



**ELLA**  
Evidence and lessons  
from Latin America

**PRACTICAL ACTION**

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# MANAGING SOUTH SOUTH RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE FOR POLICY IMPACT

Reflections from the 'Evidence and Lessons  
from Latin America Programme' 2014-2017

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America Programme' 2014-2017

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# ACRONYMS

CBCP	Community-based Crime Prevention
CEP	Comparative Evidence Paper
DFID	UK Department for International Development
D&M	Design and Methods Paper
DV	Domestic Violence
ELLA	Evidence and Lessons from Latin America Programme
ELLA1	Evidence and Lessons from Latin America Programme – Phase One
ELLA2	Evidence and Lessons from Latin America Programme – Phase Two
IDS	UK Institute of Development Studies
LC	Local Content policies (for oil and gas)
PAC	Practical Action Consulting
RC	Research Centre
REP	Regional Evidence Paper
	Think Tank

# SUMMARY

The Evidence and Lessons from Latin America (ELLA) programme facilitates South-South research, exchange and learning, on economic, social, governance and environmental issues. In its second phase (2014-2017) it has evolved to conduct inter-regional comparative policy research between Latin America and Africa, and based on that research, the programme has run peer to peer exchange, organised study visits, and managed awards to put learning into practice.

This report reflects on the experience of this second phase of ELLA, and the lessons learnt. It is aimed at those interested in knowledge management for development, especially for those with an eye for fostering south-south comparative research and knowledge exchange. After the introduction (section A) and a brief description of the evolution of the ELLA programme (section B), the report reflects on how the management team identified the six pairs of Latin American and African research centres who participated in the programme and their chosen topics (section C), the research process (section D) and research uptake (section E). Each section closes with briefs] lessons and these are included below in summary form. The final section F reflects on the overall design and implementation of this second phase of ELLA.

## Lessons on Identifying Research Partners and Topics

'Marrying' up research centres from different regions to work together on joint comparative research is feasible. Attention should be paid to organisational skill sets, motivations and topic competences.

In bringing centres from different regions together, do not under-estimate the profound knowledge gaps about each other's region that are likely to exist. Provide space, structure and time for the pair to become familiar with each other, to gain a strong foundational appreciation of the topic in both regions.

## Lessons on Doing Inter-regional Comparative Research

Doing inter-regional research is hard, especially when it involves comparative inter-regional research between countries where the matching is *unusual*. Expect it to involve constant change and evolution as the research centres increasingly learn about each other's regions, countries, approach to the topic, discourse, language and use of terms. Be prepared to be flexible and supportive as the research centres go through this process of approximation.

Doing collaborative research at a distance is hard. Research Centres need to be disciplined about constant coordination with each other as the research evolves. They need to be flexible about working schedules and managing joint drafting at a distance, while sticking to deadlines. Developing mutual respect, trust and friendship is crucial to this process. Allowing plenty of time for this to develop is helpful.

The pay-off however from pursuing inter-regional comparative, causal policy research can be huge. South-south collaboration opens up the research agenda and the questions asked, shaping the preparatory regional research as much as the final comparative research itself. The product of this process has been a set of highly interesting research papers – both the regional and comparative papers – with valuable policy implications across all the themes.

## Lessons on Doing Inter-regional Knowledge Exchange

When looking for a partner with a good potential for research outreach, note that in some cases universities may well outperform their *think tank* cousins. The presence of a communications team in the research centre is an indicator of their commitment to research use, but examine the quality of their

activities. Review how they describe their outreach activities: are they developing long term social relations with the intended *targets* for their research?

Short term projects should be realistic in setting ambitions for outreach: typically any organisation has a deep culture that is not easy to change. Be clear about the existing capacity, ensure you are responsive to their plans and needs to help build capacity.

Requesting research centres – whether think tanks or university centres – to take on the design and running of inter-regional online communities and study tours represents a big step for most centres. Both require skills in moderation, facilitation, training and teaching, skills that many researchers may not have. In online communities, non-face-to-face interaction with different cultures is challenging, and digital literacy skills are also required. Both online communities and study tours require intensive levels of preparation and for the online communities, live accompaniment of the moderation.

Designing a study tour is complex, and running one is exhausting, but of all the exchange and learning modalities, this is the one with by far the biggest impact on participants. The learning journeys followed on from the online communities, allowing participants to experience first-hand what they had read about and discussed online. Many people described the experience as fundamentally changing their perceptions of the issues, opening up their minds to new ideas about what is possible.

Supporting the use of inter-regional research through such modalities as 'Learning into Practice' awards opens up great potential where the user of that research has been taken through a learning process that allows the research evidence to be applied in a considered way to their own contexts.

## Conclusion

We believe that the ELLA model linking *two-way* research with exchange and learning programmes based on that research represents an effective model for promoting South-South knowledge exchange. But for programmes of this complexity, it would be better to have longer timeframe of say four to five years for completion of the project cycle.

## A. INTRODUCTION



ELLA researchers together for the final ELLA Lesson Learning Workshop on January 2017. Photo: Gabriela Ramos

The Evidence and Lessons from Latin America programme (ELLA) has been underway since 2010, funded by UK Aid. The programme supports South-South research, exchange and learning, on economic, social, governance and environmental issues. ELLA conducts evidence synthesis as well as original data collection and analysis on policy issues, and based on that research, runs online peer to peer learning communities and offline events, organises study visits, and manages awards to put learning into practice. The programme is managed by Practical Action Consulting (PAC) Latin America.

In its first phase, the ELLA programme involved researching evidence from Latin America for sharing with African and South Asian countries – hence the name. But in its second phase ELLA has evolved to become a ‘two-way’ programme, involving inter-regional comparative research and exchange and learning between Latin American and African countries, organisations and individuals. Section B describes this evolution of the programme.

The report then brings together reflections and lessons on this second phase of ELLA, from the perspective of managing such south-south research and exchange programmes.<sup>1</sup> The report is divided into three main parts. Section C reviews how we identified a total of twelve research centres from Latin America and Africa to participate in ELLA – one from each region to work together as a pair on each of six topics – and how the topics themselves were identified. Section D examines how we undertook the process of inter-regional comparative research, often undertaking unusual country comparisons in doing so. Section E reviews the activities that we pursued in order to encourage exchange and learning between the two regions, research uptake and use. Each section describes what we did, followed by reflections, before concluding with brief lessons. Section F of the report presents some general conclusions on the overall design and implementation of the programme.

The reflections and lessons have been drawn from a Lesson Learning workshop held in Lima in early 2017 in which all the research centres participated. The report also draws up on the extensive monitoring, evaluation and learning system managed by the PAC team, as described in the [ELLA Phase Two Monitoring and Evaluation report](#).

We hope that the report will be useful to all those involved in knowledge management for development, especially those with an eye to fostering south-south comparative research and knowledge exchange.

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<sup>1</sup> A Lessons and Reflections report on managing Phase One of ELLA can be found [here](#).

## B. THE CONTEXT

### From ELLA Phase One to ELLA Phase Two

In 2010 Practical Action Consulting (Latin America) won a contract from the UK DFID to implement a project that was originally called *A Synthesis of Policy and Research Lessons from Latin America* – which following an inception period became the *Evidence and Lessons from Latin America* (ELLA) programme.

