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Organización
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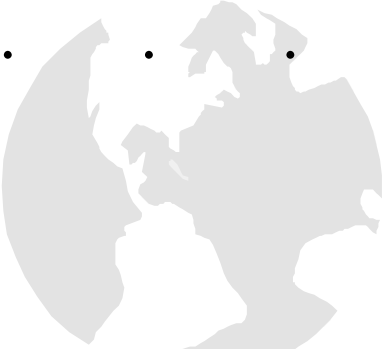
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Policy Assistance Literature Review

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ACRONYMS

IFI	International financing institution
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FAOR	FAO Representative
FAO-TCP	Technical Cooperation Programme, FAO
TCA	Policy Assistance Division
WB	World Bank
UN	United Nations

1 Basis conceptual notions

1.1 Policy

1.1.1 Policy

A policy is a *plan of action to guide decisions and actions*. The term may apply to government, private sector organizations and groups, and individuals (Wikipedia, the online Encyclopedia).

1.1.2 Public policy

Public policy is a course of action or inaction **chosen by public authorities** to address a problem. Public policy is expressed in the body of laws, regulations, decisions and actions of government. (Wikipedia, the online Encyclopedia).

1.1.3 Food and Agricultural Policy

Agricultural and Food policy describes a set of laws relating to domestic **agriculture** (in its broad definition), **imports** of foreign agricultural products, and to **enabling people access enough good for an active, healthy life**. (Wikipedia, the online Encyclopedia).

Governments usually implement agricultural policies with the goal of achieving a specific outcome in the domestic agricultural product markets. Outcomes can range from guaranteed supply level, price stability, product quality, product selection, land use or employment.

As a subfield of public policy, **food policy** covers the entire food chain, from natural resources (such as soils, water, and biodiversity), to production (crops and animals), to processing, marketing, and retailing, as well as food consumption (including food safety) and nutrition (including nutrition-related health). Food policy shapes the structure and functioning of the food system in the direction of the intended goals. (Wikipedia, the online Encyclopedia).

For the purpose of this project, policy is defined as public policy, more specifically as food and agricultural policy.

1.1.4 Policy Communities

Policy communities is “*stable networks of policy actors from both inside and outside of government, which are highly integrated with the policy-making process...[and are] the most institutionalised variant of the policy network concepts*” (Stone et al., 2001).

Consistent with this idea, Kingdon writes that “*policy communities are composed of specialists in a given policy area – health, housing, environmental protection, [etc.]. In any of these policy areas, specialists are scattered both through and outside of government...academics, consultants, or analysts for interest groups. But they have in common their concern with one area of policy problems*” (Kingdon, 1984).

1.1.5 Epistemic Community

Haas defines an **epistemic community** as a “*network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue area*” (Haas, 1992).

According to Stone, policy communities differ significantly from epistemic communities since an epistemic community “*...coalesces around ‘objectivity’, ‘expertise’ and ‘scientific authority’ [and] policy communities are not characterised by shared principled beliefs*” (Stone, 1996).

Further, policy communities are based on “common understandings of problems or of the decision-making process within a given policy domain. They emerge and consolidate around specific policy fields or subsystems (such as education, tax or security) and revolve around relevant institutions such as specific ministries or government agencies” (Stone et al., 2001).

Epistemic communities must also be distinguished from the broader scientific community as well as from professions and disciplines. Although members of a given profession or discipline may share a set of causal approaches or orientations and have a consensual knowledge base, they lack the shared normative commitments of members of an epistemic community (Haas, 1992).

1.1.6 Policy dialogue

“A policy dialogue is a form of conflict resolution. It is typically used in regulatory, policy and community conflict situations. Typically, multiple stake holders are struggling with an issue that can not be avoided. Meetings are held over a period of time, are usually guided by a facilitator or mediator, and aspire to produce concrete outputs i.e. guidance to government, a proposed rule or regulation, or a plan or strategy.” (Adler and Celico, 2003).

According to Adler and Celico (2003), policy dialogues seek to **exchange information and build consensus recommendations** between the public, private and civic sectors through leaders who are in a position to forge alliances, make decisions, or strongly influence the trajectory of a possible solution to a challenging issue. Policy dialogues go by many names. Some call them “Roundtables” or “Issue Workshops”. Others take the form of specialize committees, commissions, regulatory negotiations or working groups. Regardless of their name, all policy dialogues:

- bring diverse interest groups to the table
- focus on a regulatory, policy, or planning issue that is of common interest,
- have a life cycle with a beginning, middle and end, and
- seek to formulate practical solutions to complex problems

While there is no fixed and formal format, most policy dialogues usually involve i) an emerging or ripe **dispute**; ii) **multiple stakeholders**, not all of whom may have standing in and existing or prospective lawsuit; iii) contending **values or ideologies**; iv) complex **scientific and technical issues**; and v) challenging substantive, procedural and psychological **dynamics**.

Policy dialogues usually have a **convener or sponsor** (sometimes, multiple co-conveners and sponsors), a negotiated mission or goal, stakeholders who are willing to sit in council on a tough issue and address it in a disciplined manner, and facilitators to help organize and moderate proceedings. Successful policy deliberations tend to progress through three broad phases: **i) issue focusing and convening; ii) information exchange and discussion; and iii) solution-seeking and consensus building.**

1.1.7 Policy arena

Policy arena is the place or scene where policy forces contend or policy events unfold. Each political arena has its own set of rules about decisions are made. The basic rules are generally written – legislatures have “rules of order” and agencies have administrative procedures.

Political strategies within arenas: trying to shift issues to more favourable arenas is not the only political strategy that can be used to achieve policy outcomes. Four following general strategies are often used: **co-optation, compromise, heresthetics and rhetoric** (Weimer and Wining, 1992).

Heresthetics refers to a strategy that attempt to gain advantage through manipulation of the circumstances of political choice, either through the agenda or through the dimensions of evaluation. **Rhetoric** refers to the use of persuasive language (Weimer and Wining, 1992).

1.2 Policy process

1.2.1 Definition

The **policy process** includes the **identification of different alternatives**, such as programs or spending priorities, and choosing among them on the basis of the impact they will have. Policies in short can be understood as political, management, financial, and administrative mechanisms arranged to **reach explicit goals**. " (Luca Salvatici and Maria Grazia Quietì, 2003).

