Policy Processes - Part 1
Making Sense of Policy Processes
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by

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for the

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, FAO

FAO Policy Learning Programme aims at strengthening the capacity of high level policy makers in member countries in the field of policies and strategies for agricultural and rural development by providing cutting-edge knowledge and facilitating knowledge exchange, and by reviewing practical mechanisms to implement policy changes.

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Table of contents

1. Summary ............................................................................................................................ 1
2. Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 1
3. Introducing and Defining Policy Processes ......................................................................... 2
4. A proposed road map to understand and address policy processes .................................... 10
5. Requirements before undertaking policy work ................................................................... 11
6. Ex-ante Assessments of the Impacts of Policies on Livelihood and/or Socio-Economy ....... 11
   6.1. Socio-economic assessments ...................................................................................... 12
   6.2. Sustainable Livelihoods Framework ........................................................................... 15
   6.3. EXTRAPOLATE – A practical tool for ex ante analysis ........................................... 17
7. Context .................................................................................................................................. 18
   7.1. Types of policies and institutions ............................................................................... 18
   7.2. Type of policy process we are looking at ................................................................. 20
   7.3. What is the governance context ................................................................................. 21
     7.3.1. Political context ................................................................................................. 21
     7.3.2. Institutional set up and bureaucratic conditions ... 23
     7.3.3. Voice, responsiveness and policy spaces ......................................................... 24
8. Actors .................................................................................................................................... 29
   8.1. Defining actors and networks ..................................................................................... 29
   8.2. Dealing with Power Issues ......................................................................................... 33
9. Content ................................................................................................................................. 36
   9.1. Type and quality assessment of content .................................................................... 36
   9.2. Dealing with policy discourses and narratives ........................................................... 37
   9.3. The importance of evidence-based policies ............................................................... 39
     9.3.1. Research-policy links ......................................................................................... 39
     9.3.2. Projects as source of evidence in shaping policy content .................................... 43
10. Monitoring and Evaluating Policy Impacts and Processes ............................................. 44
11. Policy analysis – A tool for to help policy makers through the policy process stages ...... 49
   11.1. Defining policy analysis ............................................................................................ 49
   11.2. Basic steps in policy analysis .................................................................................... 50
     11.2.1. Identifying policy objectives .............................................................................. 50
11.2.2. Generating and choosing policy instruments ........................................ 52
11.2.3. Implementing policy instruments ...................................................... 53
11.2.4. Monitoring and evaluating policy reforms ......................................... 56
11.3. Policy analysis and policy making ...................................................... 57
11.4. Constraints in the use of policy analysis .............................................. 58

12. References ............................................................................................. 61

Annex 1: List of Acronyms ............................................................................. 68

Module metadata .......................................................................................... 69
1. **SUMMARY**

This background material concerns policy processes – the ways policy reforms are planned, designed, implemented and evaluated – which significantly influence policy outcomes and impacts on people’s livelihoods.

Part 1 of this material aims at providing ways and means to better make sense of policy processes. It starts with an introduction to policy processes, including how these can be defined and a summary Table on the main models used to explain policy processes. This is followed by considerations on the main elements that grasp policy processes and work on these, including context, actors, content, impact and the main stages of policy processes (i.e. agenda setting, decision making on policy objectives and instruments, implementation and monitoring and evaluation). The Final Section of this part concerns policy analysis, as a useful tool to address the various stages of policy processes (i.e. agenda setting, defining objectives/instruments/options, implementing and monitoring and evaluation).

2. **INTRODUCTION**

**Objectives**

The purpose of this document is to provide background material on policy processes to the participants of the FAO Training Programme on Policies and Strategies for Agriculture and Rural Development. It is deliberately written with the goal of addressing the challenge faced by senior civil servants: broad policy directives and development targets come through to them from parliament and from international processes and they are then tasked with putting vision into practice.

**Target audience**

The target audience of this document is high level policy makers in the fields of agriculture and rural development in FAO Member countries.

**Required background**

The real problem that policy makers face is how to put all of the rhetoric about how to put policy processes into action under strict constraints of time, staff and budget, externally enforced targets and organisational insecurity that characterise the civil service in most countries of the world. The spirit of this module therefore assumes that the participants on this course are most likely to be interested in course materials that help them move from the “what” policies do– which will have been addressed in the other modules of the course – towards the “how” to better make policies and make better policies.

The emphasis on “how” aspects of policy making explain why this material has attempted in as much as possible on practical aspects, with theoretical considerations limited to the minimum required for easy understanding of the arguments and advice. In that spirit, the core of the material will include many “helping tips” such as check lists, summary tables, probing questions and boxes with real-case examples, and more theoretical explanations in annex.
A basic assumption of the material is that the work of policy makers is towards achieving goals of poverty reduction and sustainable resource use, as voiced for instance in the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This does not mean that all policies should focus on the poor and reducing their poverty. Indeed some policies might target the corporate sector or civil servants. The key point then is that policies, at a minimum, do not harm the poor. However, this document acknowledges that poverty is about the distribution (not just the absolute amount) of resources and of political power among different social groups.

Part 1 of this material aims at providing ways and means to better make sense of policy processes. It starts with an introduction to policy processes, including how these can be defined and a summary Table on the main models used to explain policy processes. This is followed by considerations on the main elements that grasp policy processes and work on these. The Final Section of this part concerns policy analysis, as a useful tool to address the various stages of policy processes (i.e. agenda setting, defining objectives/instruments/options, implementing and monitoring and evaluation).

Part 2 of this material discusses ways and means to achieve more effective policy making.

Finally, Part 3 discusses different factors that are important to achieve State-citizen synergy in policy processes, namely participation, communication and negotiation.

Readers can follow links included in the text to other EASYPol modules or references. See also the list of EASYPol links included at the end of this module.

3. INTRODUCING AND DEFINING POLICY PROCESSES

In several circumstances national governments, international organizations and development practitioners examine policy issues in detail and propose seemingly sound and effective policy solutions. But country governments often end up implementing different, and often ineffective, policy options.

A variety of disciplines, including political economy, sociology and management, have attempted to explain why governments do what they do – which often diverges from what they are expected to do. Whereas comprehensive and omni-valid explanations have not been and will not be found, nor is this a sensible objective, these theories concur that the process of public policy making matters, policy process being the way government forms a political vision and translates it into policy objectives and instruments. In other words, technical government departments cannot just generate and/or be provided with optimal policy solutions, but it is the entire policy process through which the government takes a

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1 EASYPol hyperlinks are shown in blue, as follows:
   a) training paths are shown in underlined bold font
   b) other EASYPol modules or complementary EASYPol materials are in bold underlined italics;
   c) links to the glossary are in bold; and
   d) external links are in italics.

2 This module is part of the EASYPol Training Path: Policy Learning Programme, Module 4: Policy and Strategy Formulation, Session 1: Making sense of policy processes.
decision that ultimately determines the kind of policy reform that is agreed upon, its outcomes and impacts.

There are a number of definitions on the policy process drawing attention to the role of the public sector and to the dynamics of policy identification and formulation, as listed below:

- ‘A policy process is the manner in which problems get conceptualized and brought to government for solution; governmental institutions formulate alternatives and select policy solutions; and those solutions get implemented, evaluated, and revised’.

- The policy process refers to ‘all aspects of what is involved in providing policy direction for the work of the public sector. These include the ideas which inform policy conception, the talk and work which goes into providing the formulation of policy directions, and all the talk, work and collaboration which goes into translating these directions into practice’.

- ‘Understanding the policy process requires a knowledge and perceptions of hundreds of actors throughout the country involving possibly very technical scientific and legal issues over periods of a decade or more when most of those actors are actively seeking to propagate their specific ‘spin’ on events’.

**Box 1: Policy paradigms and policy making**

Policy paradigms are embedded in popular and technical culture, take a long time to evolve, and decision-makers and analysts rarely dare to challenge them openly. For example, few would nowadays state that a top-down planning approach to development is more effective than a bottom-up participatory strategy; yet, from the 1950s to the 1970s top-down development approaches were considered as largely effective, particularly in socialist developed and developing countries. On the other hand, these days participatory bottom-up development strategies are deemed crucial for effective policy making, such as for instance community-driven development approaches operating ‘on the principles of local empowerment, participatory governance, demand-responsiveness, administrative autonomy, greater downward accountability, and enhanced local capacity’ (www.worldbank.org).

The ways policy problems are addressed are therefore complex: they can be balanced or unbalanced, smooth or uneven, path-dependent or innovative, involve a multiplicity of stakeholders, and are very much country, time and sector specific. Ideally, however, any policy process at minimum includes four stages:

- **agenda-setting**, which involves the identification of an issue / a problem to be addressed;

- **formal decision-making** on the selection of policy objectives and instruments, based on policy analysis and the influence of different elements (context, actors, etc);

- **policy implementation**; and

- **policy monitoring and evaluation**.

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3 Sabatier, 1999.
In an ideal world these steps would be sequential and rational, but in the reality the way governments take decision are extremely complex, involving a variety of stakeholders and multiple interactions among them. Understanding the policy process, therefore, is crucial to understand why governments do what they do, why practice often diverges from prescription, why good analysis may not be sufficient by itself to lead to good policy and, ultimately, it might provide indications on how to design / support the policy process so as to trigger public actions promoting successful rural development and poverty alleviation.

Scholars have elaborated a number of theories of decision-making to enhance our understanding of the policy process and how it can affect formation and outcomes of policies. Some theories have been developed as formalized models; some others are storylines attempting to catch on the multiple and ambiguous aspects of reality and can be defined as ‘approaches’. The fundamental differences is that models assume that participants in the policy process are generally rational and philanthropic actors, though rationality might be bounded; conversely, approaches of the policy process assume that decision makers and policy implementers are mostly selfish, that peculiar interests significantly influence and affect policy outcomes, and that policy reforms are ultimately compromises among interest groups, advocacy coalitions and policy networks pursuing diverging objectives. Table 1 provides a summary of the main theories of the policy process. Additional explanation on these different theories is presented in Annex 1 of this document.

The variety of models and approaches suggests that policy outcomes not only will be highly dependent on the type of process adopted, namely on how the agenda was set, analyses made and implementation modalities developed, but also that in most cases policy processes are more than the rational formulation of policies by a small team, and implementation mainly through governments: policy processes are often interactive, multi-actors, multi-located, two-way communication, and mix formal and informal aspects. Indeed, the metaphors that have guided policy research over recent years suggest that policy processes are actually rather messy, with outcomes occurring as a result of complicated political, social and institutional processes which are best described as ‘evolutionary’.

The messy and complex character of policy processes stems from the fact that policy making often mixes the characteristics summarised in Table 2.

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8 Juma and Clarke, 1995.
### Table 1: Summary overview of theories of the policy processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theories of the policy process</th>
<th>Who decides/provides elements for decisions</th>
<th>How</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Warnings / Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rational Model</strong></td>
<td>Discrete organization(s) of the public sector guided by long-term welfare of citizens</td>
<td>Scientific, rational analysis made by technically trained people</td>
<td>Scientific analysis is supposed to lead to optimal policy decisions&lt;br&gt;The analytical process and results can be shared</td>
<td>Policy reforms are top-down&lt;br&gt;Policy analysts have rarely adequate information and resources to carry out comprehensive analyses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incremental Model</strong></td>
<td>Discrete unitary decision-making organizations as well as multiple organizations</td>
<td>Analyses are limited to a few alternatives and policy problems tackled one at a time by ‘muddling through’ in a piecemeal fashion</td>
<td>It builds on what exists already&lt;br&gt;Driven by realism, pragmatism and contextual adaptation</td>
<td>Decisions are remedial, preventing any radical reform&lt;br&gt;Model is unable to explain major policy reforms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mixed-scanning model</strong></td>
<td>Discrete unitary decision-making organizations as well as multiple organizations</td>
<td>Scientific rational analysis for fundamental decisions and incremental decision-making for minor decisions in preparation of fundamental decisions</td>
<td>Based on realism and able to explain both major and minor policy reforms</td>
<td>Does not provide criteria for determining which decisions to be take through rational analysis and which through incremental analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theories of the policy process</td>
<td>Who decides/provides elements for decisions</td>
<td>How</td>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>Warnings / Disadvantages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Garbage can model</td>
<td>Multiple organizations: politicians, practitioners, activists, etc.</td>
<td>Organizational fragmentation, short term duration in office by decision-makers, inextricable weaving of politics with decision-making</td>
<td>Allows explanation of apparently ‘irrational’ policy reforms</td>
<td>‘The urgent may drive out the important’&lt;br&gt;Driven by opportunism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public choice approach</td>
<td>Policy makers and public sector bureaucrats only for pure public goods</td>
<td>Rational scientific analysis whose benefits are commensurate with the cost of the analysis</td>
<td>Draws attention to the role of government limited to truly public goods and to establishing accountability mechanisms</td>
<td>Excessively negative view of public sector agents’ behaviour might lead to restrict unduly the role of government vis-à-vis that of market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest groups, advocacy coalitions, policy networks approaches</td>
<td>Policy makers, interest groups, networks, hybrid organizations, think-tanks, etc.</td>
<td>Governments is either a passive actor or one of the actors enabling dialogue among interest groups, advocacy coalitions and networks</td>
<td>Diffuse networking may imply greater participation by various groups in policy-making</td>
<td>Rational decision-making is constrained by interest groups, and powerful lobbies might be the only one able to get issues on the agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argumentative approaches</td>
<td>Policy makers, interest groups, networks, hybrid organizations, think tanks, etc.</td>
<td>Different groups agree upon common policy reforms through argumentation, with inclusion of different perspectives</td>
<td>Allows participation, to tackle ill-structured problems, to address policy issues where conflict is otherwise likely to produce high transaction costs.</td>
<td>There may be no agreed rules on how policy measures should be agreed upon, and powerful actors may become protagonists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Main characteristics of policy processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>What does that mean?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incremental and complex</td>
<td>Policy is often based on experimentation, chance events, learning from mistakes, and a range of other influences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaped by policy paradigms and narratives</td>
<td>Different stories evolve to describe events. Some gain more authority and have more influence on policy decisions than others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pluralist</td>
<td>Many actors and interest groups can influence the policy process. There may be a range of mechanisms by which these different voices are heard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed by actor networks</td>
<td>Certain individuals or institutions spread and maintain narratives through chains of persuasion and influence and inform policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Power relations between citizens, experts, and political authorities mean that policy making is not neutral. Both personal politics and party politics influence policy decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influenced by practice</td>
<td>Projects, and the practices of front line staff can have a strong influence on policy.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


Box 2 illustrates the complex and ‘messy’ character of policy processes in the case of the agricultural sector reform in Uganda, as they combine some of the characteristics mentioned in Table 1

Box 2: Politics and agricultural sector reform in Uganda

Assessments of Uganda’s ambitious Plan for the Modernization of Agriculture (PMA) that do not recognise the political tensions raised by the in-built horizontal (cross-sectoral) nature of the Plan, and by the central roles played by donors and civil society in the Plan’s design phase, will fail to grasp the central challenges faced in implementing the Plan. Tensions emerge as agriculture’s line ministry negotiates terms with the Executive branch, and with various ‘non-line’ ministries that influence resource allocation for national development, e.g. the Ministry of Finance. A large donor role in planning and heavy donor influence in implementation means there is intense pressure to demonstrate early impact and thus little time and resources to invest in key institutional strengthening activities prior to implementation. Institutionalised involvement of civil society widens the scope for debate and disagreement on a range of implementation issues, rendering the process volatile and open to interruption.

