

How to

Incorporate policy engagement into a COSOP

Country-level policy engagement toolkit



How To Do Notes are prepared by the IFAD's **Policy and Technical Advisory Division** and aim to provide practical suggestions and guidelines for country programme managers, project design teams and implementing partners to help them design and implement programmes and projects.

They present technical and practical aspects of specific approaches, methodologies, models or project components that have been tested and can be recommended for implementation and scaling up, including best practices and case studies that work and can be used as a model in a particular field.

How To Do Notes provide tools for good practice design based on best practices collected at the field level. They guide teams on how to implement specific recommendations of IFAD's operational policies, standard project requirements or financing tools.

The **How To Do Notes** are "living" documents and will be updated periodically based on new experiences and on feedback. If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact the originators.

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List of acronyms

| | |
|-------|---|
| AIIM | Alignment, Interest and Influence Matrix |
| CEL | Context, Evidence, Links (Framework) |
| CLPE | country-level policy engagement |
| COSOP | country strategic opportunities programme |
| CPM | country programme manager |
| ICO | IFAD country office |
| PRSP | poverty reduction strategy paper |

Introduction

IFAD's policy engagement has the overall objective of supporting and encouraging national policies that promote inclusive and sustainable rural transformation. This objective can be conceived as being achieved through three outcomes:

- enhancing the participation of smallholders in policy processes
- stimulating the production and utilization of evidence for policy processes
- enhancing the policy capacity of governments.

In turn, these outcomes are achieved through a diverse set of policy-related activities that IFAD either supports, or in some cases conducts. Thus, as part of its strategy to strengthen its development impact, IFAD is concerned to mainstream country-level policy engagement (CLPE) in its country programming, and this means focusing on the issue at the COSOP design stage. The commitment matrix of the IFAD10 consultation report 1 includes the target of: **“100 per cent of COSOPs [that] define a specific approach for country-level policy engagement appropriate to IFAD’s programme in each country”** (Commitment no. 17). This How to Do Note explains both how to address policy engagement within the COSOP and what are likely to be the key elements of “a specific approach”.

The results-based COSOP seeks to position IFAD in the country in question and provide a framework for IFAD's country programme. It is built upon and responds to three overlapping elements (see Figure 1):

- a review of the national macro and sectoral policy framework, which it should support;
- an analysis of rural poverty in the country, its location and the factors contributing to it, as well as the livelihoods of rural people living in poverty;
- an understanding of IFAD's comparative advantage in the country, based upon its mandate and the lessons it has learned through its past experience in the country and beyond.

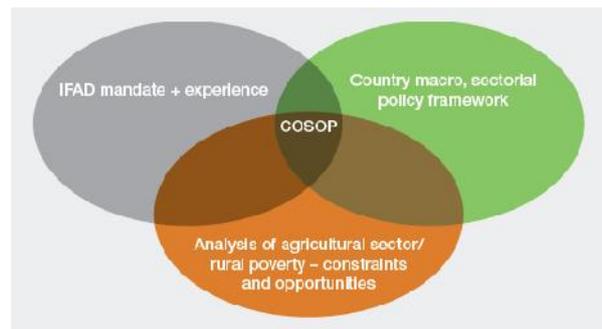


Figure 1. Locating the COSOP

As an integral part of the COSOP, the CLPE agenda needs to respond to all three dimensions.

Key issues

At the heart of the COSOP are the country-specific strategic objectives and the key (outcome) indicators that will be used to measure the changes associated with the achievement of the strategic objectives. The COSOP is expected to describe “the project and non-project activities to be undertaken, including policy engagement, and how they contribute to the achievement of the expected results.” This section will explain how non-project activities are linked with and support investments to achieve the Strategic Objectives.²

Here, the aim is not necessarily that the strategic objectives themselves should be policy-related or that one of the strategic objectives refers explicitly to a specific policy area; on the contrary, the expectation is that, more often, policy engagement will be one of the instruments, along with the projects and other

¹ Report of the Consultation on the Tenth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (2015). Available at: <https://webapps.ifad.org/members/gc/38/docs/GC-38-L-4-Rev-1.pdf>

² Operational Procedures for Country Strategies, approved August 2016.

activities, for the achievement of one, more, or all of the (thematically-oriented) strategic objectives. Thus, a strategic objective such as “improved access of rural people to inclusive financial services” or “increased smallholders’ capacity and opportunities to access markets” would be expected to be achieved through investment projects, combined with engagement on policy issues, focused on these thematic areas.

Put another way, CLPE needs to contribute to the achievement of one or all of the strategic objectives of the COSOP; and it is one of the activities that will be carried out, or tools that will be used, in the thematic areas that support the achievement of the strategic objectives. **So CLPE is intimately linked to the strategic objectives; and, conversely, CLPE that does not contribute to the achievement of the strategic objectives is almost certainly beyond the scope of what IFAD should be doing in the country.**

While IFAD frequently talks of country programmes being made up of “project activities” and “non-project activities”, in reality, the distinction is less clear-cut, and investment projects, grant-financed projects, CLPE, knowledge management and partnerships are all closely linked and interdependent. Projects can:

- support, and frequently operationalize, national policies
- contribute understanding, lessons and evidence that can inform policy development
- support consultative and participatory processes for policy development and negotiation, and support the capacity of the stakeholders involved in those processes
- support the preparation of policy documents; and
- lead the CLPE agenda, often assisted and complemented by the efforts of the CPM/ICO.