The logic behind the DFID tender was that knowledge of Latin American development policies and practices was not as widely shared globally as should be the case, due to geographical, cultural and linguistic barriers, compounded by the region's graduation from aid which meant that its policies were no longer centre stage in some development debates.

In response to the call, PAC prepared a proposal for research synthesis and inter-regional learning centred on a sub-set of economic and environmental topics. DFID was keen to include several governance topics, which were also incorporated. During the subsequent three years (2011-14), ELLA Latin American partners researched some 21 topics and ran six learning communities - online and offline - with the objective of sharing Latin American knowledge on these topics across the global south.

The programme was ambitious in scope - the number and range of topics - and in objective: inter-regional learning and the informing of *other regions'* policies and practices, based on the knowledge gained about Latin America. The lessons and reflections on delivering phase one of ELLA were brought together in a [2014 Report](#) and discussed with DFID in the preparation of a second phase of the programme.

Several changes were made in the design of the phase two of ELLA (ELLA2), but the two most significant, with major implications for the programme, were in the number of topics and in the move towards 'two way' knowledge exchange. In ELLA2 six topics were to be addressed, a reduction that would allow each topic to be researched in greater depth and to a higher degree of academic rigour (than in ELLA1). Indeed the agreement with DFID was that each topic would be researched to journal standard, with the final research output being a journal article.

The move towards 'two way' knowledge exchange represented a big change. In ELLA1, the programme was firmly focused on synthesising Latin American knowledge for *export* to other regions. This had largely been a *one-way* process of sharing Latin American knowledge with the world, which in PAC's view raised some ethical concerns and also questions of efficiency and effectiveness. PAC had witnessed first-hand the resistance of some African and South Asian actors to the one way process of ELLA1 – "Latin America can also learn from us". It also meant that when Latin American knowledge products were shared with other regions, the adaptation and application of that knowledge to African and Asian contexts was challenging for the reader/learner, insofar as the African and Asian contexts were largely absent in the ELLA1 products and services. The basis for inter-regional learning was weakened by the absence of the African or Asian side of the story.

The ELLA2 proposal was for twinned Latin American and African research partners to conduct the topic research, to provide the basis for an enriched two-way experience of mutual learning. South Asia was dropped from the ELLA2 proposal, to ease the comparative approach and management of the programme. DFID accepted the arguments for two-way exchange, with the caveat that the design and funding nevertheless directed the bulk of the learning benefits at (poorer) African countries, in line with UK aid policy to focus its aid on low- and lower-middle income regions and countries – and away from Latin America, which is predominantly upper middle income.

## The Logic of ELLA Phase Two (ELLA2)

In line with this evolution, ELLA2 set out to investigate some six development topics and to build south-south learning between Latin American and African organisations and individuals. This would be delivered by six pairs of research centres from Latin America and Africa, led and coordinated by PAC Latin America, and supported by the UK Institute of Development Studies (IDS). The higher level objective (impact level) was that (predominantly) African decision makers would use evidence from Latin America to inform their policies and practices.

The logic of the programme, the *theory of change*, implied three overlapping phases or components. The first phase involved the identification of both the topic and the research centre pairings that would work the topic. We chose to identify the research centres and the topics in a simultaneous process (see section C). The objective was to identify a centre in each region (Latin America and Africa) with similar research interests that could also come up with a policy research issue which was on the agenda in the two regions, where there was scope for inter-regional learning. (DFID was particularly concerned that African countries might learn from Latin America). With a policy relevant topic and capable research centres identified, the foundation for a solid research, exchange and learning programme would be in place.

The second phase was the research. Based on the identification of shared central research questions, and common research designs and methodologies, the paired Latin American and African centres would conduct regional research, in turn leading on to an inter-regional comparative analysis – in principle to identify policy and practice variables that were important to achieving better outcomes. With rigorous comparative research in place, the basis for inter-regional learning would be established.

The third phase would be exchange and learning, to facilitate *research into use*. The strategy was for each research centre to engage its intended research users from the outset in the identification of the research topic, and throughout the research cycle. The *research uptake* activities – from dissemination events, through inter-regional online learning communities, to study tour visits and ‘learning into practice’ awards – would reach out to these *target* users and help them learn. The contextualisation of the research within a comparative framework would provide a strong basis for decision makers to accept, learn from and use the research findings.

This was the broad logic of the ELLA2 *theory of change*. Behind these broad structures were other significant assumptions that will be explored in the main body of this report.

## C. THE IDENTIFICATION OF RESEARCH PARTNERS AND TOPICS



Comparative Research Workshop. Photo: ELLA/Andrea Baertl

### What we did

In preparing the proposal for ELLA2, PAC proposed that the six topics would be chosen from a broad list of pre-identified economic, governance and environmental themes. The themes drew on the experience of ELLA1: in which Latin America was judged as having some form of *comparative advantage*, potentially with valuable lessons to share with other regions; and for which we had evidence of demand for knowledge from Africa (and Asia). (See [ELLA Phase one Lessons and Reflections Report](#)).

### Candidate Research Themes

**Economic Development:** Growth, inequality and jobs; Extractive industries management; Agriculture and Food security; Land and water management

**Governance:** Gender equity and violence against women; Violence and security; Human rights; Budgets, transparency and corruption

**Environmental management:** Sustainable cities; Environmental licensing; Global environmental instruments

We advertised for research centres from Latin America and Africa to participate in ELLA2, setting out the parameters of the programme, and asking them to identify a research topic (from the above list) that they proposed to investigate that was on the policy agenda in their country and region. The tender called for individual research centres to identify a research partner from the other region if they had a preferred partner - noting that if they did not (and very few did), ELLA would propose a partner from the other region in the implementation of the project. PAC was ready to 'marry' centres together: the 'arranged marriage' became a running source of metaphor in the implementation of the programme.

From the 35 Expressions of Interest, twelve centres were selected – six from each region – based on their topic proposals and an assessment of the centres' capabilities and proposed team. Latin American and African research centres were paired together in line with their shared topic interests. The twelve centres were invited to a workshop in Lima which provided the opportunity for participants to meet their *chosen partners*. The workshop took the attendees through the objectives of ELLA2, and provided a structured space for them to work in pairs to develop their policy research proposal. Following the workshop, the research pairs were given six weeks to prepare a joint technical proposal for submission to PAC, and subject to approval, an agreement would be signed with each centre. In preparing the proposals, the centres were asked to ensure that the topic was policy-relevant in both regions, and to consult with the intended users of their research in their own countries on their proposals.

## The Topics and Research Centres Selected

**Informality and Inclusive Growth:** Fedesarrollo, Colombia with the Development Policy Research unit, University of Cape Town, South Africa

**Land and Water Tenure and Access Rights:** GRADE, Peru with the Tegemeo Institute of Agricultural Policy and Development, Egerton University, Kenya

**Oil and Gas Local Content Policy:** Grupo Faro, Ecuador and ACODE, Uganda

**Horizontal Accountability:** CIPPEC, Argentina and the Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA), headquartered in Ethiopia

**Crime Prevention:** FundaUngo, El Salvador and the Department of Language and Communications, Ibadan University, Nigeria

**Addressing Violence Against Women:** Fundar, Mexico and the Centre for Gender studies and Advocacy, University of Ghana Legon, Ghana

## Reflections

### Organisational pairing

The decision taken to pair centres together was a big call. The potential for mismatches is high. Organisational character, core research background and interests, and individual personalities all have strong implications for whether the pairing will work. Because of the nature of the work to be carried out – comparative research that focused down at the country level – country *mismatching* (see next section) was also a risk.