1.2.2 Some models of policy process

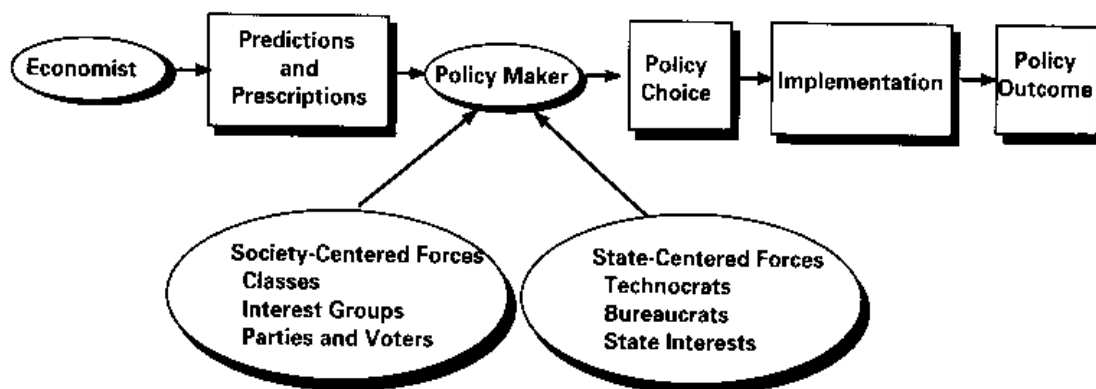
1.2.2.1 The 'Rational' model (Linear Model)

The **rational model** outlines policy-making as a **problem-solving** process which is balanced, objective and analytical. Accordingly, policy analysis is supposed to be the quiet space of scientific rationality, providing largely uncontroversial knowledge that enhances the administrative capacity. In the model, decisions are made in a series of sequential phases:"

- Recognizing and defining the nature of the issue to be dealt with
- Identifying possible courses of action to deal with the issue
- Weighing up the advantages and disadvantages of each of these alternatives
- Choosing the option which offers the best solution
- Implementing the policy
- Possibly evaluating the outcome" (Sutton, 1999).

Figure 1

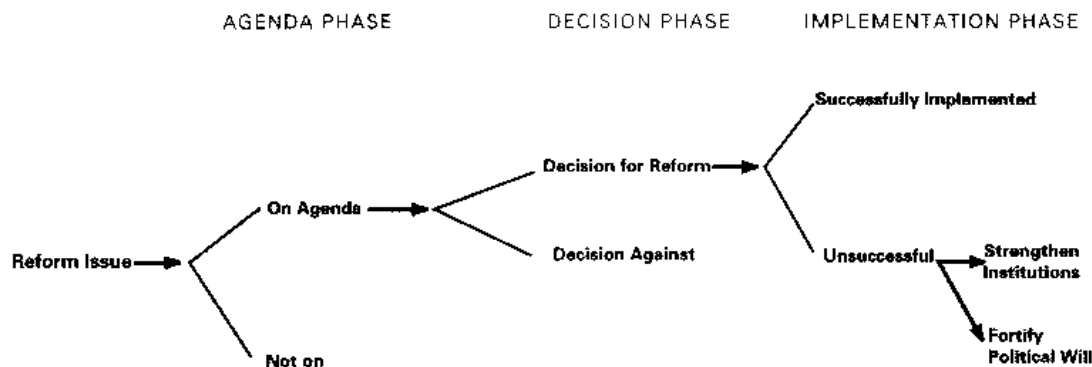
THE LINEAR PROCESS



Merilee Grindle and John Thomas (1991) also observe that a "roughly linear model" of the policy process underlies many analyses of reform in developing countries: "... a proposed reform gets on the agenda for government action, a decision is made on the proposal, and the new policy or

institutional arrangement is implemented, either successfully or unsuccessfully". They map this linear model as a decision tree (Figure 2).

Figure 2
The Linear Model of Policy Formation (2)



“Given such a normative basis, the approach of economists has often been to analyse policy impacts, assuming (implicitly) that the set of policy measures is embedded in a system in which they always work perfectly and do exactly what they are intended to do. Modern welfare economics has largely focused on the normative theory of public choice, which leads to policy recommendations that will increase some measure of social welfare. However, the **widespread failures of the linear model** have given rise to a growing awareness that **'first get the facts right' is no longer a credible policy analysis strategy**” (Salvatici and Quieti, 2003).

1.2.2.2 Policy in Stages

The traditional textbook approach to the study of public policy separates policy making into its component steps and analyzes each in turn (Harold Lasswell, 1951). The policy process is broken down into analytic units-activities-that are treated as temporally and functionally distinct. These include:

- **Problem identification:** The identification of policy problems, through demands for government action;
- **Agenda setting:** focusing the attention of public officials on specific public problems;
- **Policy formation:** formulation of policy proposals, their initiation and development, by policy-planning organizations, interest groups, the executive or legislative branches of government;
- **Decision-making :** adoption and legitimating of policies through the political actions of government, interest groups, political parties;
- **Policy implementation:** implementation of policies through bureaucracies, public expenditures, and the activities of executive agencies; and,
- **Policy evaluation** (continues or terminate): evaluation of a policy's programmatic implementation and impact.

The basic criticism of the stages framework is that too often it is represented as a model of actual decision processes. It does parallel, in a formal sense, the cognitive steps of the rational approach to problem solving: problem definition, the analysis of alternative solutions, the adoption of a solution, its testing and evaluation. But in the real world, events seldom unfold in this neat, ordered fashion, and policy decision making only rarely follows this pattern.

Decision making in stages may accurately reflect the decision procedures followed by some individual actors. But when many players are involved and when they drift in and out of the process, a different sort of collective decision-making structure results. The stages model, then, is most useful as a heuristic for identifying times and places in the policy process where different tactics for shaping policy come into play (Porter, 1995).

1.2.2.3 Agenda-setting (multiple streams) model

The "**agenda**" is the **list of subjects or problems** to which government officials, and people outside of government closely associated with those officials, are paying serious attention at some given time. The agenda-setting process narrows the set of all possible issues to the set that actually becomes the focus of attention.

Following Kingdon (1984), these are three process streams-processes through which participants affect agendas. **People recognize problems, generate proposals for policy change, and engage in such political activities as pressure group lobbying and election campaigns.**

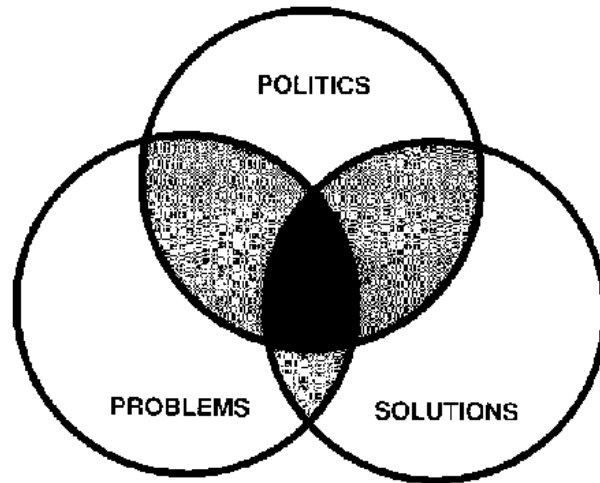
Problems Stream: Kingdon (1984) characterizes the problem stream as one that through various means, such as, for example, certain indicators, focusing events and feedback, bring problems to the attention of policy makers. Once their attention is gained, policy makers then use indicators to assess the magnitude of, and the change in, a problem.

For a social condition to be a problem, people must first recognize it as such and become convinced that something should be done to change it. Furthermore, just as a problem can come to the forefront of the public agenda, it can also disappear from the agenda. Kingdon suggests that problems fade from view when government addresses the problem, because people become used to the condition, or because attention to that problem is faddish.