Source: Omano and Farrington, 2004

The result of different combination of the various characteristics mentioned in Table 2 leads to the idea of the “amoeba model”, where the policy process may frequently take different shapes due to the influence of the policy environment (e.g. civil society or donor pressures, forced action or restricted room for manoeuvre due to economic conditions, etc)⁹. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The ‘amoeba’ model of policy making

Source: Garrett and Islam, 1998

Acknowledging the complex and messy character of policy processes, and therefore accepting to address it, is a crucial step forward in bridging the frequent gap between policy on paper and policy on the ground, that is going beyond ‘what to do’ and address the ‘how to do’ aspects of policy making. Box 3 illustrates the difference between the ‘what’ and ‘how’ aspects of policy making through an invented dialogue that could take or may even taken place in a given country.
Box 3: What is ‘what’ and what is ‘how’

What is gained from asking how? What is lost from failing to do so? Consider the following scenario: An African delegate at a UN conference stands up and says: “We must increase the speed of development in Africa.” Another delegate replies: “But how?” A third one answers: “By promoting private sector involvement in agricultural development.”

The third person, a Member of Parliament from a West African country, returns home, and in the next session of Parliament states: “We have agreed that we must promote private-sector involvement in agricultural development.” Another Member stands up and asks: “But how?” And the Minister of Agriculture answers: “By liberalizing and privatizing markets.”

The Minister goes back to his Ministry and says: “We have decided to liberalize agricultural markets.” One of his aides asks: “But how?” Another aide says: “By reducing controls on input and output markets.”

And so on...

What more is there to the how question than more detail? I want to suggest that there is considerably more. Look again at the second exchange in the example above:

Member of Parliament 1: “We have agreed that we must promote private-sector involvement in agricultural development.”

Member of Parliament 2: “But how?”

Minister of Agriculture: “By liberalizing and privatizing markets.”

I venture that the Minister’s response is not a how answer; rather, it is a what answer. And it is followed by another what answer: “By reducing controls on input and output markets.”

A how answer from the Minister might go like this:

Minister of Agriculture: “We intend to liberalize and privatize markets. But we know that market liberalization and privatization are not all-purpose solutions to the problems of agricultural development in this country. Look at what happened when we liberalized and privatized the petroleum industry. Nothing changed. Fuel prices are still too high, especially for kerosene, on which our poorer citizens depend for cooking and lighting.

"The donors wanted us to depoliticize the energy sector and allow it to restructure in a pro-poor way. ‘The future will take care of itself,’ they said. But even then, we should have been able to foresee what would happen. Who was going to be most able to respond to the new environment that we created? The three most established firms, of course! We handed the entire industry over to these people without asking for anything in return. They are now entrenched, minting money on the backs of poor people. Before, when we were still in the market, at least we had some power to push them into a corner and limit price increases. Now all we can do is talk. But if we say anything, the donors beat us up. The future has not taken care of itself.

"So, given the importance of agriculture in our economy, we intend to move cautiously and selectively, paying great attention to implementation. We have some ideas, of course. For instance, with regard to privatization, my people tell me that one option is open franchise bidding. But you can imagine what that will mean for the seed and fertilizer industries, where there are high working-capital requirements. A handful of companies will dominate and we will be unable to influence them easily. Prices will be even higher than they are today, smallholders will suffer, and we will not achieve the growth we expect. So, while we want to use franchise bidding (it is by far the easiest option administratively), we will reserve it only for those industries where we are fairly sure of large net benefits, while guaranteeing some protection to smallholders. This means that we must make sure to find ways to retain some power in those industries.”

Of course, the Minister’s answer raises a host of additional questions. But the answer demonstrates that a real how question asks how the “what” can be made to happen.

Source: Omano, 2003
4. A PROPOSED ROAD MAP TO UNDERSTAND AND ADDRESS POLICY PROCESSES

The reality of policy processes requires a rather fluid perspective to understand how they actually work. Keeley (2001) suggests that this can be achieved by seeing policy processes as dynamic interactions between three poles, i.e. values/decisions, facts/knowledge and operationalising aspects – See Figure 2.

Figure 2: Introducing some fluidity in the understanding of policy processes

Another way of making sense of policy processes is to focus more specifically on the paths that lead to policy decisions. They maybe complex, but are seldom accidental. In fact they are usually structured by the complex interplay among policy actors:

- **Political interests** – hence the need to understand the political context and stakeholders’ power networks (see Actors Section in part 2 of the module)
- **Competing discourses** – hence the importance of the policy content and how it is defined (this is discussed in the Content Section), and;
- **The ability and confidence of multiple actors** involved in the policy process to articulate their interests and defend them (called “social actors’ agency” in social research jargon) – hence the importance of understanding the governance context and actors’ powers (see sections on governance context and actors for more on this).

The following sections of Part 1 is structured around a ‘road map’ that is composed of the requirements to undertake policy processes, the main elements that are common to policy processes, and the main stages of policy processes. The elements mentioned in Figure 3 are proposed as entry points to understand what influences the different stages of policy process (definition of objectives – formulation of policy instruments, policy implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of impacts).

The different stages and elements of Figure 3 are discussed in the following Sections of Part 1.

5. REQUIREMENTS BEFORE UNDERTAKING POLICY WORK

Important conditions, required before undertaking policy work, tend to be

- **Locus** – coordination of policy work needs a clear institutional home to drive the process and maintain momentum

- **High-level support and expectation** – that the work will lead to significant changes in important matters such as governance, policy and investment;

- **Commitment of key participants**, and

- **Reasonable idea of the tactics required** for influencing those who need to agree changes. Many of these tactics have a lot to do with the way information, information and communication are managed, all topics which will be addressed in other sections of the training material.

6. **EX-ANTE ASSESSMENTS OF THE IMPACTS OF POLICIES ON LIVELIHOOD AND/OR SOCIO-ECONOMY**

Assessments of people’s livelihoods and socio-economic conditions inform planning of pro-poor policies and ensure that other policies, at a minimum, do not harm the poor. Figure 4 illustrates the different stages where such analyses can take place in the policy process – in
this case using the poverty and social impact assessment (PSIA) instruments developed by the World Bank.

**Figure 4: PSIA in the policy process**

The analysis can focus on *livelihood* and/or *socio-economic* features. These two types of analyses are briefly discussed in turn.

### 6.1. Socio-economic assessments

Assessments of the impact of policies on livelihoods and socio-economic conditions are not easy. Some of the major difficulties include\(^\text{11}\):

- **Technical and methodological difficulties**, starting with the definition of who is poor. Many categorisations are based on threshold consumption values, and don’t capture the multi-dimensional aspects of poverty;
- **Administrative constraints**, including transaction costs, difficulties in retaining good staff and lower rates of returns in remote areas;
- **Political and cultural constraints**. These can relate to policies that deliberately favour wealthier society groups or are undemocratic, cultural exclusion factors, and the usually low political capital of the poor which makes it difficult to make their voice known and their concerns become policy priorities;

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\(^{11}\) Bird, 2004.
Limited reach of governments, especially in terms of provision of goods and services and interaction with citizens in remote areas.

In light of these difficulties, much effort has been put into the design of assessment methodologies to ensure that the process and outcomes are as robust and cost-effective as possible. Table 3 presents a summary of the well established approaches to socio-economic analysis, with an appraisal of their strengths and weaknesses.

Table 3: Strengths and weaknesses of selected approaches in providing information on the very poorest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Impact Analysis (SIA)</td>
<td>- SIA can be used to assess the impact of policies on people, the impacts of stakeholders on the reform and how people respond to the opportunities that policy actions create</td>
<td>- Derived from a 'do no harm' tradition and so might be difficult to adapt to focusing improving policy for the very poorest - SIA is not the best instrument to use for broad based reforms where the transmission channels and groups affected are not well known.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty and Social Impact Assessment (PSIA)</td>
<td>- The approach aims to identify the groups most vulnerable to negative impacts from a proposed policy (and those most likely to gain). The losers may include large numbers of very poor people. Highlighting this can lead to policy being redesigned or mitigating measures being implemented to benefit the very poorest</td>
<td>- PSIA findings rarely identify the very poorest, or investigate how a policy will specifically affect different groups of very poor people. - Identification of policies to analyse done by donors or decision makers in government. Priorities of the very poorest are likely to be missed. Policies selected for analysis may have little or no impact on the poorest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA)</td>
<td>- A research guide is used but the study communities may be able to emphasise the issues of relevance to them. This is likely to mean that the policies and services with greatest impact on the poor and the very poor will be highlighted for examination. - There are techniques for differentiating amongst the poor. Well trained facilitators should be able to identify the destitute, the very poorest and the excluded and elicit their opinions.</td>
<td>- Facilitators may not elicit issues and themes which are important to the poor, but rather stick to their research guide. They may also fail to differentiate amongst the poor systematically - The very poorest often lack confidence and are not very eloquent, especially in public fora. They may therefore be unwittingly ignored. - People living with AIDS, widows the mentally ill, and the mentally and physically impaired may be disproportionately represented amongst the very poorest, but stigma and social exclusion may lead to their ‘invisibility’ to outsiders - Migrants (who may also be very poor) may be excluded from community based exercises, as they are not seen as belonging to the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Surveys</td>
<td>- Can produce statistically robust data on different income groups, including the very poorest - Panel data can be generated (i.e. time series data, generated from repeat interviews of the same households), providing important information about movements into and out of poverty. Correlations (e.g. consumption figures and assets, income and education, ill-</td>
<td>- Sample rarely large enough to give statistically significant differentiated information on poor groups at the sub-district/province level - Surveys commonly directed at household head. May not capture the opinions of marginalised individuals within households - Questions in questionnaires may not cover the issues of interest to the very poor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Instrument Strengths Weaknesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>health and consumption) can enable analysts to determine the probable causes of such changes in well-being.</td>
<td>poorest - The destitute are often not in households and are left off lists of households (kept by local government etc.) used to generate random samples. They are therefore left out of surveys - Not very good at answering process or why questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRSP Annual Reviews</td>
<td>Special studies can be commissioned to be part of a PRSP annual review</td>
<td>May not include the very poorest unless there is existing work which (1) identifies them, and (2) presents clear analysis of poverty determinant and dynamics showing why ‘x’ policy is likely to affect ‘y’ and ‘z’ groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficiary Assessment (BA)</td>
<td>Participatory, involving direct consultation with those affected by and influencing reform. not focused exclusively on the poor, but may be designed to include the opinions of the poor and very poor  •  Can be adapted to assess the impact of discrete policy interventions where transmission channels and affected groups are clearly defined.  Can be used to evaluate proposed policies, to signal constraints to participation faced by target group, and to get feedback from the public regarding ongoing policy implementation.  Can be adapted to capture the opinions of the very poorest</td>
<td>More appropriate for measuring responses to changes in service delivery than macro-economic changes - Tends to have a narrower focus than Social Impact Assessment or PPA. Provides less contextual and historical background information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficiary Cards</td>
<td>Used to get feedback on the public’s satisfaction with service provision  Combines participatory (qualitative) and quantitative methods. Can be used in conjunction with household surveys  Enables the public to communicate their views to public agencies and politicians on key reform areas.</td>
<td>Can only be used to assess policies already implemented. - More appropriate for measuring responses to changes in service delivery than macro-economic changes - Requires an agency with market research and data collection skills to conduct the survey - Requires support of media - Limitations in comparability across services, - Large sample required for heterogeneous population and lesser used services, - Lack of predictability in how different players respond.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory Public Expenditure Reviews (PPER)</td>
<td>Involve stakeholders in the government’s budget allocations in the PPER process. Involving the public can help improve better targeting, allocation, and tracking of resources.  Can result in policy suggestions  Can make the final decisions of the PPER more legitimate and accountable</td>
<td>The poorest are unlikely to have their voices heard - Using the budget process as a starting point presupposes that a particular policy has already been selected. This might not be useful where a number of options are on the table.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bird, 2004