But we took the decision to pair off centres in knowledge of these risks, given the time limits imposed on the programme. Our market intelligence indicated that relatively few centres had active research links with centres from the other region<sup>2</sup>. Even if we had gone with the option of providing a long list of candidate partners (which we had to hand) for the tender exercise, we estimated that the initial tendering period would have taken up to six months, instead of six weeks, with no guarantee of ending up with better pairings. So how did the matching-up work out?

Of the six pairs, none ended up in a divorce, and all delivered on the expected outputs, with just one pair only failing to produce a joint journal article as the final research product, because the comparative research had drifted too far apart (see next section). PAC's subjective judgement is that two pairings worked very well, three well and one only fairly well.

*Organisational character:* One of our initial concerns was that in four cases *think tanks* were paired off with university research centres<sup>3</sup>, a potential mismatch of academic standards and interests, and research uptake motivations. In the event, this fear was largely misplaced. All were identifiably policy

<sup>2</sup> The survey of RCs revealed that most would have struggled to identify and work up a proposal with a partner at a distance.

<sup>3</sup> In both regions, we advertised the call to both universities and think tanks. In the event, all six Latin American centres could be termed *think tanks* whereas four of the African centres were university research centres. This outcome was the result of IDS leading the advertising in Africa, where they are better known among the university sector, and PAC Latin America advertising in Latin America where we are better known among the think tank community. The response rate reflected this division of labour.

research organisations, and the anticipated dividing line between academic standards and research outreach was not sharp. Most of the think tanks met the academic challenge, and some of the university centres proved more capable at outreach than some of the think tanks. Of the twelve centres, nine reported that they saw strengths in pairing the two organisational types, bringing mutual learning to each partner. But one of the think tanks noted that the university centre was inadequately engaged in the *real world* and two of the university centres would have preferred to be paired with another university centre.

*Core research strengths:* It was unlikely that the paired research centres would propose an identical topic so when we brought the centres together they had to work hard to find their common ground. As they moved to find that common focus, the topics chosen sometimes took the individual researchers beyond their core research strengths. But this could also be regarded as strength of the programme: the centres and individuals expanded their research capabilities during the programme.

*Individual personalities:* The success of projects like ELLA depends significantly on the individuals involved. The most successful pairings were those that involved paired researchers who not only had the appropriate professional skills but also the personal attributes: a friendly open collaborative nature, a respect for the *other*, and a genuine interest in learning about the other's region, country, organisation and research topic. Research pairings cannot be judged solely at the organisational level, the individuals involved are a vital part of the mix. Agency matters.

### Topic pairing

*Understanding each other:* When the paired researchers were brought together for the first time at the inception workshop in Lima in June 2014, they not only had limited knowledge of each other and each other's organisations, but also in most cases, very limited understanding of each other's region, country and approach to the topic. Few had travelled to the other region or carried out inter-regional professional work.

This gulf in the starting conditions for inter-regional knowledge sharing should not be underestimated. Given busy schedules, researchers cannot be assumed to have done all their own 'homework' to bridge that knowledge gap. Time and resources should be built into the programme in a structured way to address this. With hindsight, in ELLA2 we perhaps relied too much on Centres picking this up as they went along. It may have created a firmer foundation if there had been more initial investment in bridging this structural knowledge gap.

*Understanding the topic:* At the inception workshop, we also focused down on the comparative nature of the ELLA programme – as the basis for south-south learning – with a focus on research methodologies for comparative research. In hindsight again, before focus on the explicit process of rigorous comparison, we perhaps could have given more time to the pairs to range widely and freely over the topic, its nature in the two regions, and each centre's (philosophical, ideological and theoretical) stance on the issue, to create a firmer initial foundation for comparison.

One option would have been to provide expert thematic support at this stage, to facilitate structured dialogue on the topic, instead of waiting as we did to provide this support at a later stage in the project (see later). Exploring an overview of the topic from a global perspective and how the issue plays out against this perspective in the research pairs' regions and countries would have been an option. But it would have been important to avoid falling into the trap of deploying a Northern expert and a deductive approach. The ELLA philosophy is of Southern led research of a more inductive nature.

*Language and cultural barriers:* The English-Spanish divide did not prove much of a barrier to the researchers. English was the *lingua franca* of the ELLA programme, and most of the Latin American

researchers spoke reasonable to excellent English. But semantics matters. The contextual interpretation of any particular term, phrase or wider discourse required a good deal of unpacking and discussion between researchers, to ensure an effective level of understanding. In research terms, variables needed careful definition and measurement: a 'high level of crime and violence' means different things in Nigeria and El Salvador. At a broader level, the framing of a narrative, for example on rights, can have a very different resonance in the two regions. Putting resources into allowing researchers the time to manage these cultural language barriers is vital.

*The topic-country pairing:* An additional challenge arose from the programme objective of aiming for journal standard comparative research. Beyond the literature reviews which did allow a regional perspective, the time and resource limitations of ELLA2 meant that most pairs had to focus their research down at the country level, and understandably most focused on their own country: they know their own country best, and their institutional interests lie there. This meant that the comparative research resulted, superficially at least, in some *unusual* country pairings for comparative research (e.g. Nigeria and El Salvador, or Argentina and Kenya).

It could be expected that any Latin America-Africa comparative work would likely end up with unusual comparisons, and this was an innate challenge of the ELLA2 programme that we accepted, indeed relished. But the point is that these *unusual* country pairings made it challenging for pairs to identify a comparative research design. We prioritised research interest and policy relevance in the choice and pairing of research centres, over the country location of the research centre, which indeed made for some interesting challenges (see next section).

An alternative more conventional (?) approach would have been for a thematic expert with a global view of the topic – from some globally-oriented institution (probably in the North) – to have identified the topic and pairs of countries that would have worked well for comparative purposes, then to search for the research centres within these countries. But we opted for a Southern-led approach, which allowed greater scope to Southern voices, albeit taking on a greater challenge.

### Time period

From the time the research centres first met their partners until they submitted a joint proposal, we allowed less than two months. With hindsight, such a time period probably allowed too little time to create the strong initial foundations for the pairings that are listed out above, in terms of getting to know each other and gaining a common appreciation of the topic. Instead pressing ahead with the timetable of the project meant that the Centres had to learn and adjust as they went along. This may not have been the most effective approach. Perhaps it would have been more appropriate to allow more time in the initial planning stage, with a compensating reduction in the time available to the research itself.

### Lessons

Pairing up research centres from different regions is eminently feasible. Due attention should be paid to organisational skill sets, topic competences, and where possible to individual motivations and characteristics.

In bringing centres together, do not under-estimate the profound knowledge gaps about each other's region that are likely to exist. Provide space, structure and time for the pair to become familiar with each other and to gain a strong foundational appreciation of the topic in both regions.