Solutions Stream: The policy stream, sometimes referred to as the solution stream, is where ideas can be found. These ideas or proposals are generated by a policy community, most often by specialists found within a policy community. New ideas, however, are not necessarily picked up by the policy community as a feasible or functional solution to which all members agree. Some ideas or proposals need a strong figure or champion to push the idea along. Once a proposal/alternative has reached the decision agenda, it becomes part of the political stream.

Political Stream: According to Kingdon, there are three components in the political stream: (1) **national mood; (2) organized political interests; and (3) government.** Based on the swings of national mood, the balance of political interests and events in government, the political stream is seen to have its own dynamics and flow.

Figure 3
Multiple Streams and Policy Change



Policy Windows: Once a problem is defined, and a solution is produced or found, there are needs to be an opportunity for initiatives to be adopted. Kingdon refers to these opportunities as “**policy windows**” and they occur because of changes in the political stream. Once the window opens, however, it does not stay open very long. *“The window closes for a variety of reasons. First, participants may feel they have addressed the problem through decision or enactment...Second, and closely related, the participants may fail to get action...Third, the event that prompted the window to open may pass from the scene...Fourth, if a change in personnel opens a window, the personnel may change again”* (Kingdon, 1984).

At points along the way there may be partial couplings:

- Solutions to problems, but without a receptive political climate.
- Politics to proposals, but without a sense that an important problem is being solved.
- Politics and problems, but without a clear policy alternative to advocate.

But the complete joining of all three streams makes it much more likely that an item will become fixed on a government's decision agenda, and increases the odds that an authoritative choice will be made and implemented.

Policy Entrepreneurs/Policy champion: It is the policy entrepreneur who generally couples a particular problem with a particular solution and pushes for its attention on the political agenda. Because of this, it is the policy entrepreneur who is considered to be central to the entire process.

According to Kingdon, an individual must possess three critical qualities to be considered a successful policy entrepreneur (1984) “**expertise**; an ability to speak for others, as in the case of the leader of a powerful interest group; or an authoritative decision-making position”; second, the individual must be known for his or her “**political connections or negotiating skill**; and third, “successful entrepreneurs are **persistent**” (Kingdon, 1984). As Kingdon explains, “many potentially influential people might have expertise and political skill, but sheer tenacity pays off”.

1.2.2.4 Policy transfer model

The diffusion literature, as related to the policy process, suggests that “*policy percolates or diffuses gradually over an extended period of time...this perspective posits incremental changes in policy with the advancement of knowledge and awareness as well as interdependence*” (Stone, 2000). An important critique of the diffusion literature, however, points to the problems and weaknesses of the diffusion approach: “*the major problem with this research tradition is that it reveals nothing about the content of new policies. Its fascination is the process not substance*” (Neilson, 2001).

In their review of the policy transfer literature, Dolowitz and Marsh identify seven objects for policy transfer: (1) **policy goals, structure and content**; (2) **policy instruments or administrative techniques**; (3) **institutions**; (4) **ideology**; (5) **ideas**; (6) **attitudes and concepts**; and (7) **negative lessons** (Neilson, 2001). In terms of what can be transferred, they explain that “*...both general policy ideas and specific policy instruments can be transferred, but that the borrower may pick and choose what to borrow*”, depending on what occurred in the original country and what is needed by the borrower. Marsh and Dolowitz also identify six main categories involved in policy transfer: **elected officials, political parties, bureaucrats/civil servants, pressure groups, policy entrepreneurs/experts, and supra-national institutions.**

There are several factors which either constrain or facilitate the policy transfer process. According to Rose, **complexity is a major factor constraining the transfer of policies**: the more complex a policy or program the less likely it is to be transferred. With respect to this, Rose offers six hypotheses which are presented in Box 1.

Box 1: Rose's Six Hypotheses Regarding Policy Transfer

- (1) Programmes with a single goal are much easier to transfer than programmes with multiple goals;
- (2) The simpler the problem the more likely transfer will occur;
- (3) The more direct the relationship between the problem and the 'solution' is perceived to be the more likely it is to be transferred;
- (4) The fewer the perceived side-effects of a policy the greater the possibility of transfer;
- (5) The more information agents have about how a programme operates in another location the easier it is to transfer;
- (6) The more easily outcomes can be predicted the simpler a programme is to transfer.

Source: Neilson, 2001.

Rose also stresses **past policy as an important constraint to policy transfer** and one which is often neglected “*policy makers are inheritors before they are choosers; as a condition of taking office they swear to uphold the laws and programs that predecessors have set...new programs cannot be constructed on green field sites...they must be introduced into a policy environment dense with past commitments*” (Neilson, 2001).

Stone argues that international organizations, think tanks, researchers and consultancies often perform the role of policy transfer agent or policy entrepreneur (Stone, 2000). As she explains, through networks, participants can build alliances, share discourses and construct consensual knowledge. From this basis, policy entrepreneurs can work to shape the terms of debate, networking with members of a policy making community, crafting arguments and ‘brokering’ their ideas to potential supporters and patrons (Stone, 2000).

Stone also points out that the non-governmental status of some organizations and non-state actors can in fact be a constraint to their role in policy transfer. Nevertheless, non-state actors may be better at ‘soft’ transfer of broad policy ideas influencing public opinion and policy agendas. By contrast, officials are more involved in ‘hard’ transfer of policy practices and instruments involving formal decision-making (Neilson, 2001).

In sum, the policy transfer process, often facilitated through networks, is a two-way street and thus should be treated as such.

Looking at the wide variety of policy making models leads to the conclusion that there is no one model of policy making that is universally valid and applicable. How policy is made depends on the context.

Some more models of policy process are presented in Annex 1.

1.3 Role of Networks and Think Tanks in the Policy Process

Networks, especially among and between think tanks and research institutes and/or organizations, are an important means for disseminating the policy message that a particular network or community wishes to advocate or push to the forefront of the public agenda.

Networks and organizational affiliations are significant features found in the development field and help to enable and **encourage knowledge and information sharing** concerning current research activities in a given sector, particularly with those who do not have access to professional and scholarly journals or other sources of information (Stone, 1996).

In terms of the relevance of the research, Neilson (2001) found that the network was highly relevant to the national governments in the region. The three factors which facilitated this relevance include: **(1) the composition of the national research teams within the networks which included high level public servants, sector specialists as well as researchers; (2) research plans and priorities were developed through national fora; and (3) the global and multidisciplinary approach to the research.**

Individual networking is also considered relevant and is an effective means of sharing policy ideas. According to Stone, the personal networks of staff, executives and board members are just as valid and important as other networks discussed above.

As important as these networks and communities are in the policy process, they are not the answer to “policy influence”; they merely act as a route to political influence, rather than as a source of political influence

Networking promotes solidarity, loyalty, trust and reciprocity. Conflict and opportunistic behaviour is diminished in favour of co-operation on a common problem of policy project. More resources and intellectual capital can be mobilized in efforts to shape policy agendas (Stone, 1996).