Specific conceptual frameworks and analytic tools can complement these general approaches. The following two sub-sections introduce two useful examples: first the Sustainable Livelihoods (SL) Framework and its application in linking local realities with macro-level policy, and second the EXTRAPOLATE tool, which expresses the potential impact of a policy on disaggregated stakeholder groups.
6.2. **Sustainable Livelihoods Framework**

Rural development practitioners and policy makers recognize that sectoral interventions are insufficient to improve people’s livelihoods: holistic, cross-sectoral approaches are needed. The sustainable livelihood (SL) framework (developed by the UK-based Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in 1998, with several variants proposed subsequently) is a useful means of conceptualizing the multiple aspects of rural livelihoods and the interplay between livelihoods and policies (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework**

The SL framework takes into account the range of assets of rural households: not only financial but also natural (agriculture, wild resources, water, soils and minerals, ecosystem services), human (labour, skills, education), social (family, community, trust, relationships) and physical (infrastructure, transport, equipment). It recognizes that poverty reduction involves not only raising this broad set of assets but also helping people to protect themselves from falling back into poverty (vulnerability). These understandings lead to a range of principles and hypotheses about how policy and development interventions can make the most positive impact on livelihoods (Table 4).
Table 4: SL principles and underlying hypotheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principles</th>
<th>Corresponding Hypothesis/es</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addresses vulnerability and increases resilience</td>
<td>Projects that address the vulnerability context, by reducing vulnerability while strengthening individual and collective capacity to withstand shocks, are more effective in enabling the poor to overcome their poverty than approaches that ignore the vulnerability context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builds assets</td>
<td>Because asset ownership reduces vulnerability in the face of shocks, projects that build rural people’s assets are more effective in reducing poverty than projects that focus exclusively on raising income without regard for asset ownership and balance. To reduce poverty on a sustainable basis, it is not enough to raise household income above a national poverty line; it is equally important for households to acquire a capacity to prevent themselves from falling back into poverty when exposed to shocks. Projects that build rural people’s human and social capital in addition to building their physical, financial and natural capital are more effective in reducing poverty than those that neglect human and social capital while building other types of capital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livelihoods focus</td>
<td>Projects that focus on livelihoods are more effective in reducing poverty than projects that seek to reduce poverty through economic growth or improved access to infrastructure and social services without regard for the ways that poor people make their living.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Neely, Sutherland and Johnson, 2004

A sustainable livelihood approach can add value at a policy level in different ways. It can (Ashley and Carney, 1999):

- Help ensure that policy is not neglected;
- Provide a common language for policy makers from different sectors;
- Encourage a more people-focused approach to policy;
- Ensure that attention to vulnerable groups and vulnerability factors are given due consideration;
- Linking macro to micro as part of a Livelihoods Analysis - i.e. local realities and policies that structure and shape them;
- Understand poor people’s capacity for articulating demands;
- Help identify entry points when planning SL interventions.

However, the potential use of SL approaches in policymaking has often been constrained by their emphasis on micro or local level studies, thus making SL analysis findings very contextual. Other weaknesses relate to the analysis of social relations and power, which are also important determinants of policy processes.

In practice, Norton and Foster (2001) suggest that the gap between SL analysis and policy analysis should be better addressed by focusing on SL principles than the specifics of the framework, i.e.

- Seek processes which are accountable, engage with the disaggregated, specific realities of poor people’s conditions, allow for appropriate subsidiarity in dealing with key
issues, and take a cross-sectoral perspective on the causes of deprivation and the analysis of measures to reduce it.

- Focus on the need to achieve livelihood outcomes for the poor as a guide to applying the conceptual framework in practical situations, and encouraging partners to use it.

- Seek to prioritise policy and programme actions – the analysis of the ‘complex reality’ of local livelihoods must not become an impediment to action or an excuse to avoid making choices in terms of how to apply scarce public human and financial resources. The challenge is to use sustainable livelihood approaches to help determine whether the right priorities have been chosen – but not to overcomplicate a policy agenda to the point where nothing can be delivered. There is no necessary contradiction here – it is a question of how the analysis is applied.

Shankland (2000) suggests some probing questions for including livelihood concerns in policy analysis, i.e.

- Who and where are the poor?
- What are their livelihood priorities?
- What policy sectors are relevant to these priorities?
- What are the possible impacts of different policy alternatives?

### 6.3. EXTRAPOLATE – A practical tool for ex ante analysis

FAO has developed a tool called EXTRAPOLATE that allows addressing the links between policies and livelihoods. EXTRAPOLATE (the EX-ante-Tool-for-RAnking-POLicy-AI TErnatives), is a participatory decision support tool designed to help assess, ex-ante, the potential impact of policy interventions on different stakeholders. The programme serves as a ‘filter’ that helps the user to sift through a range of policy measures, based on simple numerical analyses, to identify the most appropriate combinations for a given policy goal. Referred to by some as a ‘discussion support tool, it also encourages policy discussions to be broad and unbiased, given an appropriate setting.

EXTRAPOLATE is built around four main elements and their linkages: (i) stakeholder groups and their livelihood status – an estimate of welfare; (ii) constraints that prevent stakeholders from achieving desirable (iii) outcomes, which are the measurable effects of relaxing constraints and which contribute to the livelihood of stakeholders; and (iv) policies that impact on constraints. Using EXTRAPOLATE requires two simple steps: defining the model elements, and then quantifying their linkages according to simple numerical scales. The programme calculates the effect of individual or a combination of the proposed policy alternatives on the livelihood status of the different stakeholder groups, through its/their impact on constraints and outcomes. Results are presented both numerically and graphically.
**Figure 6: Before and after a policy change (P) in the simple model**, showing marginal changes in constraints (C) and outcomes (O) that bring about a marginal change in the livelihood status (LS) of stakeholder groups (S)

1. The status quo (before any change)

   ![Diagram showing the status quo](example_diagram)

2. After a policy change

   ![Diagram showing the change](example_diagram)

EXTRAPOLATE has been used to explore the impact of policy change in countries in sub-Saharan Africa, South and Southeast Asia and in Latin America. The programme and user manual are freely available for download at [www.fao.org/AG/againfo/projects/en/pplpi/dextra.html](http://www.fao.org/AG/againfo/projects/en/pplpi/dextra.html).

Although it was developed in the specific context of the livestock sector, EXTRAPOLATE can easily be used in other sectors.

### 7. Context

Policy making does not happen in a vacuum. The context in which policies are developed exerts significant importance on their outputs and outcomes. Therefore making sense of the policy context is very useful in understanding policy processes. The policy context can be analysed by looking at the following elements:

- What **type of policy and institutions** are we dealing with?
- What **type of policy process** are we looking at?
- What is the **governance context**?

These are briefly discussed in turn.

#### 7.1. Types of policies and institutions

It is important to know the type of policies we are dealing with because different types of policies link differently to citizens. The impact on people and their livelihoods of different types of policy is conditioned by the different structures which ‘channel’ or mediate each policy. These structures are traditionally defined as institutions. *Institutions* are the rules, organizations, and social norms that facilitate coordination of human action. Institutions can
therefore be seen as both the ‘rules of the game’ (formal and informal) and the organisations (structures) that implement policies, strategies and programmes. Organisations are often defined by their budget, staff complement, and a definite set of objectives. This is illustrated in Figure 7.

**Figure 7: Institutions as rules of the games and organizations**

![Figure 7: Institutions as rules of the games and organizations](image)

The distinction between rules and organizations is fundamental as some policies mainly operate through the rules of the game and other though organizations. For instance, macroeconomic, regulatory and rights-based policies operate primarily through changing the ‘rules of the game’. Macroeconomic policy will typically be transmitted through market regulations: devaluation increases the price of imported goods in the inputs market, while interest rate rises will increase the cost of borrowing in the formal-sector credit market. Organisational change policies alter the allocation of resources and responsibilities within a particular government organisation, such as a sectoral ministry. For instance, decentralisation changes the allocation of resources and responsibilities among different branches and/or levels of government, or between government and the private sector. Some policies may operate through both the ‘rules of the game’ and organisations: an example would be a forest policy which both changes the law on access to state-owned forests and devolves decision-making to frontline forestry officers.

- Where a policy operates through the rules of the game, its impact on livelihoods will be conditioned by the extent to which people operate according to those rules of the game (for example the extent to which they conduct transactions in the market or consider themselves to be bound by formal rather than customary law).
Where a policy is channeled through organisations, its impact will depend on other elements of like the size of their presence on the ground and the degree of fear or trust which they inspire. In addition, the shape in which a given policy reaches people and, indeed, whether it reaches them at all, will be significantly influenced by the internal politics and priorities of the organisation through which it is channeled.

7.2. **Type of policy process we are looking at**

It is important to assess what type of policy we are looking at as a good mapping exercise regarding the other elements of the policy context. Table 5 gives examples of policy characteristics that help define the type of policy one is dealing with.

**Table 5: What type of policy we are looking at?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VISIBLE</th>
<th>BACKSTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QUICK</td>
<td>SLOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIOLENT</td>
<td>PEACEFUL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEW STAKEHOLDERS</td>
<td>MANY STAKEHOLDERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOCUSED</td>
<td>MULTIPLE FOCI/POORLY-FOCUSED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIA</td>
<td>NO MEDIA INTEREST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONE MINISTRY</td>
<td>MULTIPLE MINISTRIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUREAUCRATIC</td>
<td>OUTSIDE BUREAUCRACY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CERTAINTY</td>
<td>UNCERTAINTY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACUTE</td>
<td>CHRONIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEGAL PROCESS</td>
<td>NOT A LEGAL PROCESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCAL/NATIONAL/REGIONAL/GLOBAL</td>
<td>MULTI-SCALE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following questions can be asked to assess the type of policy process one is looking at:
- Who is engaged?
- How many stakeholders are there?
- Is the process essentially inside a bureaucracy, or outside?

The implications of these types of issues need to be acknowledged for any given process, and thought through.

Most international development statements stress the importance of country ownership in achieving long-term development. But to what extent can this happen? Answering this question requires assessing the degree to which national stakeholders really own policy processes, and therefore the types of external pressures exerted on policy makers. Indeed these can exert a profound influence policy prioritization. External pressures usually stem from two arenas, i.e.

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International partners, including the donor community: To what extent can policies realistically be nationally-promoted when, for instance, in Africa, on average, some thirty international development partners intervene in policy formulation\textsuperscript{13}?

International processes, be they in the shape of international agreements or targets, or global market conditions. Figure 8 illustrates the constant bombardments by international processed countries face through the example of the forestry sector.

7.3. What is the governance context

The governance context includes the political context, the institutional (including bureaucratic) context, the degree of voice power (mainly from grassroots level), responsiveness to voice power and ensuing ‘policy spaces’ (Keeley, 2001). These aspects are briefly discussed in turn.

7.3.1. Political context

The political and social dimensions of policy making has recently received significant attention, as ways to better understand how changes promoted by policies happen of not in the real world. This is captured in the use of New Political Economy Perspective (NPEP). NPEP is a multi-disciplinary approach that seeks to combine the insights of political economy with the ‘new institutional economics’ and the study of social processes, cultural norms and ethnicity. The essence of the approach can be summarised in two central propositions\textsuperscript{14}:

- In order to understand how policies favourable to development can be put in place it is essential to analyse the incentives that influence the decisions of governing elites, other powerful interest groups and change agents in civil society, the private sector and the government bureaucracy.
- These incentives result from the pursuit of economic interests and the restraints of formal institutions. They are also heavily dependent on the informal social rules that govern behaviour, define the social hierarchy, create and perpetuate embedded power structures and generate reciprocal social obligations, often shaped and perpetuated by historical, cultural and ethnic influences.

Different political conditions obviously exert a significant influence on policy making, as illustrated in Table 6.

\textsuperscript{13} Fouilleux and Balié, 2006.
\textsuperscript{14} i.e. Landell-Mills et al, 2007.
Figure 8: Countries are bombarded by international processes – Example of the forestry sector

Source: Mayers and Bass, 1999
Table 6: Links between political systems and types of policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of political systems</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Types of policy in place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collapsed states</td>
<td>There is no effective central government</td>
<td>No policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal rule</td>
<td>Rule through personalities and personal connections. If political parties exist, they are based on personalities.</td>
<td>Policies are unstable; a major objective is to enrich those in power; few basic public services are provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimally institutionalized states</td>
<td>An unstable mixture of personal and impersonal rule, with varying degrees of legitimacy. Parties are based partly on personalities</td>
<td>There exist organizations to provide a range of basic public and welfare services; coverage is patchy and often based on patronage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalised non-competitive states</td>
<td>Rule through stable and legitimate organisations and procedures; no open competition for power. Political parties serve the regime or are hindered and controlled by it</td>
<td>A wide range of basic and welfare services may be provided, but citizens have little influence over the range and type of provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalised competitive states</td>
<td>Rule through stable and legitimate organisations and procedures; open competition for power through programmatic parties</td>
<td>A wide range of basic and welfare services. The range and type of provision are major themes in politics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Moore and Putzel 1999

Some aspects related to the political and bureaucratic contexts as well as ‘policy spaces’ are further discussed below.

7.3.2. Institutional set up and bureaucratic conditions

Bureaucratic conditions also influence the way policies are developed and implemented. Bureaucratic capacity varies between different places with implications for abilities to facilitate and respond to inclusive policy processes, to make useful linkages between micro and macro scales. Institutional analysis is also useful in understanding policy implementation because institutions (i.e. rules and norms of society) and organisations (government, private sector and civil society) are the interface between policy statements and people.