Figure 2. Linkages between investment projects and policy engagement

Knowledge management links projects and policy engagement (Figure 2): above all, knowledge products can provide the evidence base upon which IFAD-supported projects, and IFAD itself, can contribute to country-level policy processes.

As shown in Table 1, evidence does not necessarily need to be “researchers’ evidence”; what is important is that it speaks to the specific needs of policymakers. So those products may be reports, briefs or even newspaper articles or films; they may present the results of desk reviews, surveys, interviews with farmers’ groups or the outcomes of policy forums; and they may serve to identify and document policy blockages or limitations, or gaps in policy implementation. It is also the case that the need to establish – and communicate – evidence for policy engagement can provide the clarity of purpose to a project’s knowledge-management agenda and associated activities that may otherwise be lacking.

Table 1. Different notions of evidence

| Researchers’ evidence | Policymakers’ evidence |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ▪ Scientific (context-free) | ▪ Colloquial (contextual) |
| ▪ Proven empirically | ▪ Anything that seems reasonable |
| ▪ Theoretically-driven | ▪ Policy-relevant |
| ▪ As long as it takes | ▪ Timely |
| ▪ Caveats and qualifications | ▪ Clear message |

Source: J. Young and S. Sumarto (2006).

Lessons learned

In defining a “specific approach” (the phrase used in the IFAD10 commitment; see paragraph 61), the intention is that the COSOP should articulate a strategy for CLPE that explains how it will contribute to the achievement of the strategic objectives. It should identify the rationale and the broad areas for policy engagement, as well as the outcomes sought, the approaches to be used and the expected activities.

In some countries, particularly in those where there is already a strong policy engagement strategy and the COSOP does not envisage major changes of direction, it may be possible to go further and define a relatively detailed and complete policy agenda; in others, where there has been limited policy work in the country and the COSOP proposes working in new thematic areas and on new issues, this will be less easy. In the latter case, a detailed agenda will be formed in the course of COSOP implementation, as the challenges of, and opportunities for, achieving the strategic objectives become clearer. **In all cases, space should be left to enable the country programme to capture opportunities by responding to policy openings as they emerge during the course of implementation.**³

A strategy for policy engagement should be built upon the following elements:

- A review of the current country policy framework and institutional context, its specific characteristics, strengths and weaknesses.
- A review of IFAD’s past experiences with policy engagement, if any, under the country programme, an identification of successes realized, and a drawing out of lessons learned.
- An identification of the broad thematic areas in which it is expected that IFAD/IFAD-supported projects will pursue a policy agenda under the COSOP, viewed in terms of their contribution to the achievement of the strategic objectives.
- The approaches (within investment projects, grants, CPM-led) that will be used to pursue policy engagement and the likely activities to be carried out.
- The links to the COSOP agenda for scaling up and knowledge management, and the opportunities/values for partnerships to pursue the agenda.
- An indication of the resources – both financial and human – required to deliver the agenda.

Each of these aspects is described in more detail in the checklist of issues to be covered in developing a COSOP approach for CLPE in section C. The “specific approach” itself can best be developed in a short working paper (5-10 pages), which can be annexed to the main body of the COSOP, and used to form the basis of the necessary inputs into the main body.

The following is a checklist of suggested issues to be covered when preparing the annex and/or the COSOP itself. It is not intended to be comprehensive, and the COSOP design team is not expected to “comply” with it. There may be other questions or topics of relevance in specific country contexts, and it may not always be relevant, or possible, to go through all the topics proposed here. The checklist is therefore intended solely for the purpose of offering broad guidance when thinking through the issues in the process of developing an approach for policy engagement within the country programme.

³ This is, effectively, “strategic opportunism”, or the ability to remain focused on long-term objectives while staying flexible enough to solve day-to-day problems and recognize new opportunities. Isenberg (1987).

Checklist – COSOP approach for CLPE

A. Review of policy and institutional context

1. **Political framework for policymaking.** Here, the issues to understand include: (i) whether the policy framework is broadly state-led or pro-market, and pro-smallholder; (ii) the extent to which responsibilities for policymaking and implementation are decentralized (to state/provincial/district levels); and (iii) to the extent relevant, the link between policymaking at the regional (i.e. supranational) and national levels. Contradictions and duplications should be highlighted, where appropriate.
 2. **Overview of policy framework, including national policies/strategies/programmes.** Here, there is need to focus both on the broad sectoral policies for agriculture and rural development, and on the more specific subsectoral policies in key areas of relevance to the COSOP and its strategic objectives (e.g. policies for irrigation, rural finance, farmer organizations). In some countries, the interest may be in subnational (e.g. state-level) policies.
 3. **Particular features of policy framework.** What are the relevant policy strengths, weaknesses and gaps? Are there any specific policy issues that could constrain project implementation (current and future) and/or the achievement of development impact; and where agreement may be needed relative to a review of the policy?
 4. **Capacity for/approaches to policy formulation and implementation.** To include analysis of the institutions of government (in the ministry of agriculture and beyond, as relevant) responsible for policy development and implementation.
 5. **Implementation gaps** and consequences, particularly at the local level. Does the government have the capacity and political will to implement policy in (remote) rural areas? What are the policy realities for rural people?
 6. **Nature of policy processes.** Is there a history and culture of consultative policy processes in the agricultural sector? If so, who are the key stakeholders? Who is able (and not able) to influence the debate? Who is excluded? Are there any interprofessions, consultative forums, etc., in existence? Or are policy processes closely guarded by the government? Transparency and availability of government information?
 7. **Political economy of key policy issues.** Are there particular policy areas of relevance where there are specific interest groups and influential individuals with a vested interest in maintaining the status quo where policy change is needed, or in changing policies in their favour?
 8. **Forum for policy dialogue between the government and its development partners.** Is there a sector working group (or similar)? How is it structured (hierarchy of groups/committees; who chairs, etc.)? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the arrangement? Are all major stakeholders represented, including rural producer organizations (RPOs)? How representative are RPOs of smallholder farmers?
 9. **Relevant policy-related activities of other development partners.** Are there other development partners of government involved in policy-related activities of relevance to the agriculture and rural development sector? Do these offer opportunities for linkages and collaboration?
-