In sum, the policy network theory helps to explain the myriad of actors in the process, as well as how they are able to influence the policy process, but they do not explain policy development very well. Moreover, for the most part network models are somewhat rational in nature and as a result do not explain the complexities outside of the actors' environment, particularly in a developing country context.

1.4 Public policymaking

1.4.1 Actors

Decisions are not made by a single person. Policies and programmes are the cumulative result of **conflict and co-operation among many government actors**, principally politicians and bureaucrats, as well as members of external interest groups. Of course, these interactions can result in policy stasis as well as policy change. (Garrett and Islam, 1998).

In this process, policy makers do not simply react to pressure from interest groups inside or outside the government. Through judicious use of available resources, including those provided by outside interest groups, policy makers can advance their own agendas and shift discussion to a setting where they have greater control over resources that influence the decision-making process, widening the range of feasible policy options – their “policy space” – from which is first apparent (Grindle and Thomas, 1991).

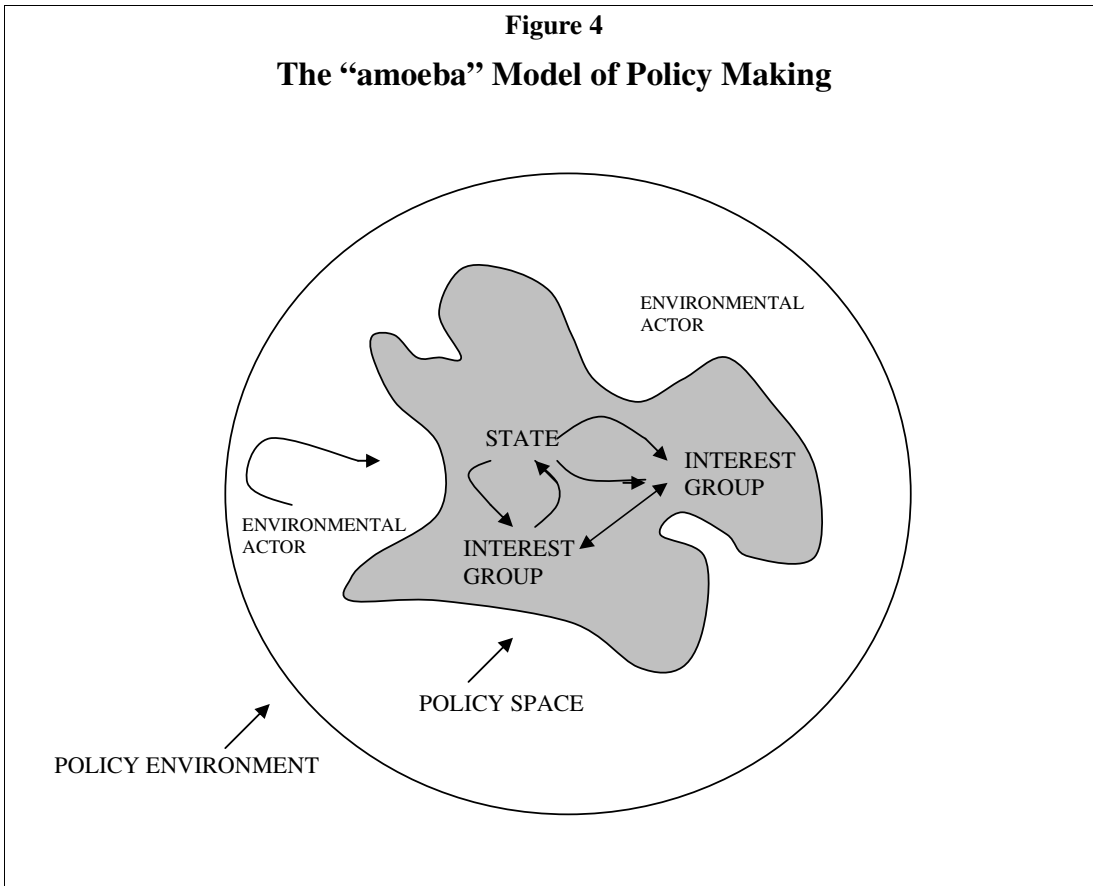
This process does not have to follow precise analytical stages or otherwise be linear. Policymakers at different levels can be making decisions about the same issue at the same time, and also be interacting with others inside and outside the policy space.

Interest group can exert significant influence on policy choices. The impact that a group has depends on how powerful the group is. Powerful interest group need not to be rich or large. A decision maker's interest in advancing a group's cause may be sufficient to give the group access to the policy process. The decision by policymakers to take up, champion, or oppose an issue depends to a large extent on whether they believe furthering a particular group's concerns will advance their own interests.

1.4.2 Policy environment

The particular cultural, political, and economic environment in which decision-making takes place can define issues and determine the range of policy choices. Cultural conventions can define acceptable group or individual action and the limits of permissible policies. Macro political structures, such as the constitution or type of government, can expand or lessen policymakers' room to manoeuvre. Economic conditions can force action and restrict choices. For instance, society may expect the state to maintain key macroeconomic variables, such as unemployment and inflation, within a commonly accepted range. External actors with no direct connection with the specific policy issue at hand, such as international financial institutions, can also affect this environment and thus the policy space (Garrett and Islam, 1998).

Figure 4
The “amoeba” Model of Policy Making



Source: Garrett and Islam, 1998

1.4.3 Using information to influence the agenda

Before policy making can begin, the issue must come to the attention of the policymakers and policy must decide to act on the issue. Moments of change in the cultural, political, or economic environment are important in providing “window of opportunity” for research to influence the policy agenda and policy choice (Kingdon, 1984). If information is readily available when policymakers need it, it can help frame the debate and affect the choices that policymakers make.

1.5 Process of policy change

The process through which policy changes become part of national agendas, and are designed, adopted, implemented, and sustained has significant implications for policy changes’ outcomes. In this process, protagonists have different opportunities to influence conflicts and decisions. In many cases, for every action or decision that is taken during a policy making process, there is some possibility for altering the conflict equation that surrounds a proposed change (Grindle, 2001).

Table 1 in the next page indicates which actors tend to be most relevant at each phase of the policy process, what institutional arenas are most likely to be the site of conflict and strategic action during each phase, and what critical decisions are likely to be made in those institutional arenas.

Agenda setting: Case studies showed that despite several oppositions to change, policy issues got on public agendas because specific political actors, usually presidents, or ministers with the support of presidents – made specific choices to put them there. In other words, some policy chances appears to have been “chosen” rather than “pressing” reforms in that political leaders decided whether the issue was put on a national policy agenda and given priority or not (Hirschman, 1981).

Designing changes: Traditionally, policy design has been a closed and executive-centered activity. Most case studies indicate that proposals for policy change were generated by the executive rather than by legislatures, political parties, interest groups, or think tanks.

Design teams are critically important in determining the content of reform initiatives, which in turn defines winners and losers and determines the scope of initial gains and losses. The political leaders who select such teams often give them broad mandates. International agencies, important in purveying ideas about changes to improve the quality and efficiency of food and agriculture related activities and in providing funding for new initiatives, generally have their most frequent interactions with these design teams.