The implementation of policy reforms often requires organizational changes by the concerned governmental and non-governmental structures. The issue of organizational change is discussed in Section 5 (Part 2).
7.3.3. Voice, responsiveness and policy spaces

‘Policy spaces’ can be seen as ways in which opportunities for engagement can be conceived. One can distinguish three types of regularised or transient political spaces (Gaventa, 2006):

- **Closed or uninvited spaces**: These are typically the spaces where bureaucrats, experts and elected representatives make decisions with very little broad consultation with or involvement of other stakeholders.

- **‘Invited spaces’**: These refer to many intermediary institutions provided by governments (including within donor-supported initiatives), where the agenda is set up and participation is framed by the government or project teams). Examples of invited spaces within project contexts include community groups (regularized spaces) or participatory needs assessments (one-off events), and deliberative councils at local level are examples of government-led invited spaces. Three factors are crucial regarding the quality of participation and political clout within invited spaces, i.e. adequate political representation, enabling rules of deliberation and accountability mechanisms regarding those leading the space (government or project).

- **‘Claimed/created spaces’**: These are arenas which are relatively independent from the state and where people choose to come together. They are often claimed by less powerful actors from or against power holders, or created more autonomously by them. Examples of popular spaces include several types of civil society groups such protest or opposition movements or events. Popular spaces often face tensions between leadership and participation and between the desire for diversity and the need for cohesion.

The border between invited and claimed/created spaces is often blurred. For instance, some stakeholder groups can be part of ‘claimed/created spaces’ while sometimes contributing to the discussions in ‘invited spaces’. In this case participation in ‘claimed/created spaces’ often constitutes a good opportunity to gain confidence and capacity to participate in ‘invited spaces’.

Political spaces can exist at different levels, i.e.

- Local level, for instance within programs of democratic decentralisation;
- National level, such as during the formulation of PRSPs; and
- Global level, such as during discussions on policies of global importance (e.g. conventions, treaties, etc).

Table 7 shows examples of spaces, in this case for poverty reduction policies in Nigeria.
Table 7: Spaces for poverty policy in Nigeria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Official (closed) spaces</th>
<th>Invited spaces</th>
<th>Created spaces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>External</td>
<td>Donor policies</td>
<td>Donor-civil society dialogue</td>
<td>Global social movements (oil, debt, etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>National Poverty Programme</td>
<td>PRSP</td>
<td>National trade union, rights organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>E.g. Jigawa State Poverty Policy</td>
<td>E.g. Jigawa State People’s Congress</td>
<td>Emirate and youth structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Local government councils</td>
<td>Parallel structure – e.g. Emirates, Oil companies</td>
<td>Zakkat committees, Homa Town Associations, youth movements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Power issues pervade the functioning of political spaces, whatever their nature. More powerful interests may deliberately bind these spaces to reduce citizen influence, or create several ‘invited spaces’ to neutralise energy for engagement. Therefore, despite the proliferation of political spaces, participation in itself may not alter power, may not change the status quo because in itself it does not alter power structures. Power issues are further discussed in the Section on actors of this document.

Different political and bureaucratic contexts suggest that the spaces in which engagement in the policy process is like to happen will vary.

Different balances will need to be struck between building voice at the bottom, and increasing responsiveness at the top. In some places joining in with government programmes may be important, for example, participating in national poverty reduction programmes. This depends on whether there is bureaucratic capacity and political commitment. This is further discussed in the material related to participation in policy making.

Box 4 illustrates different ways of developing or using policy spaces according to governance and political contexts in the case of soil management policies in Ethiopia, Mali and Zimbabwe.
Box 4: Different policy spaces in soil management policy processes in Ethiopia, Mali and Zimbabwe

Research on soils management policies in Ethiopia, Mali and Zimbabwe suggests that governance contexts shape policy processes in important ways. Likewise, strategies for influencing policy vary depending on the context.

In Ethiopia, the regionalisation policy fundamentally shapes the governance context. Actors seeking to influence soils policy processes suggested concentrating efforts not on the federal level, but at regional level instead. However there is a question of which regions to work in. In the soils arena there has been very little room for maneuver to challenge dominant policy narratives in the large Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region. Here NGOs experimenting with new approaches have found it hard to influence the bureaucracy. In Tigray, in the north of the country, there has been far more confidence to suggest new policy directions. Researchers argue that a ‘green light’ has come on in Tigray when introducing new ideas to policy debates, around issues where there has often been a stop sign elsewhere. This regional variation reflects different bureaucratic and political histories. One legacy of both the Imperial and Derg eras has been a lack of capacity and independence in the South. In contrast, the origins of the current government lie in Tigray, and these continue to give it special status, in the eyes of many observers.

In Mali, both politics and economy are dominated by cotton, the major export crop. Policy processes within the cotton zone are very different to those in other parts of the country. Farmers are better organised and the government is much more likely to be responsive to the demands of farmers given the strategic importance of cotton. In 2000, the cotton farmers’ union refused to grow cotton deeming that the price being offered by the largely government-owned cotton company did not offer a sufficient return. This grassroots action was a serious shock to the government. The union eventually compromised with the cotton company on a marginal price increase, but the majority of farmers in the zone still refused to plant. New democratic spaces that have evolved since the end of military rule were an important precondition for this type of action. This has in turn created space to push for inclusion in other livelihood related policy processes. The niche occupied by the cotton zone has been crucial to this.

In Zimbabwe, the style of bureaucracy shapes policy processes in a fundamental way. A particular style of technocratic management of rural livelihood policy issues has persisted from the colonial period into the post-independence era. Very technical land management approaches and extension schemes, and a plethora of natural resource management regulations have all aimed at the ‘betterment’ of farmers. This style has been challenged in recent years, as bureaucratic capacity weakened following structural adjustment policies, retrenchment and economic crisis. NGOs starting out in service delivery roles have found new spaces to promote participatory ideas and methods. Gradually, these are finding some measure of institutionalisation: participatory extension approaches have been adopted by Agritex, the national extension agency, and the Department of Natural Resources is now much more flexible in enforcing land use rules. The very technocratic approach also obscured more basic questions of access to resources. These issues have recently become extremely politicised, which has further undermined the technocratic approach to land development.

Source: Keeley, 2001

Box 5 presents some probing questions to assess what factors might drive or hamper change at national level.
Box 5: Framework for basic country analysis of drivers of change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundational factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is there a political community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does government control the territory?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How have the history of state formation, political geography, geo-strategic position, embedded social and economic structures shaped the basic characteristics of the political system?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is government dependent on taxpayers?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More medium term, institutional factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How ‘institutionalised’ are the bureaucracy, policy mechanisms, political parties, civil society organisations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How embedded is the constitution?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the basis of political competition, and the composition of the political elite?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How important is ethnicity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is power shared between the political executive, the military, the legislature, the judiciary, other levels of government, the private sector, religious organisations?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short-term factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is government’s bureaucratic and financial capacity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key mechanisms for vertical and horizontal accountability?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political resources (including point in the electoral cycle)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ODI, 2006

The most common tools for mapping policy contexts recently developed in the spirit of the NPEP are presented hereafter: 15

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Tools</strong></th>
<th><strong>Description</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civil Society Index (CIVICUS)</strong></td>
<td>A tool for assessing and comparing civil societies, in order to strengthen them. Dimensions: civil society's structure, impact, environment and values. <a href="http://www.civicus.org/new/intro_new.asp">http://www.civicus.org/new/intro_new.asp</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. ACTORS

8.1. Defining actors and networks

In any one context, various institutions and stakeholder groups will have a bearing on policy. These policy actors and the apparent power structure involved in decision-making need to be identified. Power issues, which have a crucial importance in policy processes, are discussed in the material related to participation in policy making. It is useful to identify who is pushing for what, and who cannot be ‘heard’? Who are the ‘integrators’ and who are the ‘dividers’? The range of influences on policy actors can then begin to be unpacked. These influences include16:

Institutional/organisational factors:
- mandates, rules, norms, functions, strengths and weaknesses;
- dynamics, interactions, institutional culture;

Individual motivation factors:
- ideological predispositions, pursuit of political objectives;
- position and control of resources;
- professional expertise and experience: adhering to professional standards; promoting own careers;
- institutional loyalties; enhancing the standing of own agencies;
- personal attributes and goals, such as rent seeking.

Stakeholder analysis is a useful tool to assess what stakeholders are involved, their interests, values and perceptions. The stakeholder analysis should involve a power analysis. Power issues, which have a crucial importance in policy processes, are discussed further in this material. Table 8 gives an example of stakeholder analysis.

---

Table 8: Example of stakeholder analysis matrix – Drawn up by District agricultural Officers, Lugana Province, Angola (2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder group</th>
<th>Nature of interest in policy decision</th>
<th>Potential impact of policy</th>
<th>Relative importance of interests</th>
<th>Importance of group</th>
<th>Influence (power) of group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary stakeholders</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female headed households</td>
<td>Improved food security</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male headed, surplus</td>
<td>Improved income</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>producing households</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secondary stakeholders</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture</td>
<td>Increasing production via 'progressive farmers'</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating implementation organisations</td>
<td>Sustaining effective programmes and funding</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Pasteur, 2001a

Stakeholder behavior changes according to the resources at stake, with a particular attention having to be given to those that can entail substantial revenue. When natural resources have a high market value, this generates market opportunities. However, trading of resources also puts pressures on common property resources because of the mix of local and outside interests it generates and the power relations involved. In particular, trading of natural resources means that:

- Incentives for appropriating the commodity and not co-operating are high;
- Enforcement of rules is likely to be complicated by high-value items, especially if the item is wanted by elites. Bribes and coercion to escape enforcement are more likely when high values bring in cash;
- Many organisations may not be flexible enough to adapt to rapid changes induced by trade. There may be no current rules on commercial products and there may be no past rules to learn from;
- High value resources and traded products create incentives for outsiders and the state to appropriate the land and dispute legal claims;
- Legitimacy of resource use is contested by regional, national or international organisations that see their interest at stake in use of a resource or commodity.

The above make participation regarding highly valuable natural resources more complicated and often more conflictual.
Given that different policy and sectors send different signals and appeal differently to different stakeholder groups, it is often useful to develop a policy influences map. This type of diagram also helps stirring a discussion in a mixed group. Figure 10 provides one example of such a map in the case of forestry issues.

**Figure 10: A generic policy influences map in forestry**

![Policy Influences Map](chart)

Source: Adapted from Mayers, J. and S. Bass (1999)

It is also important to assess stakeholders’ networks because these usually exert a significant influence on the policy content and patterns of interests. Mapping stakeholders’ network can be very illustrative in that respect. For instance Figure 11 gives an example of a network map regarding soil fertility policy making in Mali - See also Box 4. Different colours or different types of line can indicate different types of relationship within the network. The diagram is a very schematic representation of policy networks for soil fertility in Mali. Two networks are identifiable, with the network between the Ministry of Rural Development, the World Bank, and the CMDT (the cotton parastatal) dominant. The relationship between the CMDT and the Ministry of Rural Development, for example, is important. The second network around the Ministry of Environment contains strong relationships, but the narratives and interests of these actors are less well located in the policy process. Relationships between the Ministry of Environment and international NGOs are important, but between this ministry and the local NGOs slightly less so. Relationships between the Ministry of Rural Development, and both local NGOs and the Ministry of Environment are weaker again. Where there are no arrows, no clear relationships are discernible.

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The following questions may be helpful in doing a policy process network analysis (Keeley, 2001):

- Who is inside a policy network and who is outside?
- Are there alternative networks outside the mainstream?
- Would it make sense to join these up?
- Where is the network weak, where is it strong?
- How do people or institutions become enrolled into networks?
- How penetrable is the network?
- How do ideas circulate through the network?
- What are core beliefs?

In practice, policies are often led by executive-based ‘change teams’, from definition through political turmoil to adoption and implementation (Grindle, 2000). The key issue then is how these ‘change teams’ relate to key actors and their networks.

Finally, two groups of actors are of particular importance in achieving policy change, i.e.

- ‘Communities of practice’ – are formalized coalitions that bring together various different actors – government, NGOs, think tanks, media – on the basis of a shared perspective can have a substantial impact;
- ‘Street level bureaucrats’ – these are the people who implement policies and thus determine what actually happens in practice. Understanding their incentives and
constraints is an essential part of promoting policy change. The importance of street level bureaucrats is illustrated by the case of the NGO SPEECH in India, presented in Box 6.

**Box 6: The importance of street-level bureaucrats in policy implementation: the case of SPEECH in India**

The case of the Society for the People’s Education and Economic Change (SPEECH), an NGO in India, highlights that the main points of contact with the policy system (of people and researchers) are with the state and national civil servants responsible for revenue collection and provision of services, such as education, agricultural extension, and public works. The system is fragmented, complex and responsible for a huge number of programmes, which are sometimes in contradiction with one another or with stated policy objectives. As a result, the manner in which policies are implemented is as important as the decision-making and the explicit statements of intention that drive it. The bureaucracy responsible for policy delivery suffers from insular incentives and a risk-averse culture, which can cut off public officials from the concerns of those they nominally serve. Those who do attempt to correct perverse policy outcomes face enormous difficulties, because the formal channels of the state bureaucracy are slow and tend to discourage initiative.

The result of all this is that from the local point of view, policy can seem opaque, unresponsive and arbitrary in its execution, depending on the goodwill and energy of public officials to bring policies set at state level in line with local needs. Relationships between officials and local communities are thus often marked by tension and recrimination, and the challenge for SPEECH and other similar organisations is how to work alongside the system and help ground it in local realities, without becoming subject to its limitations.