## D. THE RESEARCH PROCESS AND PRODUCTS

### What we did

With the joint research proposals in place (in September 2014), we agreed a staged process to conducting the research. This was to be structured around a series of face-to-face workshops, which brought together the paired researchers at Design and Methods (November 2014 to January 2015), Regional Evidence (June 2015) and Comparative Evidence workshops (December 2015). Each of the workshops would lead on to research products: a joint Design and Methods Paper (D&M Paper), two Regional Evidence Papers (REPs) – one each from Latin America and Africa – and a joint Comparative Evidence Paper (CEP).

The workshops were of three to five days, and each brought together two or three research pairs and was hosted by one of the centres. The workshops were designed as a space for the research pairs to meet face-to-face, within a framework that supported them in the research process, giving them ample time to work together.

*The Design and Methods workshops*, led by IDS research methods experts, rehearsed the basic elements of constructing an effective research design for causal policy research: including literature review, setting central research questions and hypotheses, concepts, typologies, and a review of selected analytical strategies – with participants building their own research design through these steps. The objective of the workshop was to provide a robust research design, with a clear research question, design and methodology that was common to both centres in the research pair.

Each pair left the workshop with an outline Design and Methods (D&M) paper, which was subsequently finalised as a basis for the centres to begin their individual regional research.

#### Topics and research questions at research design stage

***Fedesarrollo and DPRU:*** Informality and Inclusive Growth  
Do informal labour markets promote or constrain inclusive growth?

***GRADE and Tegemeo:*** Collective Land Access Rights and Smallholder Livelihoods  
Under what conditions do collective land rights lead to improved livelihoods?

***Grupo Faro and ACODE:*** Local Content in the Latin American and African Oil and Gas Sector  
What types of frameworks promote local content in Latin American and African oil and gas producing countries and what have been the outcomes from these frameworks?

***CIPPEC and OSSREA:*** Executive Accountability to Parliament  
What are the determinants of the low performance of horizontal accountability mechanisms in Kenya and Argentina?

***FundaUngo and Ibadan:*** Community-based Crime Prevention  
Does the direct and active participation of the community contribute to the outcomes of CBCP programmes and projects in Latin America and Africa?

***Fundar and CEGENSA:*** Domestic Violence  
To what extent do factors beyond the passage of a law determine effective responses to domestic violence?

*The Regional Evidence workshops* were timed at an early stage in the regional research, and focused largely on thematic content and research rigour. Each pair received inputs from a thematic expert, and the workshop was used to try to ensure that a shared research design was being followed so that the regional work would lead smoothly on to the comparative stage. The Regional Evidence Papers (REPs) – one each from the Latin American and the African centre – were at an early stage of development, scheduled for completion before beginning the comparative research phase.

*The Comparative Evidence workshops* were designed to bring together the regional evidence, to meld this into a comparative piece of research. Second drafts of the REPs and short Comparative Notes were available as inputs for the workshop. The event focused on supporting the teams to produce an outline of their inter-regional comparisons: revisiting the questions, hypotheses, design, data, and method of analysis, focused on generating useful policy and practice lessons. Following the comparative workshops, the research teams found themselves still both finalising their REPs, and working to produce draft CEPs. With the research uptake activities (next section) also upon them, CEPs were not finalised until later in 2016.

At each stage in the research production, the research papers – D&Ms, REPs and CEPs – were reviewed by PAC and by IDS methods and/or thematic experts, with two or three versions of each produced. All of the research output is published on the ELLA and research centre websites, and many have been made available as IDS working papers. The CEPs have led on to articles, which have been submitted to journals.

## Reflections

### Breadth and depth of the research and country focus

When we embarked on the research topics, it became clear that the combined effect of the time and resources available to the programme, and the objective of producing research of journals standard, had two significant and related implications for most of the research topics. First we decided that in most cases, we could not embark on a process that undertook a comparison at the regional level beyond the scoping literature review, and that the research would focus down at sub-regional or country level. Secondly, to do good causal policy research, which compared outcome and explanatory variables in a rigorous way, the research would have to go beyond the synthesis of existing research to include original data collection and analysis.

The focus on journals standard research thus had a significant impact on the scope and nature of the research. It meant that compared to ELLA1, the research was narrower but more in-depth and more rigorous. This was a different model to the broader scope of literature of the earlier phase. The need to focus down to country level in most cases, and the choice of their *home* country for the case selection by most research centres (as noted earlier), added a layer of complexity to the cross-regional comparative research.

### Evolution of the topics

Collaborating in the conduct of inter-regional comparative research is hard, for many reasons. The previous section discussed the gulf in starting knowledge that the actors in the different regions had of each other's realities and the need to find and develop a common understanding and approach as the foundation for effective research collaboration. Organisational cultures and interests can also sometimes present a practical complication to a partnership: some were more focused on research and some more on engaging with stakeholders, for example. Working at a distance presents obvious difficulties, compounding cultural and linguistic differences, undermining familiarity. All research evolves as it is undertaken, and this presents particular communication challenges when research

partners are collaborating at a distance. The practice of comparative research is further complicated if this involves *unusual* country comparisons. Working under strict time limits also adds to pressures.

For all these reasons ELLA2 witnessed the research topics and central research questions evolving over time in a complex way, in some cases up to late in the research cycle. The two topics that defined themselves most early on in the cycle were *Informality and Inclusive Growth*, and *Oil and Gas Local Content*. These changed little from the design stage through to the comparative paper. These were the two most mainstream economic topics, and it is possible the more standardised global use and understanding of terms and data facilitated an earlier mutual understanding of the issues. In both cases, the country comparison also eased agreement. In the case of Informality the comparison was between Colombia and South Africa. In economic terms the countries shared similar characteristics, but there is a crucial difference in the share of the labour market in unemployment or in informal employment, and understanding this became the core focus of the research. In the case of Oil and Gas, the comparison took in a number of countries in both regions, and the level of abstraction may have contributed to an easier agreement on the approach.

The *Pastoralism and Land Tenure* study evolved significantly between the design stage and the subsequent regional research, narrowing down on collective land tenure arrangements for pastoralists as the complexity of the comparison between the Andean *altiplano* and the East African savannah became clearer. But the final comparative paper had to simplify further the land tenure discussion due to the difficulty of comparing collective land access regimes in the two regions. The Mexico-Ghana study looking at *Domestic Violence* evolved significantly between the regional and comparative research stages. Both the countries implemented domestic violence laws in 2007, and each of the parallel regional research papers concluded that its country had performed poorly on implementation. It was only at the comparative stage that it was evident that Mexico had indeed performed considerably better than Ghana on implementing policies against domestic violence, and for the comparison, the research had to be reoriented towards understanding the variables explaining that difference in performance.

The *Community-based Crime Prevention* study evolved throughout the research process, from design through to the CEP and indeed to the final journal article. The significant differences in the form and intensity of violence and crime in the two countries (El Salvador and Nigeria), the contrasting availability of secondary data, and the complexity of unpacking concepts of 'social capital', 'trust' and 'willingness to act' all made for a complex journey, and a repeated re-visiting of the outcome and explanatory variables under investigation. Finally, the *Horizontal Accountability* topic, perhaps predictably, proved the most challenging. The complexity and cultural specificity of Executive accountability to Parliament/Congress, embracing both formal and informal institutions, plus the distant starting points of the countries of the two research organisations – Argentina, and Ethiopia but studying Kenya – made this a particularly challenging subject, with the focus shifting continuously throughout.