B. Past IFAD policy engagement and lessons learned

10. **IFAD-supported projects.** Have any IFAD-supported projects, and/or the country programme manager (CPM) or IFAD country office (ICO) (i) had a policy-related component/subcomponent; or (ii) been involved in any policy processes?
 11. **Other policy-related activities.** Have there been any policy-related activities beyond the projects – grants, involvement of CPM/ICO?
 12. **Achievements and lessons learned.** What has been realized in terms of both outputs and outcomes? Are there any particular successes that can be highlighted? Are there any lessons as to what has worked/not worked in terms of both the specific policy areas and the approaches used? Does IFAD have a specific comparative advantage in any particular area/approach?
-

C. Potential broad areas for policy engagement

13. **Thematic areas.** Broad definition of areas (e.g. irrigation, rural finance), specific policy areas within them, where possible (e.g. irrigation system management, agricultural finance). Which strategic objectives do they contribute to, and how? Is there scope for dialogue/progress in these areas, and reasonable prospects for open debate?
-

D. Approach, activities and resources required

14. **Country view of IFAD's role.** How do relevant ministries see IFAD's role in policy processes? Do other national stakeholders have a view of IFAD's possible role?
 15. **How will CLPE be done?** Will CLPE be included as a component/subcomponent within projects? Will it be advanced through the grants programme? What will be the role of the CPM or the ICO?
 16. **Likely activities.** Draw on the typology of activities (CLPE guide book, chapter 2) without being limited by it.
 17. **Resource requirements.** What are the financial and human resources that can be applied to the CLPE agenda? (Is the agenda realistic given the resource availability?)
-

E. Linkages to other aspects of COSOP

-
18. **Role of CLPE in scaling-up strategy.** Is policy engagement the principal mechanism for scaling up, or does CLPE represent only a part of a broader scaling-up strategy?
-
19. **Role of knowledge management.** How will the knowledge-management strategy, within and beyond the projects, contribute to the CLPE agenda?
-
20. **Partnerships.** Who are likely and possible partners in pursuing the policy agenda?
-

Guidance for design

How long does it take to develop a CLPE strategy and who should do it? It is suggested that a minimum two-week, full-time input (and ideally more) would be required to develop the minimum elements of the strategy, though this depends on both the specific country context and the extent to which the person responsible for developing it has been involved in the country programme. It is likely to be easier for an outposted CPM, the CPO or a local consultant than for someone with less in-country experience. A combination of the CPO and a consultant/PTA specialist may be an effective one. In addition, the in-country country programme management team can provide an excellent point of reference for building an understanding of the key issues.

As part of the process of developing a CPLPE strategy, sources of documentation, and information more broadly, would include those of the government and of IFAD and IFAD-supported projects. Knowledge products from projects, supervision reports, as well as the performance-based allocation system rural policy assessment, are likely to be important sources. Other sources would include:

- other relevant development partners in-country
- development policy research institutes, both international⁴ and national
- NGOs
- farmers' organizations
- private-sector bodies, such as industry associations or chambers of commerce.

There exist a number of specific tools that can be used at different steps in the process of drafting a COSOP, as a way of structuring discussion with the in-country CPMT or among the IFAD staff and consultants writing the COSOP. Five tools, in particular, can be used to facilitate an event where information is gathered in a participatory way and all participating can contribute to the process of designing strategies or giving feedback. These are:

- **Contribution analysis** – helpful in analysing IFAD's previous policy engagement experience in country before planning a new strategy.
- **Context, Evidence, Links Framework** – can provide important information about the context in which IFAD is working.
- **Horizon scanning** – helps to prioritize among competing policy topics to work on.
- **Alignment interest and influence matrix** – can be used to identify stakeholders and their positions on policy issues.
- **K* framework** – helps to structure the policy and knowledge-management plans of the COSOP so that they best interact.

All of these are described in more depth in Appendix 1: Additional resources and tools.

⁴ Possible sources include Michigan State University, the International Food Policy Research Institute, the Overseas Development Institute, the International Institute for Environment and Development, FAO Monitoring and Analysing Food and Agricultural Policies Unit, and the Latin American Center for Rural Development.