Source: Court and Young, 2004

**8.2. Dealing with power issues**

Whose values determine policy choices? Whose interests define the range of possible choices? Which issues are discussed and which not? Which options are never imagined? Who sets the policy agenda? Who gets what, when and how? Who knows whom, why and how? These questions are crucial for understanding policy processes, why policies are what they are and whether they are implemented or not.

Box 7 shows an example of strong external power in Tanzania and Box 8 presents how internal power games influence resource allocation in the cocoa sector in Ghana.
Box 7: Agenda-Setting in Tanzania

Perhaps the most significant change in the Tanzanian power map in the past ten years is the extent to which the international community, through international finance institutions and donor agencies, has managed to get a hold on Tanzania’s destiny. Not only are these agencies the undisputed agenda-setters. Despite their wish to remain upstream and channel their funds by means of budget support, their collective arm stretches quite far into the implementation machinery through direct or indirect means. The irony, therefore, is that as the donors have abandoned project and program aid and now talk about Tanzanians owning the process, the donor community as agenda setter has significantly increased its own power. The Government of Tanzania may own the development process, but the donors determine its direction and set its parameters. From a power point-of-view, Tanzania is increasingly a captive of its own success: the better it performs, the more money it gets from external sources and the greater the degree of aid dependence – at least in the short to medium term.

Source: Hyden 2006

Box 8: Resource allocation in the cocoa sector in Ghana

New horizontal interest groupings have been formed more frequently and powerfully in Ghana than in most African countries. Yet, almost invariably, they have been co-opted or undermined, by the forces of patronage, inhibiting their ability to become real constituencies for change – for instance, organisations capable of placing demands upon the state to provide public goods and services to the citizenry at large. Organised groups are a significant component of a system for dispensing state patronage in exchange for political loyalty. This applies not only to cocoa growers’ and professional organisations that flowered in the late colonial period. In different periods, it has been extended to the lower ranks of the civil service and the armed forces, sections of the urban working class and even unemployed youth groups. Critically, for Ghana’s economic performance, it applies also to the business interests that have prospered in different periods.

Source: Hyden 2006

The questions mentioned above all reveal the importance of power, which in turn, explains why power analysis has recently gained currency as a complement to macro-economic aspects of policy making. Gaventa (2006) suggests three forms of power, i.e.

- **Visible power: observable decision making**
  This level includes the visible and definable aspects of political power— the formal rules, structures, authorities, institutions and procedures of decision making. Strategies that target this level are usually trying to change the who, how and what’ of policymaking so that the policy process is more democratic and accountable, and serves the needs and rights of people and the survival of the planet.

- **Hidden power: setting the political agenda**
  Certain powerful people and institutions maintain their influence by controlling who gets to the decision-making table and what gets on the agenda. These dynamics operate on many levels to exclude and devalue the concerns and representation of other less powerful groups. Empowering advocacy strategies that focus on strengthening organisations and movements of the poor can build the collective power of numbers and new leadership to influence the
way the political agenda is shaped and increase the visibility and legitimacy of their issues, voice and demands.

- **Invisible power: shaping meaning and what is acceptable**
  Probably the most insidious of the three dimensions of power, invisible power shapes the psychological and ideological boundaries. Significant problems and issues are not only kept from the decision-making table, but also from the minds and consciousness of the different players involved, even those directly affected by the problem.

  By influencing how individuals think about their place in the world, this level of power shapes people’s beliefs, sense of self and acceptance of the status quo — even their own superiority or inferiority.

  Combining the forms of power mentioned above with the different types of policy spaces discussed in Section 6.3.(iii), at different levels, leads to the image of the power cube presented in Figure 12. The image of the power cube is has proved useful for different actor groups to assess the power (or lack of) they exercise at different levels, and also to reflect on how to move from one space or place to another.

**Figure 12: The power cube**

![Power Cube Diagram](image)

Source: Gaventa, 2006

A crucial challenge lies in understanding the working of power between external actors, such as donors, on one hand and national governments and citizens on the other hand. A particular point in question concerns how power relationships play when relying on formal institutional mechanisms and structures may not be the course of action because these are weak and unreliable. In that respect, it is worth considering the following three important aspects of rationality that contradict the mainstream neo-liberal model18:

- **Transaction cost:** it is much easier for a poor person to approach a well-endowed neighbor, relative, or friend to help provide a good or service than associating with other poor people to try to collectively obtain it.

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- **Free-riding:** it is not a real problem because patrons take pride in providing a common or public good even if others do not contribute. It gives him the power that he is looking for.

- **Moral hazard:** even if the risks tend to mount because of the break-up of old community boundaries, seeking out others informally for problem solutions is less risky than relying on formal institutions to do so\(^9\).

### 9. Content

#### 9.1. Type and quality assessment of content

The contents of policy are generally the central focus in the policy process, and are often the ‘meat’ of any policy research. Typically there may be tools, instruments and mechanisms involved which are of one or more of the following types: regulatory, economic/market, informational, institutional, contracts/agreements.

Some criteria should be used to rank the different policy instruments that form policy content and select the most appropriate to achieve the policy objective. These criteria fall into two broad categories: monetary and efficiency criteria, on the one hand, and non-monetary and equity criteria, on the other, and might include\(^20\):

- **Merit** – does the proposed policy instrument genuinely address the policy problem?
- **Cost** – how much is the proposed policy instrument feasible given existing resource availability?
- **Equity** – is the proposed policy instrument ‘equitable’, e.g. does it disproportionately benefit/harm some groups?
- **Reliability** – has the proposed policy instrument proved successful in some other regions/countries?
- **Simplicity** – is the proposed policy instrument easy to implement?
- **Consistency** – is the proposed policy instrument congruent with existing policies, norms and procedures?
- **Robustness** – will the proposed policy instrument work if economic and institutional conditions change?
- **Flexibility** – can the proposed policy instrument support any other policy objective?
- **Communicability** – is the proposed policy instrument easy to understand both for potential beneficiaries and implementers?

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\(^20\) Saint Germain, 2002.
9.2. Dealing with policy discourses and narratives

One key aspect that influences policy content has to do with *policy discourses*, and the way they are formed because, as main ways of thinking and outputs, they are influenced by dominant values and positions and marginalize other possible ways of thinking. Common ways of framing policy discourses include 21 ‘crisis’ (e.g. deforestation crisis), ‘politics-as-usual’ and ‘breakthrough’ (e.g. new ideas on taxes or market instruments). The following are common types of agenda perceived by policy actors in agriculture and rural development over the last few years. The agenda types are arranged in order of those most commonly emerging from perceptions of crisis, through those which grow from politics-as-usual, to agendas formed by the breakthrough of new policy actors or the perception that their innovations should be mainstreamed22:

- **New controls** – major changes in institutional structures, laws and regulations
- **Privatisation** – deregulation and market reforms
- **Decentralisation** – divesting responsibilities, or devolving power
- **Cross sectoral cooperation** – harmonising sectoral policies
- **Civil society initiative** – non-governmental and private sector actors cooking up policy
- **Local innovation** – those previously marginalised muscling in on policy

In the frame of policy discourses, *development narratives*23 are a very influential and commonly used ways to influence policy contents. A development narrative is a ‘story’, having a beginning, middle and end, outlining a specific course of events which have gained the status of conventional or received wisdom within the development field. Famous examples of development narratives are the ‘tragedy of the’, which outlines the series of events leading from overgrazing of common land by pastoralists to eventual desertification, the African ‘wood fuel crisis’, and ‘Doomsday scenario’. The setting of development narratives is usually explained by the governance context.

The attraction of narratives is that they simplify usually complex development subject, and they are programmatic. But they also reduce the ‘room for maneuver’ and policy space by preventing alternative explanations and approaches to address these subjects. It is therefore important to recognize and analyse what/who is behind narratives, and think of ways to reframe or counteract them. This is illustrated in Figure 13.

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23 While both policy discourses and narratives imply domination by certain interests, they are slightly different. Policy discourses denote modes of thought, values and fundamental approach to issues; development narratives define a view and approach regarding a specific problem.
Hereafter are specific questions and tips on how to go about these tasks:24:

**a) Identify the narrative**
- It can be useful to investigate narrative assumptions through discussions with different actors in a policy process:
- What is the basic problem that they are trying to address in their work? Discussions around this theme can give a good idea of narrative framings.
- It can then be useful to tease out what sources of information or experience helped shape this view. Often this can open up what the basic assumptions are.
- Discussing how a stakeholder thinks policy works and how they go about engaging with it may also offer further insights.

**b) Whose interests and perspectives are included and excluded?**
- Think through who is included and excluded:
- Who does the narrative bring to centre stage?
- Who gets more power, who gets more resources from this narrative?
- Who is left out, or loses power and resources?
- Whose perspectives and interests are ignored?

**c) How could this be reframed?**
- Any framing leaves some issues and problems out of the picture:
- If we set the problem up like this, where will it mean we end up concentrating our energies?
- Which groups need to be repositioned in the narrative?

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Are there other ways of looking at the problem?
Are there issues that are being left off the map?
How can we make coherent links between these excluded issues, perspectives and groups?

d) Devising a counter narrative
- Narratives need: simplicity, clarity and transparency’:
  - Is the story clear and simple?
  - Does it suggest a course of action?
  - Does it acknowledge complexity and uncertainty?

9.3. The importance of evidence-based policies
The above tasks point to the importance of evidence in counteracting prevailing narratives and providing a sound basis for shaping the policy content. This and also the usual complex and uncertain character of development problems, explain the importance of evidence, in ensuring sound definition of policy problems, and thus also policy instruments. Evidence can be produced through research and/or projects. These are discussed in turn

9.3.1. Research-policy links
Recent work on research-policy links, based on 50 case studies shows that:
- Indeed research can exert a powerful indirect influence through introducing new terms and shaping the policy discourse;
- Context is all-important regarding the degree to which research can influence policy. This includes in particular prevailing development narratives and policy discourse, the degree of demand for new ideas, which itself can be stimulated by external pressures for change, and the degree of contestation of ‘business as usual’ policies.
- Policy narratives – development policies based on inaccurate arguments and narratives may continue because reproducing them is easier than taking difficult decisions;
- Research is just one of many elements within complex systems of innovation, and its impact on policy cannot be measured in isolation;
- Interactive Communication – continuous interaction, and re-communication based on feedback, leads to greater chances of getting a message across accurately;
- Provide the solution to a problem is a key ingredient to ‘sell’ research to policy makers, because, like most of us, they buy products if they see it as the solution to a problem. Policy-makers will only buy the results of research if it solves their policy problems.

Some questions and tips on how to promote evidence-based policies are summarized in Table 9.

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25 Court and Young, 2003; ODI, 2005.
Table 9: Tips on how researchers can influence policy processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What researchers need to know</th>
<th>What researchers need to do</th>
<th>How to do it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Context:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Who are the policymakers?</td>
<td>- Get to know the policymakers, their agendas and their constraints.</td>
<td>- Work with the policymakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Is there policymaker demand for new ideas?</td>
<td>- Identify potential supporters and opponents.</td>
<td>- Seek commissions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What are the sources / strengths of resistance?</td>
<td>- Keep an eye on the horizon and prepare for opportunities in regular policy processes.</td>
<td>- Line up research programmes with high-profile policy events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What is the policymaking process?</td>
<td>- Look out for – and react to unexpected policy windows.</td>
<td>- Reserve resources to be able to move quickly to respond to policy windows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What are the opportunities and timing for input into formal processes?</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>- Allow sufficient time and resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evidence:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What is the current theory?</td>
<td>- Establish credibility over the long term.</td>
<td>- Build up programmes of high quality work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What are the prevailing narratives?</td>
<td>- Provide practical solutions to problems.</td>
<td>- Action-research and Pilot projects to demonstrate benefits of new approaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How divergent is the new evidence?</td>
<td>- Establish legitimacy.</td>
<td>- Use participatory approaches to help with legitimacy and implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What sort of evidence will convince policymakers?</td>
<td>- Build a convincing case and present clear policy options.</td>
<td>- Clear strategy for communication from the start.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Package new ideas in familiar theory or narratives.</td>
<td>- Communicate effectively.</td>
<td>- Face-to-face communication.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Links:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Who are the key stakeholders?</td>
<td>- Get to know the other stakeholders.</td>
<td>- Partnerships between researchers, policymakers and policy end-users.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What links and networks exist between them?</td>
<td>- Establish a presence in existing networks.</td>
<td>- Identify key networkers and salesmen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Who are the intermediaries, and do they have influence?</td>
<td>- Build coalitions with like-minded stakeholders.</td>
<td>- Use informal contacts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Whose side are they on?</td>
<td>- Build new policy networks.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>External Influences:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Who are main international actors in the policy process?</td>
<td>- Get to know the donors, their priorities and constraints.</td>
<td>- Develop extensive background on donor policies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What influence do they have?</td>
<td>- Identify potential supporters, key individuals and networks.</td>
<td>- Orient communications to suit donor priorities and language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What are their aid priorities?</td>
<td>- Establish credibility.</td>
<td>- Cooperate with donors and seek commissions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What are their research priorities and mechanisms?</td>
<td>- Keep an eye on donor policy and look out for policy windows.</td>
<td>- Contact (regularly) key individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What are the policies of the donors funding the research?</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Young and Court, 2004
To illustrate some of the tips proposed in the above Table, Box 9 presents an example on the importance of networks for research to influence policies, based on the case of Joint Forest Management (JFM) in India, while Box 10 presents the experience of involving policymakers in rapid rural appraisal (RRA) exercises in relation to land policies in Madagascar and Guinea.