### Collaborating at a distance

Research collaboration across the oceans presents obvious challenges. Despite the wonders of modern technology, the physical distance, lack of face time, time zone differences, and general lack of easy communication all combine to make joint research difficult. Setting the research up rigorously in the early stages makes for greater efficiency, but this is when researchers are least familiar with each other and where regular long distance communication does not come so easily.

The face to face workshops were judged by all participants to be essential, the most important ingredient in fostering good collaboration. Most would have liked more. During the workshops, although the structured support and learning sessions were appreciated (see later), the feedback was always that pairs would have appreciated even more time simply to get on and work in their pairs.

As the research developed, it evolved, and the more effective working came from paired centres who appreciated the need to be in regular communication with each other. The temptation for the research, to drift in different directions was always there, especially at the regional research stage.

The most difficult phase of the collaboration for the pairs was in writing up the joint papers: the initial D&M paper and more so the preparation of the CEP, the hardest part of the research process. The pairs tried different approaches, most ending up with one of the Centres taking on the lead role in drafting; in one case with the other centre undertaking the numerical data analysis.

So what are the lessons for good long distance collaboration? There are no magic bullets. Planning ahead (to accommodate the work within busy schedules), flexibility on Skype meeting times, and setting up and committing to a regular weekly or two weekly time for coordination are all helpful. Some centres suggested that they could perhaps have agreed a set of principles, a memorandum setting out the responsibilities of each partner. This could provide greater clarity than perhaps was sometimes the case, but probably cannot replace the need for a close and trusting relationship.

### Some observations on the research process and products

*Comparative methods:* The core methodology used with the research centres for the ELLA policy research was Mill's method of similarity and difference, plotting the outcome and explanatory variables in a two by two matrix of similarity and difference. Ideally for such comparative exercises, the comparison of the two countries or regions locates the comparators in similar outcomes but different explanatory variables or similar explanatory variables but different outcomes, in order to isolate and highlight the significant variable that explains the different paths of the two countries or regions. It is not helpful to end up in the similar-similar box, because this yields no interesting results. Nor do researchers want to end up in the different-different box, as this makes it difficult to isolate key variables of significance.

Inevitably, given the unusual nature of some of the country comparisons, there was a risk of ending up in the different-different box. This would sometimes lead to a refinement of the research question and hypotheses, to establish a greater degree of similarity. Where this was not possible, centres were encouraged to explore methods such as process tracing to explain differences, and to identify policy options.

*Policy Research:* Throughout, the focus of ELLA was on generating policy research with findings, conclusions and policy recommendations, and we have achieved this overall to a good standard of rigour. But in the process of comparing often very different countries, there was frequently a momentum to open up the questions, to a more open-ended exploratory form, rather than the closed-down approach required for policy research. This was something that centres simply had to struggle with, even where it was not naturally in their genetic make-up, as in the case of some university centres.

*Time:* To do the comparative research, centres had to collect and analyse primary data in five of the six cases; in the sixth, Informality, the researchers used existing survey data. The time and resources available for this were quite constrained in the programme.

### Outcomes of Research

Out of this rich and challenging process has come a great deal of valuable research output: surveying the literature on the six topics, the generation of new regional research inspired by a comparative lens, and innovative inter-regional comparative research with findings, conclusions and implications for policy and practice in the two regions – in line with DFID wishes, in particular for African countries.

The research is published, but here in headline form are some of the research and policy insights that have arisen from, what we have termed, doing *unusual* comparative research across regions.

### Reflections on Study Outcomes

The *Informality and Inclusive Growth* study contrasted the cases of Colombia and South Africa. In the former informality is high and is often regarded as an unmitigated bad, but in the latter informality is low whereas unemployment is high, and government is considering promoting transition from unemployment at least to informal employment. The study deconstructed the informal sector, and was able to show that some types of informality were good and some were bad for inclusive growth. This unusual contrasting of countries was able to bring out the need for a nuanced approach to policies dealing with the informal labour sector; and to the mechanisms and risks of transition between unemployment, informal and formal sector employment.

The study on *Pastoralism and Land Tenure* brought together the comparison of two very different socio-economic and livestock rearing environments, the Andean *altiplano* (camelids) and the East African savannah (cattle, sheep and goats). Both however shared a similar eco-system environment with low and irregular rains. The study showed that despite the differences between the two, in both regions collective access rights to large tracts of land were crucial for maintaining pastoralist livelihoods and their associated sustainable environmental practices. Individualisation of land is a threat to environmental sustainability and pastoralist systems in both regions. The similar conclusions from these two distinct and far flung regions make for compelling policy considerations.

On the face of it, Ghana and Mexico, the focus of the *Domestic Violence* study, were subject to a similar set of forces when each passed a law addressing domestic violence in 2007: international human rights movements against gender based violence, national civil society concern about particular acts of violence against women in both countries, and an openness to enact a law on the part of the state. But implementation of the law diverged with Mexico making considerably more progress on at least some of the three Ps of protection, prevention and prosecution (albeit with a mountain still to climb). The country comparison identified the main variables in this difference: the greater representation on women in Congress in Mexico, their self-identification as feminists, and the alliances they struck with civil society in pushing a more progressive agenda – with clear implications for advocacy and practices in Ghana.

The *Community-based Crime Prevention* investigation was one of the more challenging studies, bringing together El Salvador and Nigeria, two obviously very different countries (not least in terms of size), with different types and intensities of violence and crime. El Salvador has a more top-down state-led approach to crime prevention, and Nigeria in most of the country, a more bottom-up community-led approach. This intriguing comparison nevertheless brought out the key role for community participation in both *models* and the importance of *trust* and *willingness to act* among communities, while also recognising the need for an increased role for the state working with communities, where violent crime escalates. The contrast in the country cases highlights these policy conclusions, with valuable lessons for countries where crime and violence is escalating.

The study on *Oil and Gas Local Content* yielded in some ways a more conventional comparison of country experiences. The researchers produced an innovative attempt at scoring local content outcomes (local employment, skills development and national industry participation) against local content frameworks (policies, laws and contracts). Reviewing the experience of a group of countries, seven from Latin America and seven from Africa, the research identified a correlation between successful strategies, the level of specificity in local content frameworks, the monitoring of the implementation of these, and the role for national oil companies in spearheading the policies, as well as a set of secondary enabling variables.

The comparison between Argentina and Kenya in studying shortfalls in *Horizontal Accountability* of the Executive to the Legislature paired countries with very different political and governance histories. Nevertheless, both countries have strong Presidential systems, have made recent attempts to strengthen accountability, and both still demonstrate considerable weakness in Congressional/Parliamentary oversight of the Executive. The comparison identified a series of measures that both countries could adopt to strengthen formal systems of accountability, and reviewed the variety and complexity of informal systems that undermine these, and that require deeper structural changes.

## Lessons

Doing inter-regional research is hard, especially when it involves comparative inter-regional research between countries where the matching is *unusual*. Expect it to involve constant change and evolution as the research centres gradually learn about each other's regions, countries, approach to the topic, discourse, language and use of terms. Be prepared to be flexible and supportive as the research centres go through this process of approximation.