Appendix 1: Additional resources and tools

Alignment, Interest and Influence Matrix

What is it and why should I use it?

The Alignment, Interest and Influence Matrix (AIIM)⁵ helps you to map and understand the different people or groups that COSOP or project design teams need to be aware of when planning a policy engagement strategy, and how IFAD needs to work with them to achieve its goals (for example, the policymakers you are trying to influence or other organizations that are doing similar work). Using this tool, you think about how aligned these stakeholders are with the policy engagement objectives, how interested they are in the policy issue and how much influence they have upon achieving the desired policy change. By doing this, you will better understand your stakeholders and how you need to work with them to achieve your goals. This exercise can be a valuable first step to really improving policy engagement.

Expected uses and outcomes

Use the AIIM tool in a workshop or group setting. Having a variety of people in the group will ensure you do not miss any important stakeholders and that you hear different perspectives.

The tool can be useful in the planning stages of the COSOP or projects, to think about the scope of your engagement and where to put your resources. You can also use it during implementation to consolidate thinking about who is involved and how to work together. And you can use it at the end of the COSOP or project, as a monitoring and learning tool to track how stakeholders have been influenced.

The tool

AIIM is a four-dimensional matrix. The first two dimensions are the degree to which stakeholders agree or disagree with your policy position and how interested they are in the policy issue (see Figure A1.1). The next two dimensions are the “power” they have to influence the policy issue and the “power” you have to influence them.

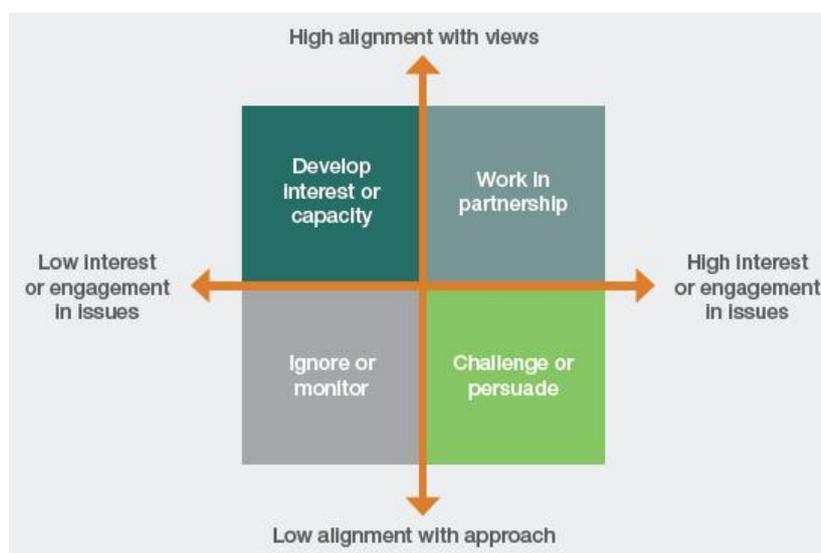


Figure A1.1. The first two dimensions of the Alignment, Interest and Influence Matrix

Source: RAPID Outcome Mapping Approach (ROMA): a guide to policy engagement and policy influence. Overseas Development Institute, 2014. Available at www.roma.odi.org

⁵ Research and Policy in Development (RAPID)/Overseas Development Institute (ODI) developed the AIIM tool in 2007, and have used it in over 50 workshops with researchers and research institutions around the world.

The steps

- 1 **Discuss and identify your COSOP or project policy objective (be specific).**
- 2 **Put a sheet of flipchart paper on the wall and appoint a scribe.**
- 3 **Draw two axes on the paper.**
 - Horizontal axis for stakeholder level of interest.
 - Vertical axis for stakeholder level of alignment with the objective.
- 4 **Referring to your policy objective, write down all stakeholders you can think of on post-it notes (one stakeholder per post-it note).**
 - Be as specific as possible, i.e. do not just write “donors”, name them.
 - Do not be limited to one post-it note per organization. If different teams or people have different degrees of alignment, then separate them.
- 5 **Place the post-it notes on the AIIM one by one.**
 - As people place their post-it note on the AIIM, explain to the group why they are putting it in that position.
 - This may lead to discussion – which is good.
- 6 **Look at the different matrix groupings.**
 - The top-right quadrant is **working in partnership**: these stakeholders agree with your aims and are interested. You may want to form a “community of practice” with these stakeholders. You could share ideas and contacts. Stakeholders from this group could also become champions to advocate for your project.
 - The top-left quadrant is **develop interest or capacity**: they agree with you, they are simply not that motivated or have greater priorities. You may want to energize or motivate these stakeholders. You could start to engage with them and develop a communications plan, share human-interest stories, reach out via media and advocacy.
 - The bottom-right quadrant is **challenge or persuade**: they are interested in the topic, but do not agree. You may want to try to convince these people of your viewpoint. Evidence works best with these stakeholders. Communicating human-interest stories and engaging them in debate can help. Using “champions” to reach this group can also be useful. Although, in some cases, there may not be much you can do.
 - The lower left quadrant is **ignore or monitor**: you may want to forget this group because these people are not interested and they do not agree. If they are not important for your project’s success, ignore them and focus resources elsewhere.
- 7 **Draw arrows to show where you want your stakeholders to move.**
 - Start to draw arrows showing where you would like stakeholders to move across quadrants. For example, is an important stakeholder currently in the bottom-right quadrant “challenge or persuade” and you want them to be in the top-right quadrant “working in partnership”?
 - Pick those that are most important to your project. Five or six is enough. Each of these arrows represents a potential engagement strategy later, so by restricting this to five or six ensures it is manageable.
- 8 **Use the sticker dots to identify power or influence on the post-it notes on the flipchart.**
 - If you do not have sticker dots, use coloured pens.
 - The dot symbolizes power or influence. If the stakeholder has a lot of power or influence over your project, place three stickers on the post-it. If it has medium influence, place two. If it has low or limited influence, place one. If it has no influence, place none.
 - Use this to help prioritize who and where you focus your energy and resources.
- 9 **Determine your priorities and outline action points.**
 - As you decide where to focus your energy and resources, make a note (on a separate flipchart) of follow-up actions you are going to take to make changes in the directions you have identified.
 - As you assemble a list of actions, decide who will take each one forward and ensure they are clear about how to do so.
 - Keep your final matrix as you may want to use it for other tools, such as progress markers (tool x), force-field analysis (tool x) or outcome mapping (tool x).