**Box 9: Networks can help influence policy and bring the voices of marginalised groups closer to decision-making - The case of Joint Forestry Management (JFM) in India**

Networks have played an important role in strengthening JFM in the country, by bringing the voice of the marginalised closer to the decision-making and policy levels. In the initial stage of JFM, national-level networks such as the Society for Promotion of Wasteland Development, the National JFM Network and the WWF-India Foresters JFM Network had provided direction by holding national-level discussions on JFM. These forums enabled local-level issues to be discussed and debated to strengthen JFM policies in the country. However, as there was no institutional ownership of this body by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), these institutions petered out after a while. Meanwhile, a wide range of marginalised stakeholders expressed the need for a neutral forum to influence policy-makers to come up with more people-friendly policies. The MoEF was also looking for an institutional mechanism to monitor the progress of JFM. Responding to these needs, a neutral stakeholders’ forum – Resource Unit for Participatory Forestry (RUPFOR) – was initiated with support from the Ford Foundation and is at present housed in Winrock International India. Since its formation in 2001, RUPFOR has had considerable success in making the policy-making process a more participatory and inclusive one. However, it cannot be ignored that it is a relatively new experiment that is still very much a work-in-progress.

Source: Court and Young, 2003
Box 10: Involving policymakers in Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) exercises in relation to land and resource management policies in Madagascar and Guinea

In the mid 90s, both Madagascar and Guinea envisaged changes in the land and natural resource management laws. Through USAID support, the Land Tenure Center (LTC) assisted them in carrying out their policy reviews on these matters. LTC proposed to undertake a process of reflection and analysis which would help government officials to both better understand local realities and come up with their own solutions, and Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) exercises involving government officials was chosen as the tool to achieve this. Reasons for this include the fact that RRA can bring village perspectives to the debate, it empowers local communities, and it challenges preconceived notions.

In both Guinea and Madagascar, a series of case studies using RRA exercises scattered around the country were carried out over approximately a one-year period, with each RRA lasting typically 7 to 10 days.

While the two projects took similar approaches, there was one notable difference: the composition of the research team. While in both cases the majority of the researchers were nationals and NGOs were also involved, in Madagascar, team members were young professionals who came from diverse backgrounds (both academia and development). On the other hand, in Guinea, most of the team members were mid- to upper-level government officials from a range of ministries responsible for writing and implementing the land code.

The advantages of including policymakers in the research team include the fact that:

- Policy makers are not presented with results of research but rather do the research, which eases the acceptance and influence of research findings in policy arenas;
- By implication, the credibility of the study is increased, since its results are unlikely to be discounted by those who carried it out;
- The learning process is more effective, but so long as it extends over sufficient time to allow for a critical mass of learning, as illustrated below;

Perceptions of policy makers and villagers change dramatically, with both sides getting to know each other; which, in the long run, can only benefit the responsiveness of policy decisions.

The main constraints faced in the process had to do with:

- Sampling a limited number of RRA areas. This may not be a problem if RRA are seen more as means to raise the right issues in policy debates rather than a way to get a comprehensive picture of local realities
- Costs: Undertaking substantive RRAs in different areas is expensive (typically US$7-10,000). This usually means that donor support is needed, and therefore bears the risk of excessive donor influence on the decision-making process. Yet, the learning of RRA participants usually continues to impact on their daily work even if the RRA exercises are stopped due to lack of funds;
- Difficulties related to attitudes and assumptions, including defensive or over-imposing behavior during meetings. But this improved significantly as the process advanced.

Undoubtedly policy makers’ exposure to local realities complicated rather than helped their decision-making process as it showed them complexities and challenged some orthodoxies. But on the other hand, this should help in implementing policies and encourage more inclusive processes to that end.

Source: Schoonmaker-Freundenberger, 1998
9.3.2. Projects as source of evidence in shaping policy content

Projects which have achieved consistent and substantive results over time can contribute to the shaping of policy content. This may occur when they have a specific policy objective, but even when they may be designed to operate at local level. In the latter case, the influence on policy content stems from evidence built over time through project outputs and outcomes. Boxes 11 and 12 present two examples of projects that have influenced policies.

Box 11: The impact of the Sustainable Fisheries Livelihood Programme on Fisheries Policies in West Africa

The Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme (SFLP) was established in 1999 as a DFID/FAO partnership, and is now due to be completed at the end of June 2007. Building on its predecessor programme Integrated Development for Artisanal Fisheries (IDAF), SFLP addresses poverty by specifically targeting, across its 25 partner countries, resource users in artisanal fishing communities, small-scale traders, processors (mainly women), and consumers. Drawing upon the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) and the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA), SFLP focuses on building capacity to improve the management and social organization of fishing communities and to improve government capacity for policy formulation, planning and management.

The impact of SFLP is much greater at the national level than either the regional or global level. Overall, the fisheries sector has been integrated into national development programmes in many participating countries. SFLP studies and briefings have raised awareness of the true contribution of the fisheries sector to national economies in many participating countries. SFLP positively influenced the incorporation of the fisheries sector into national Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in many participating countries. SFLP has supported changes at the policy and institutional levels in participating countries to address sustainable fisheries management through its work in co-management, fisheries surveillance, and legal recognition of professional organizations. Many institutions that SFLP supported appear to have been at the meso and micro level, whereas the policies have been developed at the national or meso levels. Much of the progress has been enabling; implementation has generally yet to occur. It is important to note that impact has been uneven across participating countries.

The SFLP experience clearly demonstrates the significant amount of time needed to effect policy, institutional, and behavioural change and to bring them to sustainability.

Source: FAO/DFID, 2007

Box 12: From pilot to policy in Indonesia

The Government of Indonesia (GOI) livestock-related organisations are moving toward being more client-oriented in their provision of livestock services to smallholder farmers. Pilot studies have demonstrated the possibilities, but the ultimate aim of securing commitment from the Department of Livestock Services to new policies and implementing them on a national scale remains elusive. The strategy for achieving this is to:

- Undertake general organisational and policy studies on improved organisation and management of livestock services.
- Use structure, conduct and performance studies from field to policy-level of organisations involved in the pilot projects.
- Lobby decision-makers and provide them with ‘tailor-made’ information materials based on convincing evidence.
- Organise a series of professionally facilitated workshops for GoI staff.
- Make recommendations to GOI on changes needed to support and operationalise policy objectives;
- Provide support to implement the recommendations.

Source: Pasteur, 2001c
10. MONITORING AND EVALUATING POLICY IMPACTS AND PROCESSES

Policy makers will be concerned to understand both the *impacts* of the policy choices that have been made (the ‘what’ of policy). However, given that the time span between a policy and its impacts is highly variable and may be revealed in the long term, one should also assess the impact of policies on institutional change and on the evolving *policy processes* itself, i.e. ways and means by which policy impacts have (or have not) been achieved (i.e. the ‘how’ of policy).

In very broad terms, based on the sustainable development pillars, there are three types of impact of policy processes and contents which need to be borne in mind, i.e. environmental, social, and economic impacts.

If policy reforms are successful, then their impact will be evidenced in some manner or another, such as transformed behaviors, improved welfare, larger income, increased output. These changes usually include short-term results and long-term impacts, and should be evaluated (i) to enable the incorporation of lessons learned into future decision-making process and (ii) because some policies may produce unintended and negative results and impacts (DAC, no date).

There are different ways of evaluating policies, including various ex-ante and post-hoc assessments of specific interventions, cost-benefit analysis, economic appraisal and international benchmarking. The simplest form of impact evaluation is a ‘goals-based’ evaluation, in which policy makers are informed whether a desired target has been achieved, both in the short and long-term. A limitation of this approach is that unanticipated, even negative, consequences of a policy initiative are not considered as policy outcomes. However, given the multiplicity of endogenous and exogenous variables affecting policy outcomes, it is daunting to quantify the net impacts of policies with certainty and goals-based evaluation is largely used.

In recent years, however, pilot policy projects are increasingly used to experiment policies before scaling them up to the level of country. The objective of pilot policy projects is to assess the net impact of a policy by exposing a group of people to the policy intervention in question whilst withholding the policy to a comparison group. Although on paper these methodologies appear appealing, they face challenges, i.e.

- their implementation and execution can be complex and requires significant operational and analytical expertise\(^{26}\);
- the assessed results and impacts of policies are dependent both on the analytical tools used (e.g. partial versus general equilibrium economic models) and on value judgment criteria\(^{27}\);
- what works at pilot level (micro and community level) does not necessarily work for the country, as exogenous variables in the pilot are often endogenous at aggregate level\(^{28}\). For instance, the market price for rice is exogenously given for one farmer but depends on the total production of rice by all farmers; it follows that pilot policies able to

\(^{26}\) Davies, 2004.
\(^{27}\) Bullock and Salhofer, 2003.
\(^{28}\) Pyatt, 2002.
increase rice production and farmers’ income in one village, might be ineffective when scaled up at the country level.

It is important to recognise that monitoring and evaluation (M&E) occurs at several levels providing the necessary information and feedback to make informed decisions about the way to proceed with the policies when entering a new planning loop. Figure 14 illustrates the different M&E levels in the case of the forestry sector.

**Figure 14: Different levels of M&E: Example of the forestry sector**

As regards the monitoring of policy impact, Metz (2005) suggests eight steps and activities presented in Figure 15.
Figure 15: Eight steps and main activities in monitoring policy impacts (MPI)

Step 1: **Initiation and preparation of MPI**
- Clarification of objectives of MPI
- Assignment of responsibility for MPI
- Definition of tasks of MPI

Step 2: **Policy review and analysis**
- Policy framework: objectives and measures
- Stakeholders and role of institutions involved
- Performance and state of implementation

Step 3: **Development of impact model**
- Identification of impact areas
- Identification of impact path(s)
- Formulation of impact hypotheses

Step 4: **Selection of impact indicators**
- Intermediate/proxy/final indicators
- Quantitative/qualitative indicators
- Applying criteria for 'good' indicators

Step 5: **Research design**
- Determination of research approaches & methods
- Determination of data/information requirements
- Planning of specific quantitative/qualitative surveys

Step 6: **Data collection/survey execution**
- Tapping existing information and data sources
- Upgrading of existing data collection system
- Execution of specific quantitative/qualitative surveys

Step 7: **Data compilation, processing and analysis**
- Compilation of primary/secondary data
- Data processing and analysis
- Assessment and conclusions

Step 8: **Communication and presentation of results of MPI**
- to policy makers, clients, public

Source: Metz, 2005.
More recently, Bebbington and McCourt (2006) have proposed the following features as evidence of success of development policies; which cover both impact and processes:

- They would target the enhancement of human capabilities, in particular for the people who have the greatest capability deficits. This feature can be broken down into impact on income or other human development indicators and social and political impacts;
- They should do so on a large scale: this might entail scale-up from an initial policy experiment;
- The policies would have been implemented over at least ten years, and preferably across at least one change of government: policy duration was important;
- They would preferably have succeeded against the odds; that is, at the point of inception a reasonable observer would have predicted that success was unlikely;

M&E of impacts and processes, and drawing lessons from this is of little use if these lessons are not fed into further policy actions. However, more often than not, the link between policy evaluation and policy action is weak or even entirely missing. One explanation for this lies in the fundamentally political character of the transformation of policy lessons into policy action, and thus does not occur automatically.

Therefore producing good policy valuation is often not a good enough incentive to use this in policy action. Gordillo and Andersson (2004) argue that the likelihood for this to occur is closely related to the existence of adequate institutional incentives in the shape of mechanisms of:

- *downward accountability* (i.e. to citizens), which allows citizens to hold politicians accountable; and. This seems particularly important for dealing with the issue of concentration of power within political elite
- *organisational learning* and the best way to learn seems to be in participating in the evaluation process.

These factors suggest that participation in M&E is a good way for ensuring good use of the results of policy evaluation. FAO/FONP (2006) suggests the following as simple enough techniques to be used with a wide range of participants:

- Informal reviews. Informal reviews are simple tools which do not deliver systematic information, but do give some indications on the success of activities.
- Collecting and analysing quantitative data. Standard procedures and measurements need to be established.
- Participant surveys and public opinion polls;
- Reviews & Audits. This tool can be especially important for activities that are highly relevant, resource-intensive, experimental or complex.

Box 13 presents an example of participatory evaluation regarding overall organizational changes in the Livestock Department in Indonesia.
**Box 13: Participatory Evaluation of organisational change in the Livestock Department in Indonesia**

Overall institutional change in the livestock department in Indonesia was measured by a baseline survey and subsequent follow-up studies towards the end of the project cycle. The follow-up study relied on formal questionnaires given to staff, guided focus group discussions and customer satisfaction surveys. The surveys consisted of individual interviews and focus-group discussions with farmers. They measured the importance of the services provided and the providers' performance in supplying them.

Source: Pasteur, 2001c

It is also suggested to use less formal techniques. In participatory M&E practice less ‘extractive’ approaches are promoted – this means that information is not removed from the process, rather it is generated and owned by the participants. This is considered better since it focuses on generation of information for immediate decision-making and action - by the groups who will take the action. As a result, less formal approaches may be appropriate. One technique for this is the Most Significant Change Approach or ‘evolutionary’ approach to monitoring and evaluation. The main thrust of the approach is to incorporate the collection and systematic participatory interpretation of stories - See Box 14.

**Box 14: The most significant change approach – telling stories**

Stories are used widely for co-operative inquiry and for discourse analysis, feminist research and cultural studies. In organisational learning literature, stories are valued and studied as the preferred sense-making currency. However, there appears to be little systematic, formal use of stories in National Forest Programme (nfp) evaluation. Nevertheless, program evaluation frequently involves the collection and interpretation of stakeholder stories to make some decision or other regarding a program. These 'stories' emerge during interviews (often embedded in transcripts) and in written documents such as diaries or open-ended responses to questions. But paradoxically, there is a dearth of literature that specifically cites the use of stories for evaluating programs.