Doing collaborative research at a distance is hard. Research Centres need to be extremely disciplined about keeping in constant coordination with each other as the research evolves. They need to be flexible about working schedules, to find their own means to managing joint drafting at a distance and to sticking to agreed research plans and deadlines. Developing mutual respect, trust and friendship is crucial to this process. Allowing plenty of time for this to develop is helpful.

The pay-off however from pursuing inter-regional, collaborative, comparative, causal policy research can be huge. The opening up of south-south communication shapes the research agenda and questions from the outset, influencing not only the final comparative research, but also the preparatory regional research. The product of this has been a set of highly interesting research papers – both the regional and comparative papers – with important policy implications across all the themes that were researched.

## E. RESEARCH DISSEMINATION, EXCHANGE, LEARNING AND UPTAKE

### What we did

The programme emphasized from the outset the need for the research centres to work with the intended audience for the research, identifying and engaging likely users throughout the research cycle. In preparing the initial joint proposals, the paired research centres discussed the research topic with potential users of the research to shape it accordingly, and included in their plans a *research uptake* proposal that drew on a range of methodologies that were recommended by PAC, which had been tried and tested during ELLA1.



ELLA pastoralism study tour to Peru. Photo: ELLA/Michael Zevallos

The methodologies included the development of communication products based on the research papers (including briefs, infographics, videos); face to face meetings, workshops and dissemination events; running an online learning community to foster exchange and learning between Latin American and African peer researchers, practitioners and policymakers; a study tour to Latin America; and the use of awards to support Learning into Practice.

PAC surveyed the research centres on their experience with each of these methodologies, and based on the response ran an internal online community and a workshop in Lima with researchers and their communication colleagues, in order to strengthen their skills in promoting research into action. During 2015, the focus was on the research phase of the project, when Centres were encouraged to maintain close contact with the target users of their research and to seek co-production opportunities where possible. In 2016, with the publication of the Regional Evidence Papers (REPs), and the Comparative Evidence Papers (CEPs), the focus shifted more to research dissemination, exchange and learning.

*Communication Products:* A range of products and learning materials based on the research were produced, including research summaries, briefs, infographics, videos and podcasts, for use in the ELLA Learning Alliances and dissemination events. The research centres ran a large number of (face to face) *Dissemination* events, in their own countries, to share the REP and CEP research findings, at workshops, meetings and other events.

*Learning Alliances:* A major component of the research uptake phase was the design and running in mid-2016 of the ELLA Learning Alliances: facilitated, online learning communities of Latin American and African peers that took participants through an exchange of knowledge and understanding based on a structured curriculum, drawn from the research programme that each pair had undertaken. Six Learning Alliances, each moderated by the research pair, lasted three months with five to six modules covering the research agenda.

An average of 140-150 researchers, civil society members and government officials participated in each Learning Alliance. For each module, the (sub-) topic was introduced, supporting materials provided and opening questions posed, to generate an understanding and discussion on the issue raised. Over a fortnight, participants could share their perspectives on the platform, with the discussion moderated

alternately by one of the paired research centres and brought together in a conclusion at the end of the two weeks. The conclusions of the Learning Alliances have been brought together in a Highlights document, which is publicly available.

*Study Tours:* Building on the exchange in the online Learning Alliances and offline face-to-face events, study tours to Latin America were scheduled, involving eight to ten participants competitively selected from the Alliances and one or two targeted individuals who had not participated online. The study visits were typically ten day in duration, whose objective was to allow targeted individuals to see first-hand the policies and practices in place in Latin America on the issues discussed during the online community. In all cases the study tour was to the country in which the Latin American research centre was based, and which was the main focus of the Latin America research in most cases. Study tours involved a mix of visits, meetings and opportunities for exchange and reflection among the participants. Participants maintained learning trackers and left with action plans on how to take forward their learning. Reports on each study tour are available publicly.

*Awards:* A final element within the research uptake process was the *Learning into Practice* awards. These were small grants of up to \$5000 that enabled participants from the study tours to take forward learning from the research, the online learning programme, and the study tours and put this into practice in some way. The grants have supported further research, the sharing of knowledge, evidence-based advocacy, fed public policy debates, and helped organisations strengthen their own research, advocacy and training capabilities.

## Reflections

### Overall Ability to Engage Stakeholders

Each of the research centres had a different background, culture and capability with respect to research uptake activities. A few centres had a long history of outreach and engagement, with established communications units. Most had more limited experience, though virtually all had produced policy briefs and run dissemination events of some sort. Each centre was supported through formal and *on-the-job* training, which PAC adjusted according to need.

In the outcome, all the Centres made considerable efforts at outreach. Some were more successful than others in reaching stakeholders. In this, there was no clear division between university centres and think tanks in the ELLA programme. Four of the think tanks proved very capable at the social engagement of *decision makers*, three maybe less so. Of the university centres, two were very effective and two less so. Various factors explain this:

- First, the policy relevance of the research: some of the topics and research question were more geared towards African priorities (in keeping with DFID's objectives). It also helped if there was a specific policy window which opened up, which was the case in some of the topics (e.g. Kenya's 2016 Land Bill, Uganda's 2016 oil and gas local content policy discussions).
- Second, the openness of decision makers, particularly senior ministry officials and politicians, to engage with research, especially during the research process, was important. Trusting organisational and individual and relationships play their part: respect for the centre and/or specific researchers built up over the medium term is very helpful. Some of the centres had particularly well developed relationships with their key stakeholders.
- Third, institutional incentives remain important: two of the university centres were somewhat less motivated to outreach, with more desire to focus on academic output. But individuals matter: some university researchers with little past experience at outreach were motivated to engage externally and energised to take forward this work, appreciating its importance and significance, and building their own capacity in the process.

## Learning Alliances

The Learning Alliances have been core to the ELLA proposition in both phases of the programme. The purpose has been to socialise knowledge of the topic researched, taking knowledge from Latin America to African and South Asian countries in phase one (2012, 2013), and exchanging knowledge between Latin American and African countries in phase two (2016). By taking members through a structured learning programme that promotes reading, analysis and a moderated discussion, it was hoped that participants would absorb, understand and adapt the knowledge gained to their own contexts through a process of comparing and contrasting different country contexts and experiences. The evolution in phase two of ELLA was the explicit presentation in the curriculum of *both sides to the story*, the Latin American and the African, the objective being to provide participants with a better basis for the process of comparing, contrasting and learning about Latin American and African experiences. This contrasted with the first phase, when African and South Asian participants were left with more work to do, to interpret the Latin American materials presented for their own contexts.

*Participants:* The aim is to attract *decision makers* to the Learning Alliances – policymakers, policy influencers and practitioners for whom the research evidence should be useful. But we recognise that attracting senior government officials to such communities is difficult – they are busy, otherwise focused, the communities are too protracted, and many will be less prone or indeed interested in open discussion and debate – and the objective has rather always been to reach such people through direct face-to-face activities. We did attract government officials, but the larger contingents were from the research community academics and civil society. There were more researchers in ELLA2 compared to ELLA1, which was probably the result of more reliance on the research centres to advertise the Learning Alliances.

*Country make up of participants:* We sought to attract a critical mass of participants from the research centres' own countries, since in principle this is where the stakeholder interest should be strongest, and where institutional linkages would reinforce good relationships for research uptake. In general we were able to achieve this, though by advertising through several theme-based sites, we also attracted participants from many other countries from around the two regions which was also an objective of the programme.