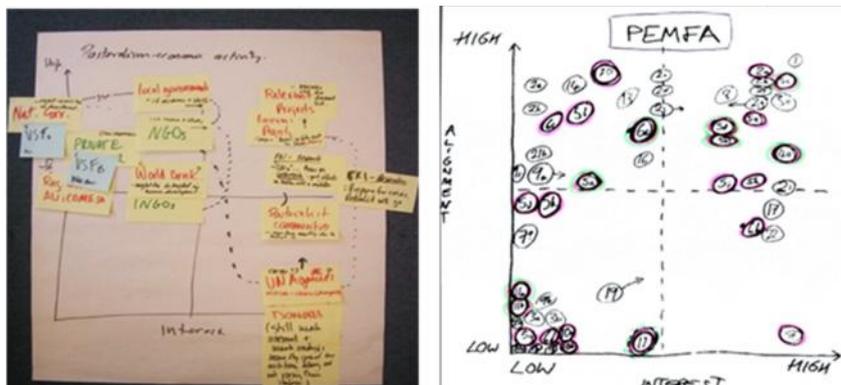


Figure A1.2. Examples of an AIIM map in action

Source: Overseas Development Institute, Research and Policy in Development programme, 2017.

Context, Evidence, Links Framework

What is it and why should I use it?

The Context, Evidence, Links (CEL) Framework is a conceptual tool to think through the context within which IFAD is working as part of the design and implementation phases of COSOPs and projects. It considers how information has been used, shaped or ignored by policymakers and how evidence could be used more effectively for policymaking. The three components of the framework can provide valuable information about policy windows, key policy actors and networks, gaps in existing evidence, alternative means of communication and trends, and changes in the external environment.⁶

Addressing all these issues can prove a daunting task – this tool can help ease the process. If time is limited and you need a lighter version of the tool, eight priority questions have been identified that can be considered instead. Also, it is likely that you know many of the answers to the questions already, but outlining them helps to build a clear contextual picture.

Expected uses and outcomes

The CEL Framework should be used when analysing political change and the factors that affect the role of evidence in influencing policy. It should be used when seeking to understand the links between an intervention's tactics, activities and inputs, and the corresponding changes in policy.

The framework is particularly helpful to strategize during design phases. The exercise is likely to draw on strengths and weaknesses of past interventions, and therefore may provide lessons on how you could adjust your work to make your impact greater. Making corresponding changes to your COSOP will help to capture the adjustments or to outline new methods or approaches that need to be made.

The tool

The framework focuses on three areas:

Context: This means considering the larger political arena, for example, the form of government (non-, semi- or fully democratic), type of institutions or level of media and academic freedom. How strong is the demand for policy change? What are the incentives for change? Do civil servants have room to manoeuvre? Do they employ participatory approaches? What are the best windows of opportunity to attempt policy change?

Evidence and communication: It is important when advocating for change to look at the quality of evidence and communication. Policy influence often comes about when messages are packaged and targeted effectively to their audience, and when you engage in dialogue with policymakers rather than talking “at them”.

Links: The framework emphasizes how networks and relationships can influence policy change. Are there



Figure A1.3. The Context, Evidence, Links Framework

Source: RAPID Outcome Mapping Approach (ROMA): a guide to policy engagement and policy influence. Overseas Development Institute, 2014. Available at www.roma.odi.org

⁶ The CEL Framework was developed by the RAPID team at ODI in 2002, and has been used by programmes and organizations around the world. See Crewe and Young (2002), *Bridging Research and Policy: Context, Evidence and Links*. ODI Working Paper 173. Available at: www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/184.pdf.

effective feedback processes with policymakers that are based on a foundation of trust? Links demonstrate the level of trust between different communities .