Some practitioners propose that when the collection of stories is coupled with a process of systematically and collectively interpreting these stories, (including documentation of these interpretations) then storytelling can be effectively harnessed for participatory evaluation. The interpretations themselves tell another story, and the process of collective interpretation can have several beneficial outcomes for evaluation utilisation. Through adding the extra step of collectively sharing and interpreting stories of program impact, a whole new dimension to the use of stories in program evaluation is added.

Source: FAO/FONP, 2006

Both monitoring implementation and evaluating policies are essential for improving the delivery of current and future policies, though if implementation is flawed then policy evaluation will be, in turn, meaningless. Unfortunately, monitoring and evaluation appear not to be part of government culture, both in industrialized and developing countries. This might be partly explained as the value and benefits of policy monitoring and evaluation are difficult to quantify, results and impacts of policies are often long-term, and the survival in office of politicians often depends more on short-term benefits to some stakeholders than on a comprehensive evaluation of current public actions.
11. **POLICY ANALYSIS – A TOOL FOR TO HELP POLICY MAKERS THROUGH THE POLICY PROCESS STAGES**

11.1. **Defining policy analysis**

In the last twenty years governments in many developing countries have undertaken a wide variety of policy reforms to accelerate growth in the agricultural sector, alleviate poverty levels and achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The pace and complexity of these reforms, including both macroeconomic, agricultural sector and sub-sector policy and institutional changes, have brought to light the often limited capacity of governments, international organizations and donors to first generate, analyse and evaluate alternative agricultural policy options, and then to design and implement the most effective and desirable policy.

Although a variety of known and unknown factors influence policy making, there is agreement that the more a policy problem is analyzed and disentangled, both from its technical and socio-economic perspective, the more likely the proposed solutions will be sound and successfully implemented. A variety of disciplines have attempted to suggest how to effectively design and implement good policies, including management science, political science, statistics, economics and sociology. Research analyses by traditional social sciences, however, are often prohibitively expensive, take long to complete as information is scarce and costly to collect and, in several areas, there exist ‘technical’ uncertainties. On the other hand, policy makers typically operate within binding budget constraints and have to take agricultural policy decisions in short times – in UK, for instance, most policies are developed across a 6-9 month time span\(^{29}\).

In the last thirty years or so policy analysis has developed as a science to collect and synthesize information to provide a format for policy decisions, and support time-consistent policy actions.

Policy analysis can be defined as an applied social science aimed at producing information for effectively addressing policy problems. It differs from policy planning, which details a global set of coherent policy objectives and strategies to the pursuit of a global goal (e.g. poverty alleviation). But policy planning makes ample use of policy analysis. It also differs from well codified academic research, which is typically long-term, based on theory and supported by empirical testing. Policy analysis makes ample use of a variety of research outcomes and is therefore complex, namely it ‘critically triangulates from a variety of perspectives on what is worth knowing and what is known’\(^{30}\).

Any predictive social science can support policy analysis, such as sociology, economics and statistics. The science that has contributed the most to policy analysis is economics, which is still the leading discipline in policy analysis when macroeconomic issues at a stake, including investigation of alternative fiscal, monetary and trade policies that other sciences are not equipped to comprehensively deal with. Conversely, a variety of sciences, including sociology, natural sciences, economics and anthropology, interact to provide insights into the effectiveness of public actions at sector level, such as for agricultural and rural development policies.

\(^{29}\) Cabinet Office, 2000.

\(^{30}\) Dunn, 1981.
According to Salvatici and Quieti (2003), food and agricultural policy analysis can help the policy makers in several ways:

- Specify - for government intervention - integrated, coherent and effective food and agricultural policies' goals, which should contribute to the pursuit of the overall global objectives;
- Identify and assess the main sectoral structural features, highlighting the factors representing both development opportunities and constraints, and producing critical reviews of the impact of food and agricultural policies;
- Analyse and evaluate the options available for the formulation of alternative policies and modes of intervention for the food and agricultural sector broadly conceived as well as rural areas;
- Enhance the understanding of economic concepts and policy issues among the variety of agents and agencies concerned with the development of a modern agro-food sector and sustainable forms of agricultural production;
- Act as a highly qualified forum for policy dialogue, between decision makers, managers and experts for the identification of current policy concerns and timely formulation of research areas as a basis for policy review and proposals.

Whatever social science or combination of social sciences is made use of to carry out policy analysis, a sequence of ‘common’ steps have been arrived at to select, analyse, propose and design solutions to policy problems. These include:

- structuring and detailing the policy problem, i.e. identifying the root-cause of the issue at hand and, consequently, detailing a particular policy objective;
- generating and ranking alternative solutions, namely selecting the appropriate public policy instrument(s) serving the policy objective;
- designing implementation procedures, e.g. defining/changing rules and regulations and/or establishing new institutions to make the policy instrument operational;
- defining monitoring and evaluation criteria and indicators, both to keep policy implementation on track and derive lessons out for future public actions.

### 11.2. Basic steps in policy analysis

#### 11.2.1. Identifying policy objectives

The policy agendas – that is the policy documents presenting a ‘political’ vision for a region, a country or a sector – are usually generic and include broad and wide ranging policy objectives and instruments, such as poverty reduction and increased agricultural productivity. They rarely, if ever, identify the root causes of the current undesirable situation that policy makers propose to change. 31 For instance:

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The overall objective of Mozambique agricultural development strategy includes ‘improve farming system, expand conservation agriculture, promote crop diversification, improve availability and affordability of improved seeds for cereals,’32.

Similarly, in Uganda, ‘the Government has decided that in the medium term its main thrust for public action in the modernisation of agriculture will be (MAIFF and MFPED, 2000):

- institutional reform and strengthening for improved efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery;
- provision of regulatory services;
- provision of agricultural advisory services for farmers;
- agricultural research and technology development for farmers;
- provision of market information for agricultural inputs and outputs;
- epidemic disease and pest control;

The policy agendas are thus markedly generic: what does ‘improving farming systems’ imply for the government? What policy reforms is the government expected to carry out for ‘improved efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery’? Government (technical) officers and policy researchers are expected to answer these questions, that is to structure the policy problem and provide a causal explanation of the present unsatisfactory situation and, hence, to identify some specific policy objective(s) or concrete measurable goals.

The way the policy problem is analyzed and structured exerts a major influence on the identification of the policy objective. Dunn (1981) details several techniques to structure the problem, ranging from rational analysis to brainstorming; Snare (1995) suggests making use of narratives, counter-stories and meta-narratives: narratives are widely accepted explanations of policy problems; counter-stories provide an unusual perspective of the policy problem; meta-narratives are stories that policy makers use to recast policy problems. Whatever the approach used to structure the policy problem, policy makers should identify a robust causal chain explaining the current undesirable status quo, such as through problem-tree analysis that breaks down the policy problem into manageable and definable chunks.

Figure 16 provides an example of problem-tree.

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32 World Bank, 2006a.
If policy makers were not able to identify a causal chain of factors leading to the policy problem, then the government would most likely mitigate the undesirable situation ex-post (e.g. unemployment benefits for the unemployed) rather than intervening on its root causes, or would implement the highly ineffective ‘do-everything’ alternative. Conversely, a well-structured policy problem allows identifying the root causes of the issue at hand and hence detailing specific policy objectives. For instance, a problem tree analysis might suggest that the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak depicted in Figure 16 is largely due to direct contact between infected and susceptible animals gathering at common water points; the associated policy objective would be avoiding animals getting together at water points. Problem definition, therefore, is the first crucial step to start investigating doable policy solutions.

11.2.2. Generating and choosing policy instruments

Once one or more root-causes of the policy problem have been found and the associated policy objectives selected, policy makers should identify alternative policy instruments, that is public actions serving the objectives, and select the most appropriate one(s).

The identification of alternative policy instruments is not a systematic process, and indications could come from experiences of other countries with similar problems; reported research findings, laws, and public/experts opinion polls; literature review of professional and academic journals; collected proceedings from conferences; be proposed by interest groups and lobbies.

In any case, some simple criteria should be taken into account when identifying possible policy instruments: (i) the policy instruments should be clearly identified, including practical public actions beyond generic pledges (e.g. ‘the government will promote, encourage and favour’). Were this be not the case, either the problem has been badly framed or the alternatives inadequately elaborated; (ii) existing policies should be considered as a policy alternative (not only would this avoid being biased towards policy change, but current policies have been previously found plausible and represent a sound benchmark against which to assess other alternatives); (iii) no policy instrument should be the ‘do-everything’ alternative, which is often incomprehensible and unfeasible; (iv) whereas an infinite number of policy instruments could be generated, it is important to
reduce policy alternatives to a manageable number to facilitate comparing the various proposals; (v) all policy instruments should limit the role of the state to the supply of public goods and market regulation for those goods with either positive or negative externalities, whereas the private sector is expected to supply private goods\textsuperscript{33}. However, one should take into account that a functioning market is not necessarily equitable, and there is a distinction between a free market and the process towards a free market serving the poor: it makes a great deal of difference, for instance, whether public animal health services are privatized before, during, or after a micro-credit policy is implemented, or before, during, or after the establishment of community-based animal health workers.

**Box 15: Public and private delivery of veterinary services**

| Market liberalization, privatization and decentralization programs have led several developing countries to reform their public veterinary services. These reforms have been largely based on efficiency considerations and, hence, on the analysis of the comparative advantages of the market and the state in the provision of specific services. Clinical veterinary services and the distribution and production of drugs and vaccines are largely private goods, because the users capture all the benefits, and can be efficiently supplied by private agents. On the other hand the private free market will not provide services such as disease diagnosis, vaccination against contagious diseases, vector control, etc. at the optimal level. Beneficiaries of these services, in fact, are both the payers and the non-payers because of the existence of positive externalities (reduced risk of contagiousness for non-vaccinated animals). The government, therefore, has an important role to play in the market for these goods. Finally, services such as epidemic disease surveillance / prevention and food hygiene / inspection are pure public goods and private markets are unlikely to deliver them due to their non-excludability characteristic. Everyone, for instance, would benefit from the monitoring and control of ‘mad cow’ disease (BSE). Hence, it becomes the responsibility of the government to find collective mechanisms to undertake the delivery of these services or sub-contract their provision to the private sector (Ahuja, 2004). |

### 11.2.3. Implementing policy instruments

Once policy objectives and instruments have been selected, policy implementation becomes the main task for policy makers. Despite failures of many policy reforms have been attributed to lack of careful consideration of how implementation should have been organized and managed, there is still scant documentation on how to implement policy reforms, to have government officers and other actors do what they are expected to do\textsuperscript{34}.

For sometime it has been argued that policies could be systematically classified and each policy category associated with predictable patterns of management\textsuperscript{35}. Whereas the concept of policy typologies is appealing, its crucial weakness is that policies present a multiplicity of features. Therefore establishing criteria to objectively assign policies into conceptually distinct categories and elaborating specific management and institutional rules for each category are subjective and highly debatable exercises\textsuperscript{36}. For policy-making purposes, it is more practical identifying a continuum series of omni-valid implementation task functions, including: (i) policy legitimization and constituency building; (ii) resource accumulation; (iii) organizational design; (iv) monitoring and evaluation\textsuperscript{37}.

\textsuperscript{33} Weimer and Vining, 1991.
\textsuperscript{34} Crosby, 1996; Griffin, 1975.
\textsuperscript{35} e.g. Grindle and Thomas, 1991; Lowi, 1972.
\textsuperscript{36} Smith, 2002.
\textsuperscript{37} Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002.
Policy legitimization – Despite a policy being sound or correct, support will not automatically be forthcoming, some actors might oppose the reform process and beneficiaries might not value that it is in their interest to support the change. Policies, therefore, need to be legitimized. Government should create an adequate constituency supporting the reform, that is lobbying, negotiating, developing alliances, and forming coalitions with key stakeholders, and particularly with presumed ‘policy champions’ that are expected to assert that the proposed policy reform is necessary and crucial to implement, even though it will present some drawback. Stakeholder analysis and political mapping are key steps in establishing an adequate constituency. Stakeholder analysis consists of assessing policy constituents, their interests, their expectations, the strength or intensity of their interest in the policy reform, and the resources they can bring or bear on the outcomes of a policy change. Next, government should examine current and prospective relationships and alliances among the various stakeholders willing to support / oppose some specific policy reforms. This is a political mapping exercise aimed at establishing an adequate constituency supporting the policy reform. But the legitimacy of policy is about more than getting public buy-in to government-led initiatives. A clear ex-ante understanding of which stakeholder groups are likely to benefit, and which to lose is a crucial component of design of a policy (not just the design of its implementation) – and legitimacy stems in large part from the extent to which the policy will benefit society as a whole. This issue and ways to carry out ex-ante livelihood and socio-economic analysis are discussed in Section 6 of this document.

Resource accumulation – Resource accumulation refers both to securing start-up funds and assuring a policy a place in the government’s budget allocation process that is ensuring a steady resource flow over the years. Policy legitimization and broad-based support, both in the short and long-run, are essential for resource accumulation as allocating financial, human and technical resources for a new policy is a daunting task; (i) policies are often designed without any significant concern about government budget, especially when influenced by personal rather than public interest; (ii) gathering sufficient resources generally means cutting those directed to old policies, and this will most likely generate opposition.

Organizational design – This is linked to the bureaucratic conditions briefly mentioned earlier in Section 7.3. The mobilization task shifts the policy from paper to actions, to programs and projects. In general, new programs and projects involve the introduction of new objectives, tasks and activities for government agencies and departments, public officers and other actors. This reform process might be constrained by low-skilled human resources unable to effectively perform the new tasks. But even if the new tasks were simple, there are intrinsic difficulties to establish new routines and practices causing some to win and other to lose. It is therefore crucial to provide the ‘right’ incentives for implementers to adopt new modes and practices required by programs and plans of actions, otherwise government officers and street bureaucrats might end up slowing down and even blocking policy reforms.