Design teams are also politically relevant because the policy proposal they develop prefigure the conflicts that will emerge when policy change is publicly announced. At times, designers include elements to moderate the potential for such conflicts. To the extent that conflict reflects the specific contents of reform proposals, the teams have considerable capacity to create or ameliorate opposition. (Grindle, 2001).

Approving or Rejecting changes: As mentioned above, new initiatives are often hatched in relatively closed executive settings. In contrast, when change initiatives are announced, the dynamic shifts to a much more public arena of conflict and debate. Because they become most engaged at this phase of the policy process, interest groups, including political parties and unions, are almost always forced to be reactive rather than proactive about proposals for change. Nevertheless, the process of approving or rejecting policy change initiatives tends to be a relatively inclusive part of the policy process, although usually restricted to already mobilized interests. However, the process of approving or rejecting reform offers opportunities to reformers to influence outcomes.

Change agents/reformers have the advantage of being able to affect the initial terms of debate through decisions about how to introduce new initiatives and what language to use to explain them. To consult with affected interests or not, to negotiate or not, to appeal to broader publics or not, to address economic motivations or social solidarity-these and other strategic choices by reform leaders can have an important impact on the fate of specific initiatives. Negotiation and the modification of reform design are most likely to happen during this contentious part of the policy process. (Grindle, 2001).

Implementing changes: Problems often emerge because of the way in which social sector policies have been designed. Whether goals are clearly defined and feasible, the extent to which there is broad agreement within government and society about those goals, how complex the policy is, and whether required resources and capacity exist-these are all factors relating to design flaws that tend to become evident only during implementation.

But beyond problems related to the characteristics of the reforms and the process of design, political conflict is usually endemic in social sector policy implementation. At the most general level, the implementation phase of policy change is when bureaucrats have extensive power to reject or sabotage the requirements of new policies-all the more powerful because it frequently occurs silently. (Grindle, 2001).

Table 1: Participation in Policy Change Episodes (in food and agriculture related fields)

	Phases	Change agents	Losers	Winners	Institutional Arenas	Key Decisions
1	Agenda setting	Political leader, International agencies (FAO, WB,...)		Ministry of Agriculture	Presidency Political parties Ministry Media	Timing Rationale for change Terms of debate Priority
2	Design	Design team International agency			Presidency, Ministry or Interministerial group	Content of change Identification of winners and losers Components to moderate opposition
3	Approval	Political leaders Ministers	Unions Interest groups Opposition parties Political leaders Legislators	Ministry of Agriculture Agricultural interest	Legislature Political parties Presidency or ministry Media	Allies Modification of plan Negotiation Approval or rejection
4	Implementation	Reformist bureaucrats (national and local) Minister International agencies	Bureaucrats Unions Opposition parties Some governors, •Mayors • New ministers?	Beneficiaries Some governors Mayors NGOs Employees of new institutions	Ministry Local/regional governments New institutions	Timing, pace of change Modifications Use of incentives Inclusion/exclusion of participation
5	Sustaining Reform	Reformist bureaucrats	Bureaucrats Unions Some governors, mayors	Beneficiaries Some governors, mayors Employees of new institutions Vendors, contractors	Ministry Local/regional governments Training institutions New institutions	Incentives Contracts and services Participation of beneficiaries

Adapted from Grindle, 2001

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Sustaining changes: To some degree, whether policy changes are sustained over time or not is a function of the resources and capacity of responsible government agencies-can they deliver the goods. Successful policy change initiatives are often characterized by the development of alliances and networks among international, national and local level reformers who strategize about introducing and sustaining change and avoiding or neutralizing opposition. In these cases, international and national reformers are able to channel technical assistance and resources to responsive local players and to mediate political conflict at a variety of levels. The support and monitoring activities of local proponents of reform, in turn, are critically important to the international and national level reformers.

1.6 Policy analysis

The term “**policy analysis**” can be generally referred as “*the family of approaches devoted to the study of policy making. Policy analysis, then, is essentially about the development and application of a variety of social-scientific insights to help resolve public problems via concrete policy interventions*” (Hajer, 2003).

Policy analysis differs from program evaluation in that it attempts to evaluate **changes to policies and programs** rather than evaluating their current performance.

According to Barbero (2000) research and analysis applied to food and agricultural policy “*can properly be described as a process of producing information of an advanced form (such as, for instance, actual or expected policy effects) by the use of basis information. The latter is currently understood to consist of secondary data, i.e. those collected and made available by statistical bureaus and departments, and of primary data, i.e. those collected directly by a research centre for its own purposes. It is thus clear that the quantity and quality of basis information play a crucial role in any research work and that special attention must be given to fact-finding activities*”

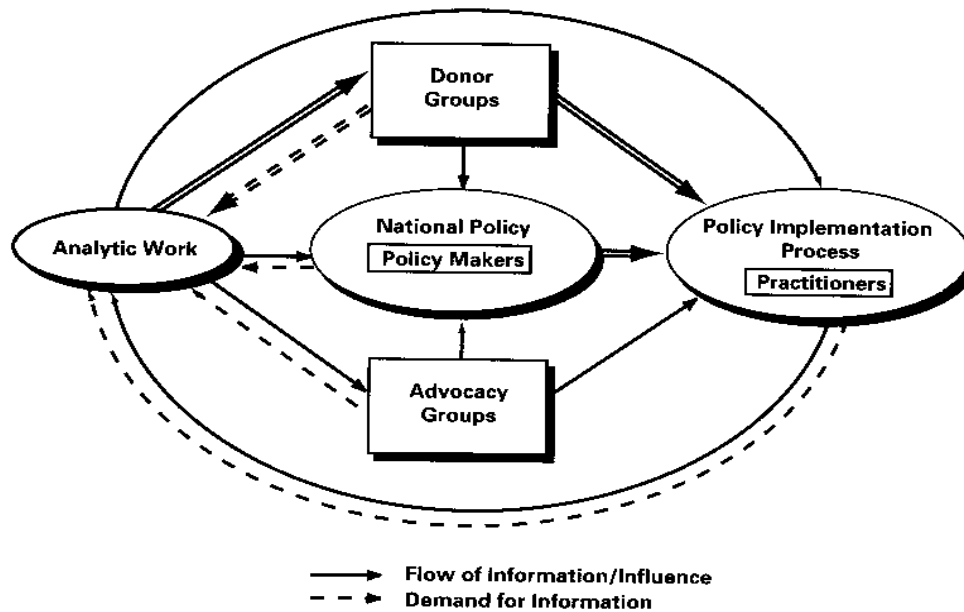
1.7 The Role of policy research

1.7.1 The role of policy analysis in policy making

According to Salvatici and Quietì (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.*

Figure 5
The Role of Analysis in Policy Formation



Typically, the linkages between policy research and analysis and policy decisions are complex and, often, problematic. But as Figure 4 suggests, they are even more problematic when policy knowledge is generated by researchers and analysts employed by the government of one country (or by international donors) for use by decision makers in other governments in other countries.