Guide questions (the eight priority questions are highlighted)

| CONTEXT | |
|-----------------|---|
| 1 | Who are the key policy actors? |
| 2 | Is there a demand for research and new ideas among policymakers? |
| 3 | What are the sources of resistance to evidence-based policymaking? |
| 4 | What is the policy environment? a. What are the policymaking structures? b. What are the policymaking processes? c. What is the relevant legal/policy framework? d. What are the opportunities and timing for input into formal processes? |
| 5 | How do global, national and local political, social and economic structures and interests affect policymakers' room to manoeuvre? |
| 6 | Who shapes the aims and outputs of policies? |
| 7 | How do assumptions influence policymaking? To what extent are decisions routine, incremental, fundamental or emergent, and who supports or resists change? |
| EVIDENCE | |
| 8 | What are the prevailing narratives? |
| 9 | Is there enough evidence (research-based, experience and statistics) to support them? |
| 10 | What type of evidence exists? What type convinces policymakers? How is evidence presented? |
| 11 | Is the evidence relevant? Is it accurate, material and applicable? |
| 12 | How was the information gathered and by whom? |
| 13 | Are the evidence and the source perceived as credible and trustworthy by policy actors? |
| 14 | Has any information or research been ignored and why? |
| LINKS | |
| 15 | Who are the key stakeholders (from AIIM)? |
| 16 | Who are the experts? |
| 17 | What links and networks exist between them? |
| 18 | What roles do they play? Are they intermediaries between research and policy? |
| 19 | Whose evidence do they communicate? |
| 20 | Which individuals or institutions have significant power to influence policy? |
| 21 | Are these policy actors and networks legitimate? Do they have a constituency, if so, whom? |

Source: Adapted from Start and Hovland (2004: 18).

The steps

CEL can be developed individually and with minimal resources responses to the guide questions can be sketched. Alternatively, CEL can be conducted by a group. If working in a group:

- 1 **Divide participants into groups of around three .**
- 2 **Put three sheets of flipchart paper on the wall and appoint a scribe.**
 - Label one Context, one Evidence and one Links.
 - Place the Links paper below Context and Evidence so that they almost form a circle.
- 3 **Discuss and determine which area of your work will be analysed.**
 - If sufficiently narrow, this could be all of your work or you could pick a particular policy area.
- 4 **Work through the guide questions.**
 - Write the answers to each question on post-it notes and add to the flipchart paper.
 - Be as specific as possible.
 - Explain your answers to the group as you put them up.
- 5 **Add a new sheet of flipchart paper alongside links titled “recommendations”.**
 - Discuss what you have learned from the exercise and how you might apply it to your work.
 - Write down possible recommendations as you go.
 - If appropriate, add an action and person who will lead the action next to each recommendation.

Box A1.1. An example of CEL - Poverty reduction strategies

In September 1999, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) adopted a new approach to aid – Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). How did the idea of the PRSPs come to be adopted? What was the role of research in this process – both “academic research” in general and the “applied policy research” within the World Bank and the IMF? An Overseas Development Institute (ODI) case study traces the various factors that contributed to this far-reaching policy shift.

Political context. The most important contextual factor that shaped the PRSP initiative was the convergence of debates and controversies in the field of international development in the late 1990s. This led to a widespread sense of there being “a problem” within the international development policy field even though policymakers did not agree on the exact nature of the problem. The challenges that needed to be addressed, particularly by the World Bank and the IMF included:

- The questioning of the mandates of the IMF and World Bank – in the light of the 1997 Asia Crisis and the failure of Structural Adjustment Programmes to resolve Africa’s development problems.
- The 1999 Review of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative and the campaign to make debt relief “broader, deeper, faster, better”.
- The need to operationalize the new conceptual framework for aid put forward by World Bank President James Wolfensohn’s Comprehensive Development Framework.

The PRSP initiative can be viewed as bringing together all these interlinked concerns, and providing answers or at least partial solutions to the issues that needed to be addressed. It, therefore, received broad-based support from many different parties.

Evidence. There were three main types of evidence that influenced the emergence of the PRSP initiative. First, academic research contributed, often indirectly, to the major shifts in international development discourse towards poverty reduction, participation and aid effectiveness. Second, there were important pieces of applied policy research undertaken in the late 1990s, in particular the research related to the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) reviews, the HIPC review, the Strategic Partnership with Africa Working Groups, and the NGO research on debt relief. This evidence focused more on providing policy recommendations and operational solutions. This was seen as particularly credible when it was commissioned by the international financial institutions themselves or other donors, demonstrated analytical rigour, and was communicated in a language that was accessible and relevant to World Bank and IMF staff and other donor agencies. Third, an extremely powerful demonstration effect was provided by the positive experience of Uganda in drafting the Poverty Eradication Action Plan. This did much to convince policymakers of the feasibility and merits of the poverty reduction strategy model.

Links. The PRSP story is characterized by a multitude of links between policymakers and researchers in main institutional actors – the World Bank and the IMF, Strategic Partnership with Africa, the governments of the United Kingdom and the United States of America, and the NGO movement. As one interviewee put it, “none of the players is more than two handshakes away from any of the others”. The formal and informal networks contributed to the speed with which the PRSP ideas were spread and accepted in international development policy.

Source: ODI, 2004: www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/198.pdf.

Horizon scanning

What is it and why should I use it?

Horizon scanning can be used when beginning to write a new COSOP, as it can help to identify which topics are going to be a higher priority in the near and upcoming future, and on this basis assess and prioritize policy topics to engage with. For example, a change in government often leads to a change in policy focus; or a global agreement – such as the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals – may prompt national governments to respond by ensuring that their policies reflect and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals. In both cases, a possible political window may be created, and this can be capitalized upon.