There is general agreement that two basic principles should be considered for both policy makers and policy implementers when designing policy implementation mechanisms, i.e.
Accountability describes the rights and responsibilities that exist between people and the institutions that affect their lives, including governments, civil society and market actors. In general, relationships of accountability have two important components:\(^{38}\):

- **answerability**, i.e. the right to get an answer and the obligation to provide one, and;
- **enforceability**, i.e. the capacity to ensure an action is taken, and access to mechanisms for redress when accountability fails.

It is also important to consider the three levels of accountability, i.e.

- **vertical accountability**, that is from service providers to clients or beneficiaries and from politicians to civil society – It is often overlooked, non existent or poorly enforced;
- **horizontal accountability**: it concerns accountability of civil servants to politicians (often via public bodies such as auditors, parliaments, legislative);
- **intra organisational, i.e.** to line managers and employees.

Rewards and penalties refer to a system of incentives for policy implementers. It should be correlated to monitoring and evaluation indicators, taking into consideration both resource use and outcomes of policy implementation. The application of rewards and sanctions is highly dependent on the existence of adequate accountability mechanisms.

The conditions under which institutions are accountable vary by country and context. Key cross-cutting factors that can improve the responsiveness of powerful institutions to poor and marginalised groups include:\(^{39}\):

- **Legal and constitutional provisions**: These are key but often not enforced;
- **Histories of protest and citizen engagement**: The politics of accountability are deeply affected by traditions of social mobilisation;
- **Democratic space**: This includes degree of independence of the legal system and media, the existence of fair and free elections, etc
- **Cultures of accountability**: Different experience and understanding of accountability leads to different expectations and outcomes in that respect;
- **State-market relations**: This is especially difficult in the case of heavy dependence on international companies for extraction of natural resources – see discussion in Section 8.

Box 16 presents some strategies people to promote adequate accountability mechanisms.

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38 IDS, 2006.

39 IDS, 2006 – see also Section 6.3. on governance context.
Box 16: Examples of strategies to promote accountability

**Direct action in Kenya:** Kenya is a signatory to the Convention on Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which provides for the right to housing, even though there is no provision for this in the Kenyan constitution. In Mombassa, international recognition for a struggle by a tenants’ association for the right to adequate housing helped the group gain momentum and confidence. Local government proved unresponsive to their demands, residents used direct action to challenge the lack of accountability, by physically preventing the construction of unauthorised housing structures.

**Citizen water management committees in Mexico:** Struggles for accountability by rural indigenous groups have focused on how to ensure the sustainable management of a rapidly declining watershed in Veracruz, Mexico. Major petrochemical industries have been draining the watershed for use in urban areas downstream. Without immediate action, the water supply will disappear in the next decade, as pressure increases from deforestation, erosion, and the growing demands of urban areas. There are many different government agencies involved in managing the watershed, with often competing interests, including traditional structures such as ejidos (communally held plots of land), urban and rural municipal governments, federal agencies for the environment and for indigenous affairs, and international conservation organisations. The lack of space for citizen participation led to a breakdown in communication between rural and urban communities, with periodic outbreaks of violence. In this case, the citizen water management committee has proved a successful mechanism for increasing accountability between the indigenous communities and the numerous institutions involved.

**Public hearings in India:** Public hearings are seldom held in advance of a major industrial development in India, despite a formal obligation to do so. Alternative citizen hearings have provided a space for people to make their voices heard, and an arena where state and industrial representatives have been required to give an account of their actions. NGOs collect evidence from other communities who have experience with similar industrial developments to those proposed. This has led to well-informed ‘People’s Development Plans’ being presented at citizens’ hearings.

**Community-based organisations in the Niger Delta:** Youth groups and women’s organisations have formed in reaction to perceived collusion between government and the oil companies operating in the Niger Delta, leading to conflicts over oil. These groups represent communities in the Niger Delta who are not being heard through formal channels, and they often clash with powerful official institutions, such as local chiefs and elected officials. Community-based organisations have created a space to articulate concerns about corruption and mismanagement of oil revenues by the government, but they also raise new questions about who represents the communities’ interests and how people in the Niger Delta can gain control over the natural resources in the region.


### 11.2.4. Monitoring and evaluating policy reforms

Policy implementation is a non-linear process influenced by a number of endogenous and exogenous factors. Progress toward the achievement of policy objectives should be therefore monitored to keep activities and progress on track, and make adjustments when required; policies should also be evaluated to assess whether public actions delivered the planned benefits and, eventually, to improve the effectiveness of future public actions.

Monitoring is essential to keep progress on track, facilitate error correction and, for purposes of accountability, to assure that policy managers and implementing agencies are fulfilling their prescribed obligations. Since monitoring requires assembling quantitative and qualitative indicators that can be traced over time, it is necessary to establish a framework for the regular collection of data and have as its output indicators that can be used directly for adjusting the policy. For instance, in India a program to help the poorly performing students hired education assistants from the local communities to tutor the students. Monitoring indicators might include budget allocations, number of hired tutors, tutors’ background as well as students’ dropout rate and performance. Some thresholds for

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41 Easterly, 2006.
the indicators should also be established in order to facilitate adjustments in policy implementation: when is policy implementation going too much off track?

Two issues are to be addressed when detailing monitoring activities. First, since monitoring might be carried out by a variety of actors (e.g. government departments, beneficiaries, civil society organizations, research institutes), implementing agencies should not be given full monitoring responsibility: they are allegedly accountable for policy delivery and their monitoring activities might be biased. Second, as monitoring often takes place within a changed institutional infrastructure, staff may be not committed or unable to monitor and new management rules and practices might be envisaged and implemented.

Ways and means to carry out monitoring and evaluation have been discussed in Section 10 of this document.

11.3. Policy analysis and policy making

Policy analysis methods can be used to confront agricultural policy problems: problem definition leads to the identification and ex-ante assessment of alternative policy options, followed by policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation. No doubt, the diversity of agricultural policy problems is so large that no detailed methodology can be developed for dealing with all of them; there is however consent and evidence that good policy analysis – which can be carried out by a number of different actors\textsuperscript{42} – does significantly contribute to sound policy proposals and implementation, when time and resources are available.

The basic steps of good policy analysis are summarized in Box 17.

\footnote{42 For the institutional dimensions of policy analysis, refer to the Proceedings of the Near East Workshop on Institution Building for Policy Analysis (FAO, 2004).}
Box 17: Summary of basic steps in policy analysis

- Identify key stakeholders, including farmers, herders, grassroots organizations, local government agencies, etc. which might have a stake in problem X.
- Detail problem X, i.e. provide a description of the status quo and a description of the desired situation. Interviews with stakeholders as well as collection of primary and secondary data are essential at this stage.
- Provide a quantitative-qualitative causal explanation of problem X, including technical constraints, institutional bottlenecks and how they interrelate. These accounts will support the identification of specific policy objectives.
- Identify possible policy instruments serving the identified policy objective and rank them according to some defined monetary and non-monetary criteria, including e.g. financial costs, who wins and who loses, technical requirements, institutions involved, consistency with existing policies and practices.
- Design implementation mechanisms for the selected policy instruments, namely identification of the role of the public and private sector, a detail description of the tasks of public agencies / departments, and of rules and regulations necessary to make the policy instrument operational.
- Propose a communication strategy to build a constituency supporting the proposed policy solution, including target groups, communication objectives, key messages and tones, means to pass on the messages, and estimated timing and costs.
- Identify monitoring indicators and relative sources to increase accountability of the responsible agencies, inclusive of thresholds of alarm and indication of rewards and penalties in case tasks are carried out properly / improperly.
- Detail evaluation indicators, range of acceptability, sources and timing of evaluation.

11.4. Constraints in the use of policy analysis

The steps described in Box 17 do not always lead to the desired or even expected outcomes. This is because of the complex linkages between policy analysis and policy making as illustrated in Figure 17. In particular, this Figure shows the fundamental role played by policy actors in linking policy analysis to policy formulation and implementation. These linkages are complex, given the interaction between policy actors and other elements of policy processes, in particular policy context – see discussion in Sections 5 and 6. These linkages are further discussed hereafter.
Interest groups and lobbies can influence policy priorities and the policy agenda, but find it more difficult to influence the way policy problems are structured, that is the definition of policy goals and instruments. Many groups, including the most powerful ones, have often limited technical capacity and inadequate information to examine policy issues in detail, especially when the impacts of policy changes have to be assessed on a wide variety of stakeholders. For instance, dairy processing companies would probably find it challenging to assess the impact of stricter sanitary standards on small poor producers operating in informal markets.

The difficulty and inability of lobbies and interest groups to comprehensively investigate policy solutions provides policy makers with the opportunity to design and implement policies which are effectively equitable and pro-poor, and not necessarily biased towards the already well-off. For this to happen, governments in developed and developing countries should make use of policy analysis when designing and implementing policy reforms: ‘policy should be supported by good analysis and, where appropriate, modeling’\(^{43}\). Alas, there is considerable variability among countries with respect to the extent to which formal policy analysis is utilized by governments, and casual observation would suggest that the use of policy analysis runs the gamut from 0 to 100, though most governments tend to make use of limited policy analysis: ‘this study has found […] that [in UK] demand for good policy analysis is not fully integrated in the culture of central government’\(^{44}\). How to stimulate both the demand for and supply of policy analysis? What are the binding constraints to the demand for and supply of policy analysis?

The demand for policy analysis by ministries and government departments is often low because of: (i) political manifesto commitments that, rather than being couched in broad terms, take the form of detailed pledges and bind the government to specific policy actions; (ii) the direction of policy is often driven by strong a priori conviction or by ‘patrons’ and

\(^{43}\) Cabinet Office, 2000.
\(^{44}\) Cabinet Office, 2000.
sponsors’; (iii) the lack of understanding on the part of the policy-making elites of the utility of policy analysis; (iv) some ministries might fear that policy analysis will – as it does – reduce their degrees of freedom; (v) no one ministry has sufficient incentives to demand policy analysis when an issue – as most issues do – cuts across several ministries; (vi) the poor quality of some policy analyses. The supply of policy analysis might be insufficient because: (i) policy analysis is a new discipline, which only in the last three decades has been ranked as a science; (ii) researchers tend to develop theories and models without considering the prospective demand for policy analysis; (iii) policies are highly variable and the supply of good policy analysis might be crowded out by changing government priorities; (iv) policy analysis is often one-department oriented and ineffective when there are multiple users and responsibilities overlap between different government departments.

There are finally uncertainties about who should fund policy analysis, which further limits its supply. In theory, responsibility for funding policy analysis should be determined on the basis of who benefits from the results of the analysis, whereas the execution of policy analysis should be decided on the basis of efficiency criteria. If the results of policy analysis are public goods, the government should be responsible for funding it, as the private sector would under-produce policy analysis because of the presence of positive externalities (anybody could make use of good policy analysis whose benefits cannot be internalized). This argument provides an economic rationale for public institutions funding policy analysis. However, since government is not necessarily the best provider of policy analysis, it should not only sponsor in-house policy-analysis and / or fund a publicly operated policy analysis institution, but also stimulate a market for policy analysis, e.g. through granting intellectual property rights on research results and distributing research funds through competitive bidding.

12. Readers’ Notes

12.1. EASYPol links

This module belongs to a set of modules which are part of the EASYPol training path Policy Learning Programme, Module 4: Policy and Strategy Formulation, Session 1: Making sense of policy processes

46 Salvatici and Quieti, 2003.
Readers can follow other EASYPol documents under Module 4, which is structured as follows:

**Module 4: Policy and Strategy Formulation**

**Session 1:** Making sense of policy processes

**Session 2:** Two case studies: Making sense of policy processes

**Session 3:** Key factors in state citizen synergy

**Session 4:** Extrapolate

**Session 5:** Rice trek – Simulation game

**Session 6:** Ministerial Loan Bargain Game

**Session 7:** Pulling it all together

### 13. REFERENCES


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**ANNEX 1: LIST OF ACRONYMS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BATNA</td>
<td>Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisations</td>
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<tr>
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### Module Metadata

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<tr>
<td>French</td>
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<td>Procesos normativos - Parte 1: Interpretación de los procesos normativos</td>
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This background material concerns policy processes – the ways policy reforms are planned, designed, implemented and evaluated– which significantly influence policy outcomes and impacts on people’s livelihoods.

Part 1 of this material aims at providing ways and means to better make sense of policy processes. It starts with an introduction to policy processes, including how these can be defined and a summary Table on the main models used to explain policy processes. This is followed by considerations on the main elements that grasp policy processes and work on these, including context, actors, content, impact and the main stages of policy processes (i.e. agenda setting, decision making on policy objectives and instruments, implementation and monitoring and evaluation). The Final Section of this part concerns policy analysis, as a useful tool to address the various stages of policy processes (i.e. agenda setting, defining objectives/instruments/options, implementing and monitoring and evaluation).

<table>
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<th>5. Date</th>
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<td>January 2008</td>
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<th>6. Author(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Olivier Dubois (with inputs from Maria Grazia Quieti and Ugo Pica Ciamarra)</td>
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<tr>
<td>☑ Thematic overview</td>
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<tr>
<td>☑ Agricultural and sub-sectoral policies</td>
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<td>☑ Agro-industry and food chain policies</td>
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<td>☑ Institutional and organizational development</td>
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<td>☑ Investment planning and policies</td>
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<td>☑ Regional integration and international trade</td>
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| 9. Subtopics covered by the module | Elements and stages of policy processes  
Policy analysis |
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