example, CASSECS
  1. **Research to demonstrate policy need and solutions:** Providing 10 PhDs on livestock contribution to GHG emissions in the Sahel
  2. **Capacity building for implementation and advocacy:** Conducted a training workshop with UNFCCC focal points and experts from 12 countries to discuss methodologies for data collection
  3. **Building an enabling environment:** Working to create a network of UNFCCC focal points
  4. **Generating and taking advantage of windows of opportunity to influence policy:** Taking advantage of the urgency from countries to update their emissions reporting

# Finding 2 is useful because ....

- We can use the policy window streams dynamic as the basis for project theory of change – that the project will bring about change through contributing to the dynamic
- We can look for ideas from the 21-project dataset for how our own project might contribute to the streams, for example contribute to stream 4 on policy windows:
  - **Leveraging international events and processes**, e.g., ASSET leveraged Laos' ASEAN chairmanship to accelerate the development and adoption of agroecology guidelines
  - **Aligning with National Policy Processes**, e.g., ACCESS: Used the 2011 National Strategy for Innovation in Burkina Faso as a policy window
  - **Responding to Market Demands and Regulations**, e.g., CLIMA LOCA: Took advantage of increased demand for Latin American cacao as an alternative to West African sources

# Starting assumption 3

- It will be possible to empirically identify, from the dataset strategy, components used by the 21 successful cases

# Finding 3: there are seven empirically-derived strategy components used by the 21 projects

1. Building on previous projects, relationships, and evidence base  
E.g., ABEE builds on and strengthens the IAVAO network, an existing network of breeders exchanging planting materials in five countries
2. Aligning with and responding to government priorities and policy windows  
E.g., ACCESS uses the 2011 National Strategy for Innovation in Burkina Faso as a policy window.
3. Facilitating multi-stakeholder engagement and coalitions  
E.g., SyRIMAO facilitated setting up a regional West Africa research network on fruit fly control as part of the transition of a national centre of excellence in Burkina Faso to a regional centre
4. Generating and communicating policy-relevant evidence  
E.g., FAIR-Sahel provided technical inputs, comments, and amendments on draft strategy documents to stakeholders involved in developing the National Agroecology Strategy in Burkina Faso

# Strategy components continued

5. Providing technical assistance and piloting solutions

E.g., MARIGO conducting training sessions on agroecology for national agricultural extension agencies

6. Developing local capacity and ownership for policy implementation

E.g., CASSECS is training 10 PhDs to develop regional expertise and champions relating to National Determined Contributions covering emissions from livestock

7. Adapting to changing contexts and learning iteratively

E.g., ACCESS overcame opposition from a senior researcher and navigated COVID-19 disruptions.

# Finding 3.1 that the strategy components map onto the four policy window streams

Policy Window Streams	Strategy components
1. Research to demonstrate policy need and solutions	1, 4, 6
2. Capacity building for implementation and advocacy	3, 5, 6
3. Building an enabling environment	2, 3, 6
4. Taking advantage of windows of opportunity to influence policy	2, 7

1. Building on previous projects, relationships, and evidence base.
2. Aligning with and responding to government priorities and policy windows.
3. Facilitating multi-stakeholder engagement and coalitions.
4. Generating and communicating policy-relevant evidence
5. Developing local capacity and ownership for policy implementation.
6. Piloting solutions and providing technical assistance.
7. Adapting to changing contexts and learning iteratively.

# Finding 3 is useful ...

- Empirically-identified strategy components, that map onto the four policy window streams, can help design implementable project strategies
  - Policy window theory with its 4 streams helps with strategy
  - The strategy components help with fleshing out the strategy
  - The queryable learning review dataset can help other projects learn from the experience captured in the 21 success cases



# The importance of the three findings

- Finding 1: The outcome trajectory perspective applies and provides a broader and more accurate way of understanding project contribution to policy processes
- Finding 2: Policy window theory applies and can be the basis for project theory of change and strategy
- Finding 3: Empirically-identified strategy components, that map onto the four policy window streams, can help design implementable project strategies
  - The queryable learning review dataset can help other projects learn from the experience captured in the 21 success cases

# Questions for discussion

- Do the Findings make sense to you? Any clarification needed?
- Do you agree as to their importance?
- What do you think of a queryable and expandable data set as an output of this learning review?

# Finding 4: The usefulness of the 21-case dataset with Claude.AI sitting on top of it

- The dataset is richer because AI helps capture and analyze transcripts, documents, etc.
- The dataset is queryable: you can ask questions of it, without coding, to draw upon the experience of 21 cases.
  - Answers can be checked by going back to the case reports, the transcripts and the original audio file