Furthermore, **researchers are likely to be sidelined in the policy-making process**. There is an extensive literature about the under/non-utilization of knowledge or research for decision making purposes. One of the most influential is the “two communities” theory which identifies the cause as the dichotomy existing between two autonomous communities – researchers, scientists and experts in a scholarly realm versus the political realm of politicians, administrator and appointed officials. “*Social scientists generally see knowledge as something that is theoretically and methodologically sound and/or defensible. Policy makers see knowledge as something that comes from experience*” (Neilson, 2001). Stone (2001) summarizes the main reasons as follow:

- *Incremental policy processes reinforce pro-inertia and anti-innovation forces.*
- *Creativity is discounted and stifled.*
- *New ideas or research can be discounted as unrealistic.*
- *There is low emphasis on developing clear goals and plans.*
- *Difficult problems requiring radical changes to resolve are ignored.*
- *Even crucial research findings may be ignored given costly investments in existing policies.*
- *Political crises (scandals or tragedies) are required before a major re-evaluation of policy occurs.*

1.7.2 The role of narratives and discourses

Policy narrative is a “story” outlining a specific course of events which has gained the status of conventional wisdom within the development arena.

It is a good strategy to simplify very complex issues and results into “stories” on which policy makers can base their decisions. “*The effect of narratives is to close down policy space, policy space being understood as the room to pursue different approaches to policy*” (Keeley, 1997). As a matter of fact, policy narratives affect policy-making in several ways, such as:

- *naming and classifying ('labeling') of groups;*
- *'framing' issues to be tackled;*
- *making policy solutions seem obvious and unquestionable;*
- *'depoliticizing' policy decisions, recasting them in the (supposedly) neutral language of science* (Salvatici and Quietì, 2003)

Discourse is “*an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to phenomena*” (Sutton, 1999). As a matter of fact, dominant discourses work by setting up terms of reference by disallowing or marginalizing alternatives.

Discourse analysis then attempts to make explicit the implicit values and ideologies in discourses. Discourse can also refer to dialogue, language, and conversation. If defined in this way, discourse analysis relates to the analysis of language used in policy-making. It relates, for example, to the use of labeling in policy discussions, such as “peasants”, “the rural poor”, or “landless” (Sutton, 1999).

Research can be influential in providing policy 'narratives' and 'discourses' that support the policy preferences of political leaders, or in providing a foundation for 'counter-discourses', alternative identities and sites of resistance. If this is true, it is not only external events, but how these events are perceived, that shape the policy agenda (Stone et al., 2001).

Providing policy “narratives” and discourses are good methods for problem “naming” and “framing, i.e. structuring the way controversial issues are stated. It is thus good mediation technique for policy dialogue.

1.8 Policy assistance

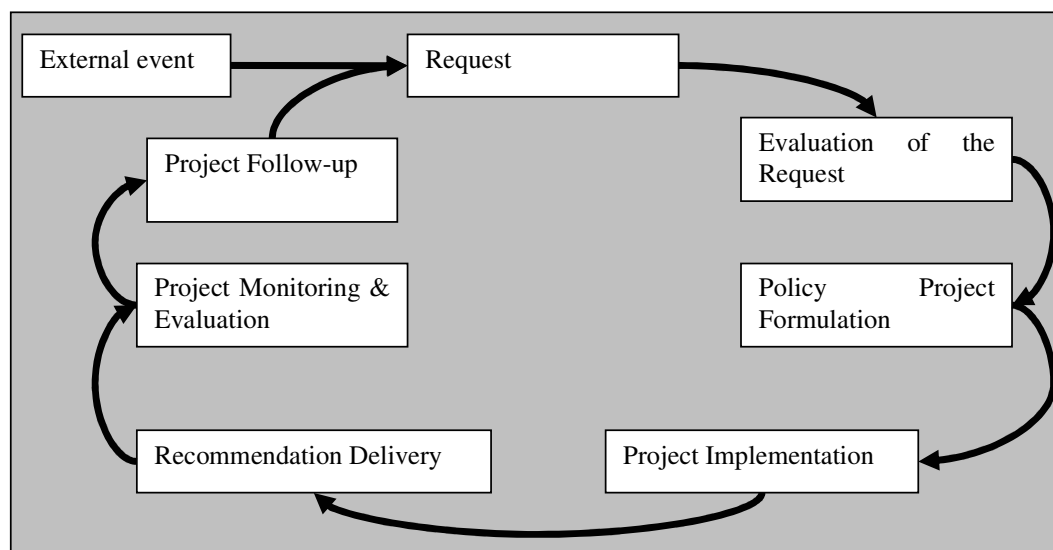
In the context of the project, FAO’s policy assistance is “*the response to a Government’s request for advice in shaping policy decisions. Therefore, the concept of policy assistance effectiveness is analyzed from the point of view of how policy is implemented or carried out*” (Sandford, 1985).

Policy assistance project mainly includes two domains: **policy advice and capacity building**. The purpose is to influence the policy process or to introduce a change in the policy framework. Policy assistance can affect the policy framework and/or the policy cycle at different levels.

Policy assistance projects consist mainly in providing **expertise** and shaping and facilitating a **process** for the intervention. Policy assistance projects include both tangibles and intangibles: tangibles are the visible part of the recommendations; intangibles are mainly the results of human interactions.

Figure 6

Policy Assistance Cycle



Source: Balié and Aguirre, TCA, 2006

Different types of food and agricultural Policy assistance by FAO: According to the Evaluation of FAO's Policy assistance (2001), the policy assistance activities carried out by FAO deal with many facets of policy, including at the:

- macro-sector interface - implications for agriculture, food security and rural livelihoods of policies in such areas as trade, taxes, money supply, property rights, water, employment and international investment;
- sector level - fisheries and forest management, promotion of private sector services in agriculture, etc.; and
- specific subject matter areas - irrigation; research, innovation and communication; degraded land management; pesticides; rural finance; genetic resources; food safety nets; emergency preparedness, etc.

The Evaluation also classified policy support as following:

- National level analysis and recommendations
- Facilitating national dialogue
- Regional meetings and workshops
- Information and awareness raising on policy issues
- National training

1.9 Effectiveness

Effectiveness means the capability of producing an **effect**. The word is sometimes used in a quantitative way, "being very or not much effective". However it does not inform on the direction (positive or negative) and the comparison to a standard of the given effect. **Efficacy**, on the other hand, is the ability

to produce a desired amount of the desired effect, or success in achieving a given goal. Contrary to **efficiency**, the focus of **efficacy** is the achievement as such, not the resources spent in achieving the desired effect. **Therefore, what is effective is not necessarily efficacious, and what is efficacious is not necessarily efficient.**

An ordinary way to distinguish between effectiveness, efficacy and efficiency:

- effectiveness: doing something
- efficacy: doing the "right" things
- efficiency: doing the things "right"

Effectiveness of policy assistance is the top-level criterion in that it is the overall measure of whether the policy objective is being achieved. Policy assistance is *effective* if the advice provided is **adopted**, i.e. translated into policy decisions which are implemented.

