

BASIC TOOLS FOR POLICY ANALYSIS

Why analyze Policy?

To be effective and pro-active in advocating for any given policy it is important to analyze the policy to:

- Establish whether the policy exists? Sometimes there are problems because there is no written policy on a particular issue.
- Test its appropriateness in terms of solving the issue/problem that has been identified or whether it is the problem. *(i.e. there is no policy, policy is not implemented, policy has gaps)*
- Identify gaps and or omissions
- Understand key definitions and aspects of the policy for example - What does Budget Support mean in a country's macro-economic context? What is the concept behind it?
- Establish whether the legal aspects have been provided for. In other words is there a related regulatory framework to back up the policy and is it adequate?
- Determine whether it can be/or is being implemented. Are there provisions in the policy or law on how to operationalize the policy framework? Who are the actors and what are their responsibilities? Are the resources adequate? Will they be provided? Be timely?
- Whether the necessary resources are available i.e. the need for technical expertise to assist in the analysis and articulation of the problem in the policy advocacy paper or platform and financial resources.

Using which tools?

1. The first tool is to gather the information about the policy – if a policy is documented acquire the policy documents and related statements, legislation and regulations or bye-laws. One of the best ways of gathering information is to conduct a quality/cost-effective research on the policy. Without proper research you will be unable to determine the origin, rationale and the critical issues surrounding the policy hence making your advocacy effort very difficult.

2. Read and be familiar with the background information to get both the historical perspective and context within which the policy operates. Find out:

- When it was made *(time assists to put things in their proper perspective)* and by whom?
- Who were the actors and how were they involved?
- Determine source of the policy *(some policies derive their legitimacy from global, regional and/or national conferences from which they derive their names. For example the Universal Primary Education initiative in Eastern*

and Southern Africa emanates from the Dakar Framework of Action on EFA/World Conference on Education for All

- Establish the *raison d'être* or rationale for making the policy including key problem being addressed;
- How is the policy linked to other sectors and with what implications?
- *Why is the policy important to you? What is its significance?*

3. Examine other policies, laws, regional and international obligations and establish coherence or divergence with your policy, determine if policy will conflict with other regional or international policies and if there is need for harmonization? *The answer to these questions may have far reaching effects on the policy and at times render it impossible to implement.*

4. If in-house analytical capacity is unavailable, source external expert advice to improve the quality of your analysis.

5. Determine the impact of the policy especially on the poorest/most marginalized sectors of society by:

- Analyzing the policy for its equity dimensions: establish whether the policy is gender sensitive; whether it caters for marginalized groups-children, women, the disabled, nomads, street families, forest dwellers, people in conflict situations (refugees, IDPs)?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses (pros and cons) of the policy (SWOT analysis)? Who are benefiting from the current policy and who are losing out? For example – an import tariff imposed on imported sugar to counter smuggling and protect the local sugar industry may hurt other industries which import sugar as a raw material in their production eg. the beverage making industry has to import sugar because what is on the local market is either insufficient or of poor quality. On the other hand, importers often dump cheap sugar onto the market thereby hurting local producers but benefiting local consumers (at least in the short run!).

6. Examine the ideological framework and underpinnings: these may have an effect on the outcome and the rationale – (religious, political, social and economic).

7. What resources (human, financial and institutional) are available for the implementation of the policy? If policy has a budget, at what level is this controlled (central, local?) and with what consequences? Also consider whether there is equitable allocation of resources (for the implementation of the policy) as well as timely disbursement. Identify the implementers and their implementation strategies.

8. Conduct an analysis and mapping of the key stakeholders:

- Who are the key decision makers (primary targets)?
- Who has the power to change the policy (primary targets)?
- Who has influence over those with power to change policy (secondary targets)?
- Who is directly affected by this policy? Who is indirectly affected? – (allies, constituencies)
- Which other people care enough about this issue to support our cause (allies)?
- Who else is working to change this policy and with what results (experiences, learning or lessons)? – (allies)
- Who else would benefit from being involved in advocating on this policy (constituency)?

What Makes a Good Policy?

Having established the tools for policy analysis we can elicit basic criteria or attributes that make a good policy. A good policy:

- Promotes inclusiveness in the policy making process
- Fosters harmony with other policies – ability to address cross cutting issues
- Is beneficial to the largest number of people
- Does not marginalize or polarize sections of society
- Is allocated adequate resources
- Is implemented with the fewest possible constraints
- Recognizes social values and norms – e.g culture, rights, customs
- Is regularly reviewed, evaluated and up-dated.
- Any others?

Policy analysis entails establishing whether the policy captures, satisfies and contains the above values, criteria and/or attributes. There is therefore need to devise a simple tool that will enable you to gauge the extent to which the policy satisfies each of the above criteria in order to determine where the gaps are and hence your intervention/action and the level at which to enter the process.

The table below has a set of the values in the vertical column and criteria for determining the level at which they have been addressed in the policy document are set out in the horizontal columns. This requires you to signify whether the level of meeting the set value in the policy is satisfactory, fare or poor and to put the reason for the choice and any other comments in the last column. For purposes of clarity you will need to clearly identify and indicate where in the policy document the particular value is mentioned, to make it easier for cross referencing of the table's findings with the policy document. You can then make a tally of the findings and come up with a final conclusion as to whether or not the policy fulfills the expected criteria. Other value judgments that are critical to a particular policy can be added as desired.

Identifying Policy Gaps:

Values	Satisfactory ☺	Fair ☹	Poor ⊗	Remarks
Inclusiveness of policy making process				
Harmony with other policies				
Beneficial (stakeholders)				
Does not marginalize or polarize				
Allocated adequate/timely resources				
Adequate Implementation guidelines				
Recognizes social values and norms – e.g. culture, rights, customs				
Regular review up-dates				

Identifying policy gaps is key to identifying our entry point in the policy making process, laying our strategy for advocacy action and identifying who to bring on board from among relevant stakeholders.