

# Use of Evidence & Role of Policy Intellectuals in Policy Making in India

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# Agenda

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- Policy making in India – What works and what doesn't
- How does evidence currently inform policy process?
- What are the constraints on use of evidence in policy making?
- Can evidence be used more meaningfully? How?
- What is the role of policy intellectuals?

# Policy making in India – What works and what doesn't?

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## ➤ Auction of 3G and 4G spectrum in 2010

- Auctions successful, but rollout still not achieved

## ➤ Auction of 2G spectrum – 2012-13

- Failure – court cases, decisions changed multiple times

## ➤ Introduction of GST

- Process on since 2000, still not operationalized

## ➤ National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) – reasonably well implemented

- States on board, demand pressures, dedicated administrative machinery

# Policy making in India – What works and what doesn't?

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## ➤ **Policy on 100,000 telecentres – 2007**

- Still not fully implemented - connectivity, services, lack of private sector interest

## ➤ **National e-Governance Plan – 2006: 31 Mission Mode Projects, 23 delivering services**

- Central MMPs successful, state and integrated MMPs lagging behind

## ➤ **Framework on Mobile Governance – 2012**

- Implemented, 530+ Govt. Depts. on Board, over 2 million transactions/day, 175 live mobile apps (mgov.gov.in)

## ➤ **National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) - 2012-13**

- Rollout behind schedule

# Why it doesn't work?

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- Too much structural fragmentation – aligning policies with a common agenda is very difficult
  - Science and Technology is dealt with by three ministries and seven departments!
- Very poor or no pre-policy consultative process, no informed debate
  - No structural mechanisms in place
- Policy making and implementation structures overlap
  - Same officials (including secretaries) do both!

# Why it doesn't work? – contd.

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- Politics can derail the policy-making process
  - But poor policy process may accentuate political interference!
- Little role of evidence in policy making!

# How does evidence currently inform policy?

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- Mechanisms in place to conduct prior consultations
  - However, wide variation in quality of the process
- Long debates over major national policies – e.g., National Food Security Bill
- Recently, in many schemes pilots conducted and evaluated before national rollout
- Consultation with outside experts and industry has increased
- Efforts to adopt best practices, especially in ICT and e-governance sector

# Incorporating evidence – the issues

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- Little informed debate over most policies
- Little systematic analysis of costs, benefits, trade-offs among alternatives and impacts
  - Policy process does not provide good scope for inputs from outside government
    - In-house specialists are not always the best!
- Lack of availability of rigorous evidence on impacts
  - Different programs aiming at the same policy outcome can have totally different results
    - Several schemes for rural poverty alleviation, impacts are vastly different
  - How to identify what works and what does not?



# Incorporating evidence – the issues

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- Technical language of the evidence is a big deterrent!
  - Effective communication to the policy audience is key
- Plethora of evidence!
  - How to compare and choose? Lack of technical capacity
- Evidence may not be the only factor while choosing between alternate programs!
  - Political considerations, technical feasibility, admin capacity, funds availability, time equally relevant
- Lack of professional and well informed policy makers

# Can evidence be used better? How?

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- Good scope for incorporating more evidence in policy making
- Foster partnership between researchers and policy makers
- Present evidence in more accessible and understandable format
- Policymakers need to collaborate more with researchers
  - to provide them with the issues for evaluation
  - Understand the evaluations better for incorporating evidence
- Finally, encourage policy intellectuals in policymaking roles!

# Role of Policy Intellectuals

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- Help bridge the gap between research and practice
- Bring more evidence into policymaking
- Make the policy making process more structured and informed
- Encourage rigorous evaluations of impacts of schemes
- Present evidence in more easily understood structure to politicians and policymakers

Several examples of outstanding policy intellectuals in the Indian context

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Thank you!