Efficiency “doing the thing right”. This criterion looks at the **cost** of delivering the policy to the targeted recipients. It is contingent upon effectiveness: what if the system spends the benefits but the targeted beneficiaries do not receive them? Efficiency therefore needs to consider **efficiency of research work** and also **efficiency of results dissemination**. There is generally a trade-off between the level of effectiveness and the dissemination cost: for example, additional resources to disseminate results add to the cost, but improves effectiveness. In efficiency term, the main question to be addressed is whether the total cost of achieving a given level of effectiveness is as low as is reasonably possible (Salvatici and Quieti, 2003).

Enforceability: the ability to make sure that the **benefits reach the targeted beneficiaries**, non-complying or unintended beneficiaries are excluded, and that benefits are not creamed off by intermediaries. Enforceability is not the same as enforcement, but is a pre-condition for it. Given enforceability, non-enforcement can take place for three main reasons: someone in the system does not want to enforce the rules, perhaps for private gain; or the costs of enforcement- in time, skills or money-exceed the benefits; or there could be inequitable access to the organs of enforcement (GTZ partnership with FAO, 2001).

Equity: is ensuring **consistent and impartial access** under the rules to the benefits across the targeted recipients. Again, equity must be seen in the context of the objective of the policy itself. Equity does not mean equal access but the assurance of equal opportunity to access to the benefits under the rules (GTZ partnership with FAO, 2001).

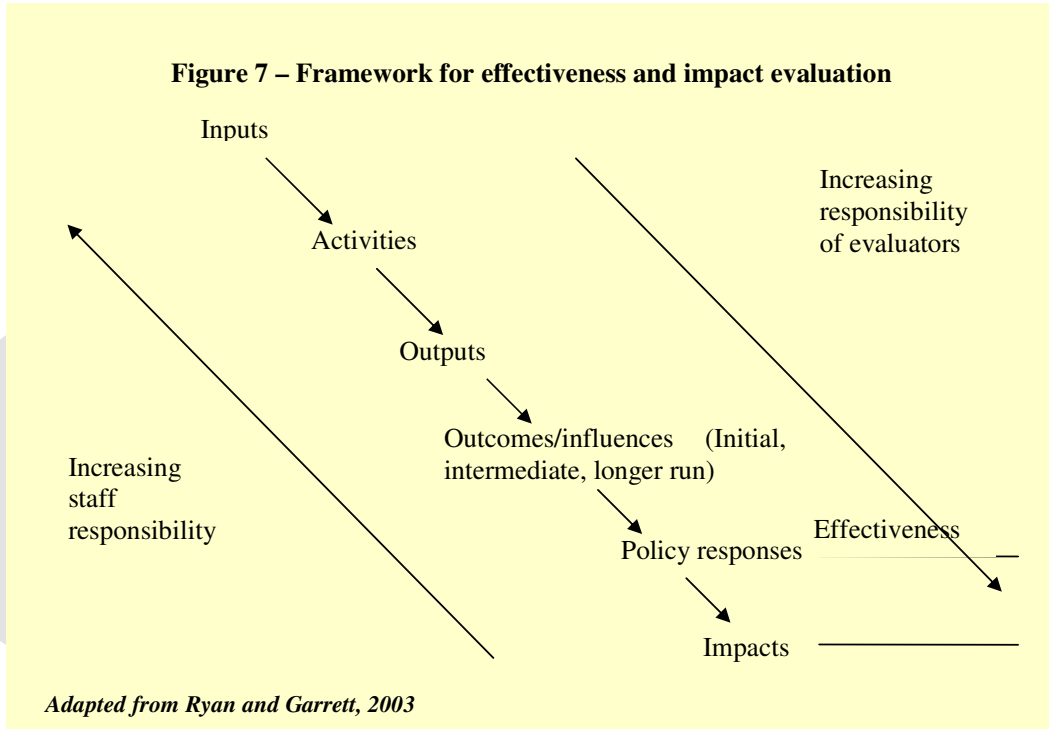
The other three performance criteria – efficiency, enforceability and equity – are second-level criteria that jointly contribute to overall effectiveness.

⋮

2 Effectiveness Evaluation

2.1 Definition

“An evaluation is systematic analytical efforts that ask why certain results are being achieved” (TIPS # 11, USAID). An effectiveness evaluation provides a systematic way to assess project effectiveness-to what extent were the intermediate results achieved.



2.2 Empirical issues

Methodologies for effectiveness or impact assessment of policy related activities are **not well developed**. Cause and effect relation is not very clear in the policy arena, which depends to a great extent on human behavior. Numerous political factors and actors complicate the connections between research results, action, and outcomes.

As a matter of fact, **quantitative methods** can not provide insight into the policy process and how policymakers/decision makers use the recommendations. **Qualitative evaluations** describe the processes by which policy assistance projects influence policy formulation and adoption. They take the form of retrospective narratives (Adam 1983, Babu 2000, Islam and Garrett 1997, Richardson 2001, Ryan 1999). They involve interviews with professional peers, policy makers and their advisers and analysts. These elicit their familiarity with the research, how it compares with alternative sources of information, what influences it had on the timing and design of policy, and how it was adopted or not. Experiences from IFPRI proved that **case studies are the most appropriate for drawing conclusions about effectiveness and/or impact and the means to achieve it** (Ryan and Garrett, 2003).

Regardless of which approach is used, analysts must confront the following issues in the design and conduct of the effectiveness assessment for policy assistance:

- **Scale and scope.** Will the evaluation focus on the **institutional, programmatic, thematic, or project level**? Although evaluators can conduct the assessment at different levels (institution, program, thematic body of work, project), most case studies are at the project level as this is easier methodologically. However, as one moves beyond the project level, more and more actors become involved, with exponential greater sources of information and motivation. This limits the evaluator’s ability to attribute policy responses to individual actors or specific pieces of policy assistance outputs.
- **Timing: Jumps, lags and horizons.** The policy process is not linear, or continuous. According to Garrett and Islam (1998), policymakers at different levels can make decisions on the same issue at the same time, and interact with others inside and outside the government. Gaps, jumps and lags in this process are present from the time an issue first arises in public discussion to when policymakers place it on the policy agenda and then make, announce, and implement policy choices. **The Cassandra problem** (by Smith and Pardey, 1997) : because of the long lead and lag times between the completion of the policy advice project and any policy changes, effectiveness assessment conducted soon after the project is completed may not reveal any effects, but only because it is premature to look for them. The Cassandra problem raises the question:

What is the value of “good advice” not taken, or of delays in taking the advice?

Even advice continually not taken has value in that an analyst could then articulate the “opportunity costs” of a “wrong” decision (that is, estimate the cost of the alternative to not taking the advice) recommendation not adopted or in waiting time? **How long after the publication of recommendation that you can conclude the recommendation is effective or not?**

Comment: Choice of case studies: how long after project completion can we evaluate the effectiveness of the recommendations? Is it too early to evaluate projects finished in 2005-2006? How can we evaluate the **potential** effectiveness then?