Horizon scanning uses the STEEPLE mnemonic to guide you through a series of steps to scan the context, considering social, technological, economic, environmental, legal and ethical factors. The framework originated in business strategic planning.

Applying the tool helps to scan the horizon systematically to identify emerging issues that are starting to appear. It can be used to assess and prioritize opportunities. Most of us do this on a regular basis in our own lives, looking at jobs that are appearing in the industry, new technologies that are surfacing or new economic policies that may affect us.

Expected uses and outcomes

Information from the horizon scan can be used to communicate to outside parties why particular interventions and policy areas were chosen. For example, as COSOPs can only fit a limited number of projects within the time frame, the horizon scan can explain why it was important to focus on the issues that were selected.

This tool can be used as a desk-based exercise by one person or by a team.

The tool

The horizon scanning tool uses the STEEPLE framework, a mnemonic to guide you through a series of steps to scan the context. It considers social, technological, economic, environmental, legal and ethical factors:

S – Social: The social steps prompt you to take a closer look at social and cultural factors within the environment.

T – Technological: Are there any technological changes that may make a significant difference within the context? Mobile banking may be one example.

E – Economic: Are there going to be large shifts in economics over this next period? Examples can include inflation, economic growth, or perhaps international trade.

E – Environmental: Environmental factors affect smallholders in a specific way. Are there any environmental issues that may require priority? For example, climate change is affecting smallholder farmers more acutely and may be a priority.

P – Political: How does the government intervene in the economy? Specifically, political factors includes areas such as tax policy, labour law, environmental law, trade restrictions, tariffs and political stability.

L – Legal: What are the legal and regulatory factors (a subset of the political factors above) that either create or constrain the emergence of economic opportunities in the rural areas?

E – Ethical: Ethical factors may be a strong priority, and always an issue when considering smallholder farmers. Issues such as food security, women's access to land or food safety are specific examples.

Considering each factor, the horizon is scanned to anticipate what might arise over two years, two to five years, or five plus years.

| | 0-2 years | 2-5 years | 5+ years |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Society | | | |
| Technology | | | |
| Environment | | | |
| Economics | | | |
| Politics | | | |
| Legal | | | |
| Ethical | | | |

The steps

Before starting, it is important to narrow down the scope of the area you are looking to engage in. What is the specific area you are looking to interact in? What are the boundaries? How far into the future are you looking?

1. **Place a sheet of flipchart paper on the wall and appoint a scribe.**
 - You may need more sheets of paper as you go.
2. **Outline the STEEPLE acronym on the left side of the flipchart. Next, put down a time line at the top.**
 - For the purpose of this example, we have borrowed the time line presented in the United Kingdom's Futures Toolkit; however, the time line can be adjusted depending on your scope.
3. **Brainstorm the possible contextual factors that will most likely occur in the near future and those in the distant future.**
 - Discuss each STEEPLE contextual factor and decide what are the scenarios that need to be anticipated over two years, two to five years, or five plus years.
 - These contextual factors may help you to spot policy opportunities that are useful for your policy issue, or they may hinder the advancement of your policy issue and so may need to be addressed in advance.
 - For example, what are the social and cultural factors to consider in the near future? This could be cultural events or shifts in public opinion. This could include sports events such as the Olympics or the World Cup, or perhaps public opinion is moving in a direction that could provide you with a policy window.
 - What technology could influence your policy issue? Mobile phone technology is the most obvious example. Agricultural technology innovations could include the introduction of new seeds.
 - What are the key economic factors that may sway your policy issue in the near future? What policy opportunities are available? You may identify the growing risk of food insecurity in a region and the potential impact on the price of crops.
 - What are the key environmental factors that may dominate your issue? This could be elements of climate change, such as an expected earthquake or drought.
 - What are the key political matters that may influence your policy in the next few years? Are there any upcoming elections? Are there coordinating groups that are trying to focus on particular areas that may affect your policy issue?
 - What are the legal concerns in the near future that may affect your policy area? What policy windows are available to push for your policy issue?
 - What are the ethical matters that may influence your policy?
4. **In turn, fill out the entire framework.**
 - If you are in a group, discuss these issues together. This helps to ensure that you are being systematic and all-encompassing.
5. **Once you have finished filling out the framework, conduct your own analysis. Ask yourself:**
 - Has this contextual horizon scanning been all encompassing? Are there any areas that are missing?
 - Given the information in the framework, what areas are most pressing to work on? Is there an area that is more urgent than others? Urgent can be defined as having a shorter timespan for influence (for example, those policy issues that require action in 0-2 years), or those that are further in the future but require a lot of preparation.
 - Is it possible to prioritize all the emerging issues? This can help determine which emerging contextual issue to focus on first if you have enough resources to focus on more than one contextual issue. You may know collaborators who can help you pool resources to focus on one particular issue.

K* framework

What is it and why should I use it?

The K* framework provides an understanding of what type of knowledge function IFAD will play during the course of the COSOP or the project, and is therefore more related to defining an appropriate knowledge-management strategy (though, as highlighted above, knowledge management is highly linked to policy engagement). It allows IFAD – or projects – to consider how to work together with others. When developing the policy engagement plan, or the policy activities and component, the K* framework may be useful to consider how information is used and how to gain the best traction for policy impact. By applying the framework, it is possible to decide how to work with knowledge.