*Incentives, commitments, participation and moderation:* The primary motivation for participation in the Learning Alliances is an individual's concern to engage with the subject matter. This was not an academically-accredited course, though we did provide certificates to active participants, and the possibility of joining a study tour to Latin America was a further incentive. Based on the experience of ELLA1, we estimated and advertised that effective participation would require a minimum of two or so hours of reading and contributing per week over the three months, a substantial commitment in busy schedules.

The Alliances achieved participation levels similar to communities of this nature, with those contributing two or more times per topic running at around 15%. Over the three months, there was only a relatively minor decline in contribution levels. Keeping the amount of reading down to two or so short documents, and setting analytical compare and contrast questions, helped ease productive interaction.

Nine of the twelve Centres had never moderated such a community. The skills and methods required for effective facilitation of online community discussions are many and are rarely easily learnt. Most centres declared this aspect of the ELLA programme the most challenging, taking them beyond their comfort zones. PAC provided training and support, but the learning required to become a good moderator should not be underestimated, and takes a good deal of practice.

*The Latin American-African dialogue:* The intention was to have a draft of the Comparative Evidence Paper (CEP) ready ahead of the Learning Alliances. In some cases, delays in the research meant we did not achieve this, so participants were not served up the ready-made comparisons. Nevertheless members did receive learning material on the topic relating to both regions, based on the regional research (and REPs), on which to draw for the comparative discussion. One outcome from this process, however, was that African participants would sometimes focus almost exclusively on the African material and find themselves discussing this with other African members (and vice versa the Latin Americans). The material was more resonant to them, and in the first instance more immediately relevant, in part undermining the intended dialogue between Latin Americans and Africans.

*Language:* The lingua franca of the programme was English: both for the research and research uptake phase. In general the language barrier was not a significant barrier in the research phase as noted earlier. But in the Learning Alliances, the Latin American voice was more muted, likely the result of the language barrier. The initial posts and all the discussion chains were translated into both English and Spanish in order to allow Latin Americans to post in Spanish, but many of the supporting materials were in English only, probably undermining the ability to contribute of those Latin Americans who had little or no English.

### Study tours

Designing and running study tours is intensive and raises many issues, including ensuring value for money from such expensive journeys. But with the right participants and a well-designed programme, they can have a powerful impact on those participating, bringing alive in a direct way the issues that they have been exposed to in the online community. The identification and selection of participants is a key consideration, as is the decision over of the mix of activities during the tour, between seeing, listening, discussing and reflecting.

*Participants:* In most cases, 50% or so of the study tour participants came from the African research centre host country, the focal point for the African research in most cases, and an important focus of study in the Learning Alliances. This took the ELLA pairing model from the research to the research uptake stage: five Kenyans (out of nine visitors) went to Peru on the pastoralism study visit, and seven Nigerians (out of nine) went to El Salvador for the community-based crime prevention visit. The outreach by the African centres to their stakeholders was an important factor here in these two cases.

The reasoning was that if group of co-nationals could attend the tour, they would be capable of supporting each other in their post study tour activities. We are following up on the extent to which this has happened, but it is clear that in some cases, bringing together national actors in this way has contributed to more collective activity and engagement on an issue in country. This represents an advance on ELLA1.

Participants in the tour were selected on a competitive basis, and the selection criteria included the relevance of the person's job, plus the potential of the applicant to leverage change in their own organisation and country, but we also gave a lot of weight to people's commitment to the process of south-south learning – as evidenced by their participation in the Learning Alliances. Our judgement is that this paid off: the more committed and energised the individual, the more likely they are to make more use of such study visits. Participants came from a mix of state bodies, civil society and the research community.

*Balance of Study tour activities:* The temptation with a study tour is to overfill the agenda with external visits and *instructional* meetings, to expose participants to as many experiences as possible. But this risks leaving inadequate time for participants to digest, discuss, reflect and consider what the Latin American story means for their own countries. We learnt this lesson in ELLA1, but it remains a

challenge not to over-pack the days. Short wrap-up and reflection sessions at the beginning and/or end of each day, in addition to an extended day of reflection at the end of the tour, was judged a good combination.

*Study Tours are a process:* As planned, most participants had participated in the Learning Alliances, so that the in-country first-hand learning experience built on everything that they had seen and discussed during the online community. Members arrived with action plans. On most visits, they used trackers to record their daily learning, and all participants departed with revised practical action plans on how they would use their learning. Due attention to this continual process is crucial to making the most of a study tour.

Many other practical lessons in designing and running study tours are captured in the ELLA1 Lessons and Reflections Report.

### Awards

The ELLA research was disseminated widely through the internet, discussed during offline events and in the online learning communities, and reinforced through study tour visits to Latin America. The use of this knowledge by readers and participants was largely beyond the project boundary, with users recurring to their own resources to take forward actions. The ELLA Learning into Practice awards however represented a limited attempt – in budgetary terms – to support ELLA participants to take forward learning for specific actions in African countries (the awards were limited to Africans in all but one case, reflecting DFID priorities). We granted 21 awards each with a value of up to \$5000 for implementation over a six month period.

The awards funded a variety of mini-projects, the majority (some 15) involving some form of policy advocacy, in nearly all cases in combination with either further research drawing on the ELLA findings, or dialogue through workshops and other public events, or training to strengthen voices for advocacy. A minority (some 6) implemented either programmes or training based around the ELLA research and study conclusions. NGO representatives benefited from fully half the awards, with the others coming from the research community, government, the private sector and one from the media.

The impacts from these mini-projects are still emerging, but as captured in the **six Impact Stories**, the awards appear to have been funds very well spent. The awardees represent the culmination of ELLA efforts from research, through the online learning alliances, to the study tours, to impart new knowledge to individuals and organisations to carry forward south-south learning. The boundary of the programme – the logical framework purpose statement – demanded that stakeholders saw and learnt from Latin American and comparative African evidence; the use of evidence was an impact objective (beyond the project control). Nevertheless the awards represented a small commitment (in investment terms) to making use of the evidence. With more time for the programme and more resources overall, more funding could have been allocated to the use of evidence.

### Outcomes

The emerging outcomes and impacts arising from the ELLA2 research and research uptake activities are described in detail in the [ELLA2 Monitoring and Evaluation Report](#) and in the **Brochure on ELLA2 Impact Stories**. The table below captures some strands from the preliminary findings, focused on African outcomes.

Theme	Outcomes and Impacts
<b>Informality and Inclusive Growth</b>	The comparison with Colombia showed South Africa the advantages of informality over unemployment, but also the risks of informality for the wider economy. These results have fed into the Presidency's Pro-Poor Growth programme and supported further work on transitions between unemployment, informality and formality in South Africa, and other African countries. In Colombia, the work has caused a reassessment of informality: it is no longer universally seen as an unmitigated bad, a perspective which has been taken on board by government and with several multilaterals.
<b>Pastoralism and Land Tenure</b>	The work on pastoralism was timely in Kenya. The research conclusion on the need for collective land access for pastoral productive systems was fed into drafting of the 2016 Community Land Act and its implementation. Several Kenyans from government, civil society and pastoral communities went on the study tour to Peru, and as awardees, have been involved in a pro-pastoralists implementation of the new Land Law. Research and advocacy has been taken forward in other African countries, including Uganda and Namibia, and in Peru (the counterpart comparison country).
<b>Oil and Gas Local Content</b>	The identification of the key policy variables behind successful Local Content (LC) outcomes, drawn from the comparison of 14 Latin American and African countries – LC framework specificity, monitoring, the role of national oil companies, an enabling business environment – have been widely shared in many African countries with emerging oil and gas industries and LC policies. Uganda (2016 draft policy), Tanzania, Ghana (new oil fields) and indeed Algeria are benefiting from the ELLA research findings and the work of participants in the ELLA programme. Within Latin America, the work has fed into the deliberations of several networks.
<b>Horizontal Accountability</b>	Despite the complexities of the analysis, the comparison of horizontal accountability systems explored in the joint Argentina-Kenya research identified measures to strengthen formal systems. Within Kenya itself, the findings have been reflected in the work of the Centre for Parliamentary Studies and Training. Elsewhere the scope for improving accountability has been highlighted by awardees in training in Tanzania and in research and relationship building in Zimbabwe. In Argentina, the scope for improvements has been very effectively fed into both Congress and to the Cabinet.
<b>Community-based Crime Prevention</b>	The research into the key ingredients for effective CBCP practices – 'trust and a willingness to act' in communities, the need for more effective relationships with the state if crime and violence escalates – was discussed at each stage in the research cycle with key stakeholders in Nigeria: the judiciary, police, communities themselves, state legislators. Nigerian study tour participants and awardees have taken back lessons from El Salvador on community programmes and collaborative approaches. Aspects have also been adopted by the Kenyan Deputy President's office responsible for crime and conflict prevention.
<b>Domestic Violence</b>	The comparative research between Mexico and Ghana revealed the importance of female political representation both within Parliament and outside, and an agreed 'feminist' agenda if Domestic Violence Laws are to be put into practice. Within Ghana, the programme has breathed life back into the DV Coalition; in Nigeria, there has been a similar push; and elsewhere, the learning has supported the work of the National Sudanese Women's Association. In Latin America, the research has led to close working relations with political groupings working on violence against women in Mexico, and to an online programme on masculinities.

## Lessons

What should you look for if you are seeking a research partner with a good potential for research outreach? It is not as straightforward as selecting a *think tank* over a university; sometimes universities can outperform their cousins. The presence of a communications department is a good sign of commitment to research use, but there is a need to review the direction, purpose and quality of their communication: their website (including activity levels), briefs, videos and use of social media. In

particular review how they describe their outreach activities: are they developing long term social relations with the intended *targets* for their research? Also check out whether their outreach ambitions are part of an overall improvement programme.

What should you expect of them? Short term projects should be realistic in setting ambitions: typically, organisations have deep cultures that are not easy to change. Be clear about their existing capacity, ensure you are responsive to their plans and needs, be flexible, and be prepared to put time in to providing iterative support. Do not under-estimate the complexity of institutional strengthening and change.

Requesting research centres – whether think tanks or university centres – to take on the design and running of online communities and study tours represents a big step for most centres. To run either requires skills in moderation, facilitation, training and teaching, skills that some researchers may have, but many will not. The shortfall in skills is most deeply noticeable in the online communities, where non face-to-face interaction with different cultures and digital literacy skills play a part.

Designing a study tour is complex, and running one is exhausting, but the face-to-face interaction makes the learning process easier to manage. Of all the learning modalities, participation in a study tour is especially valuable, with by far the greatest impact on participants. For both learning communities and study tours, it is important to ensure intensive levels of support to research centres, both in prior training and preparation, and for the online communities, live accompaniment of the moderation.

Supporting the use of inter-regional research through such modalities as ‘Learning into Practice’ awards opens up great potential where the user of that research has been taken through a learning process that allows the research evidence to be applied in a considered way to their own contexts.

## F. CONCLUSIONS ON PROGRAMME DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION



ELLA Research Workshop in Brighton. Photo: ELLA/Andrea Baertl

The objective of ELLA2 has been to share knowledge, based on rigorous research evidence, between Latin American and African countries, for each region to learn from the other to inform its own policies and practices. We did this through a process of comparative research that provided a basis for the two regions to speak to, and better understand, each other; through an inter-regional exchange and learning process that enabled significant numbers of researchers, practitioners and policymakers to absorb and internalise this knowledge; and through limited support, in the awards, to those accessing this ELLA knowledge to use it as well.

### What do we believe are the strengths of this model?

The model of building the knowledge bridge from both ends has many strengths. It recognises that learning is never one-way. The process itself enables a common language and understanding to be built, starting with the research partners, extending through to the learning alliance and study tour participants, and in the best of worlds to those attending the many dissemination events organised by ELLA partners. One way *lectures* in contrast present many obstacles to learning.

The focus on producing rigorous research, to journal level standards, means that this conversation is deep and meaningful, and less likely to lead to confusion, misunderstanding or worse still the risk of actions being taken that are out of context and have the potential for adverse consequences.

Although challenging to run, the Learning Alliances in principle are a process that allows the accessing, understanding and internalisation of learning over a sustained period, supporting the user to gain a fuller appreciation of the evidence and its relevance to their work. Despite the apparent resource-intensity of the study tour, a well-designed tour with carefully chosen participants can prove to be a transformative experience for many, with significant impact potential.

Despite the enormous challenge of taking knowledge from one region to another, expecting it to feed into and inform policies and practices in the *other* region, we have many emerging examples of how ELLA research evidence and knowledge is being accessed and used in countries both in Africa and in Latin America.

In its own significant way, ELLA2 has contributed to building bridges between Latin American and African research centres, between individuals and between organisations, promoting networking between the two regions.

### What are the alternatives?

Our VfM analysis indicates that the programme has been good value for money, but producing good quality, scientific, inter-regional, comparative research does not come cheaply. If the objective is to get as much Latin American evidence and lessons out (to the world), one other option would be a more extreme version of the first phase of ELLA. This would involve producing research evidence only on Latin America, producing it to a grey literature standard say, going more for breadth than depth, and with limited attempt at contextualisation.

This has advantages. It can cover more ground. It spends little time focusing the research evidence to reach any specific intended geographical audience or context i.e. it demands no regional or country targeting of the messages. If the objective is to focus only on what is happening in Latin America, then this approach is well focused. As noted earlier, when both African and Latin American evidence is presented together, there is the temptation on the part of participants from each region to gravitate primarily towards their own regional evidence.

But this approach introduces risks of varying severity. At a minimum, it leaves a great deal of onus on the reader to interpret, understand and contextualise that knowledge to their own reality. At another level, it is quite likely that the Latin American evidence will be judged too easily as irrelevant to say an African reader, since without the contextualisation, it will be deemed too *foreign*. Or worse still, it might inspire actions that pay no attention to context, with the risk of wasted resources or indeed adverse consequences.

### Conclusion

We believe the ELLA model linking *two-way* research with exchange and learning programmes based on that research represents an effective model for promoting South-South knowledge exchange. But for programmes of this complexity, it would be better to have longer timeframe of say four to five years for completion of the project cycle.

# CONTACT US

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