Some stakeholders (who may be identified from the Alignment, Interest and Influence Matrix or AIIM), will require information that may be difficult for you to provide. It may be necessary to engage with others who could help you to communicate more effectively. The key use of this framework is to understand that a producer of knowledge may not be in the best position to communicate that knowledge to the stakeholder. This may require other stakeholders or organizations that serve a different function.

Expected uses and outcomes

When developing your policy engagement plan, the K* framework may be useful in considering how information is used and how you can gain the best traction for policy impact. This is important when you want to consider your approach to policy engagement. By applying the framework, you can decide how you work with knowledge. Depending on what you find, you may consider that some type of policy work is not possible for you to do alone and, you must establish partnerships with others to do this effectively. This framework should explain to you what type of organization to look for when searching for partners.

This exercise can be done quickly by one person or as a group.

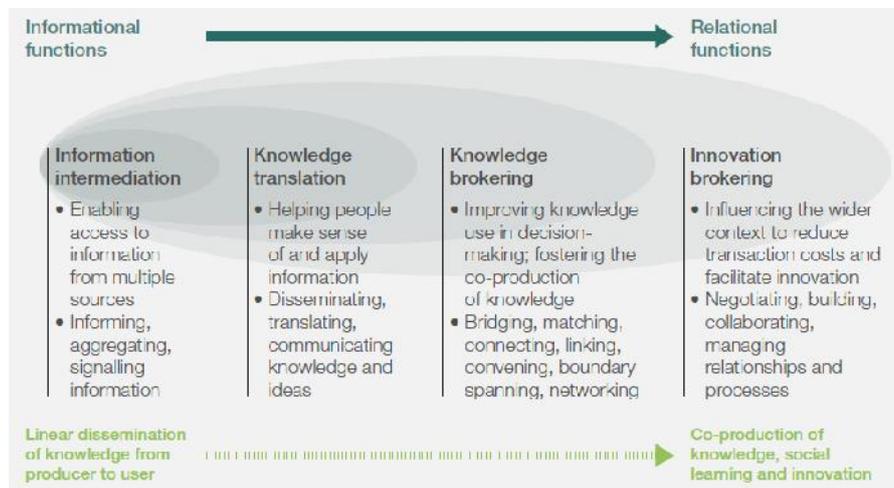


Figure A1.4. The K* framework

Source: Shaxson L. (2016). Achieving policy impact: guidance note. London: DFID-ESRC Growth Research Programme and ODI. Available at <http://degrp.squarespace.com/research-impact/>

K* framework consists of four concentric circles, each representing a different knowledge function (Figure A1.4).

- The first circle focuses on the first knowledge function, which is **information intermediary**. This function is focused on enabling access to information from multiple sources. Information intermediaries are often represented as knowledge producers.

- The second circle represents **knowledge translators**. Knowledge translators take primary sources of information and look at the implications of the information, often looking for the “what now?” question. Translating the knowledge provides an additional function for the knowledge that is useful for end users.
- The third circle focuses on **knowledge brokers**. Organizations that fulfil this role link up the right information with the right issue. This can be a difficult task if the information is not available.
- The last role is that of **innovation broker**. Organizations that fulfil this function focus on the co-creation of knowledge, social learning and innovation between knowledge producers and knowledge users.

As you travel to the right of the framework, the relationship between the knowledge producer and the knowledge users increases in intensity.

An important implication of the framework is that each project can only occupy one or, at the most, two knowledge functions at a time. It is difficult for projects and/or organizations to operate at different ends of the spectrum together. Most projects fulfil one or two functions at a time. As a result, when considering your policy engagement plan, it should be important to consider what knowledge function your project is serving.

The steps

Before starting, ensure as a group that you agree on the scope of your project.

Looking at either your project, or your organization’s relationship with knowledge, consider what is your knowledge function.

- Most organizations and projects generally occupy only one function.
- Some organizations may occupy two functions, but the functions overlap.
- Rarely does an organization or project occupy functions that do not overlap.

Next consider other organizations in the policy arena.

- First find examples of the extremes. What organizations serve as an information intermediary? What organizations serve as an innovation broker?
- Next find examples of organizations that serve as knowledge translators and knowledge brokers.

Reflect upon the questions below to help you think through any refinements and possible next steps.

- Are there any gaps? Is there a missing function in your policy arena?
 - Is it possible to collaborate with other organizations that fulfil other knowledge functions? Often times it is best to work in teams to bring about the greatest probability of impact.
 - Separation of state powers: Do you understand the checks and balances between different branches of government, and between central and local governments? How do different branches of government able to source, interpret evidence differently? What checks and balances are in place to ensure the weaker voices are heard? Does this vary between different state types?
 - Formal and informal political relationships: What are the links between formal and informal political relationships? How do opportunities for public debate affect whether non-elites can express their preferences in decisions? Who has the strongest voice in policy debates?
 - External forces: How do international agreements affect what is debated and implemented by governments? How does this have wider implications for wider evidence bases?
 - Capacity of institutions to absorb change: How do policymakers interact with each other and their capacity to absorb information? What implications are there for possible “policy windows”?
 - Not all questions and issues here will be relevant, but they cover all areas of political analysis and ensure a more systematic analysis.
-

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