- **Supply-versus demand-side approaches:** Ideally the assessment would start on the demand side from the point at which a major policy initiative occurs (the point of initial demand for the policy advice) and then work backwards from the outcome towards the research itself, assessing what institutions and researchers have played a significant role in informing or influencing the policy change. Instead, most case studies have started at the level of the research, in particular the policy assistance and track how the research outputs (the supply side) were used. The need for attribution has dictated this approach, but it may lead to loss of information about the importance of other projects, institutions, and sources of information. (Ryan and Garrett, 2003).
- **Importance of surprise:** Surprise – the addition of new information to a policymaker’s understanding- can be a key to the adoption of an advice. However, research has also shown the value of confirmatory research that reinforces current understanding and policies (Weiss, 1980). So surprise is not necessarily a *sine qua non* of effectiveness. Likewise, anticipatory research that alerts policymakers to possible future scenarios and surprises can reduce the time lag between the appearance of an issue and action.
- **Attribution.** Many actors participate in the policymaking process, and they rely on various sources of information when making or influencing policy decisions (Feldman 1989, Weiss 1977). It is difficult then to attribute effectiveness to any one source, as the

multitude of actors, themselves with differential influence on the decision, rely on a multitude of sources.

Comment: One project is more effective perhaps simply because it has had more favourable conditions (other actors pushing in the same direction)

- **Sampling:** the use of case studies to assess effectiveness poses several important methodological questions. Case studies must choose cases, but should this be **random or purposive sampling**? Each approach has pros and cons, and no clear consensus has emerged. Interviewing and elicitation techniques also remain a concern, especially when the selection of interviewees depends largely on the researcher who undertook the original policy research. To be meaningful, interviewees should have some familiarity with the research being evaluated. By definition, therefore, they will constitute a biased sample. It is useful to differentiate among audience types in constructing survey instruments and samples to ensure that an adequate cross-section of respondents provides feedback (Ryan and Garrett, 2003).

Fortunately, qualitative researchers from disciplines such as political science, anthropology and sociology have developed methods to deal with sampling problems as well. For example, to identify bias and triangulate results evaluators differentiate among audience types and utilize various techniques. Use of independent peers offers objectivity and lends credibility to the assessment, although limited budgets may reduce the study to a selection of only a small sample of projects and programs, leading to “cherry picking” of successful stories (Ryan and Garrett, 2003).

- **Ex ante and ex post assessment.** Both ex ante and ex post assessment are important. As part of standard monitoring and evaluation, a logical framework can employ an ex ante assessment to gauge the success of policy research in achieving its objectives. Even though all projects in a portfolio may not undergo formal independent ex post assessment, there is still considerable value in researchers documenting outputs, outcomes/influences, and policy responses. This promotes internal learning and enhances institutional effectiveness. However, independent peer effectiveness and impact evaluation is still needed to ensure credibility and accountability. All assessments require databases of outputs, outcomes/influences, and policy responses to enable the evaluator to verify them, track their influence and measure their impact (Ryan and Garrett, 2003).

3 Key factors to policy assistance effectiveness

3.1 Endogenous factors

3.1.1 Internal institutional context

3.1.1.1 Objectivity and quality

Policymakers seem to respond better to research that emanates from institutions that have a **reputation for quality, credibility and objectivity**. In an environment where interest groups bring their own research to bear on major policy questions, having independent research information from an institution of standing can help policy research institutions greatly enhance the impact of their work. (IFPRI, 2001).

Completeness is also an important characteristic to consider, and one that is often overlooked by the researchers themselves, or by those who are supporting the research. Completeness refers to **exploring all potential options, and making available all relevant facts and figures** that research can uncover in the search for intrinsically good policy options. Research lacking

completeness, or is limited in either the interpretation, explanation or exploration of available and/or feasible options, may, in practice, encourage the development of policies which produce negative development outcomes. Stone et al. suggest that research credibility and integrity is important to maintain quality policy formulation that does not simply justify or legitimize certain policies which may not be beneficial (Neilson, 2001).

Process-oriented criteria of **adequacy** are also necessary, although not sufficient, to assess the quality of policy analysis/policy assistance. Different criteria apply to the separate elements of the analysis, as exemplified in the following table.

ANALYTIC COMPONENT	CRITERIA OF ADEQUACY
Data	Reliability, reproducibility, credibility (for exogenous data)
Information	Relevance, sufficiency, goodness of fit, robustness
Evidence	Reliability, admissibility, strength
Argument	Cogency, persuasiveness, clarity
Conclusion	Plausibility, feasibility, acceptability

Source: Majone, 1989

There are also two quality criteria that Kingdon (1984) refers to as “survival criteria” for policy recommendations/solutions to survive the political stream: **technical feasibility and value acceptability**. As long as the recommendation or proposal is technically feasible and coincides with the values of the policy community, the idea may in fact be adopted and policy change will occur.

Importance of Primary and Secondary Empirical Data: According to the case studies conducted by IFPRI (Ryan and Garrett, 2003), quality data and simply analysis evident were strategically important to the effectiveness and the impact of any policy research. Results help illuminate the policy debates, with household survey data perhaps most significant in influencing policy decisions. Again, the importance of primary data on distributional issues by a credible international player with no stake in the outcome was key. It provides the ammunition for governments to respond to the various vested interests that may have opposed change.

Technical quality of FAO’s Policy work

The FAO’s evaluation on policy assistance (2001) concludes that the **overall technical quality of FAO’s policy work to be on average as good as, or better, than other agencies**. The quality of analysis was sometimes inferior to work done by the IFIs but the relationship was closer to the working level of government, particularly the Ministries of Agriculture, and there was very often a more consultative process. The policy change stance was in general forward looking, supporting a greater role for the private sector and farm families and a diminished role for government. Countries in Latin America noted that FAO seemed to be overly concerned with issues of food self-sufficiency. Whereas the IFIs generally have a broad policy position on major current issues, this was left to a greater extent to individuals in FAO. While flexible responses to situations are desirable, these should not result in advice which is contrary to mainstream development thinking or run in the face of what government has firmly decided to do. Rather, it should serve to constructively develop and modify policies in order to make them more effective.

Areas for improvement in policy work include:

- Much greater emphasis on analysis of existing government expenditure in the sector/sub-sector and the make up and performance of government programmes. It was not uncommon to suggest expansion of programmes or the addition of new programmes, without analysis;
- More issue-oriented analysis, looking at the implications of potential policy changes;
- Reports, which need to be **more precise, avoid obscure language** and clearly distinguish recommendations from discussion. It is particularly important that where the main audience of decision makers is non-economist, professional economic language should be explained and where possible avoided;
- Presentation of options which facilitates **non-confrontational discussion** of issues
- Ensuring that **recommendations always state how something is to be achieved. It was not uncommon to provide policy goals with little indication of how they might be implemented;**
- Ensuring recommendations are fully based on analysis and neutral, in the sense of not *a priori* supporting a position of the government or donors;
- **Avoiding, as far as possible, recommendations for substantial expansion of programmes and projects which can have the effect of rendering the policy proposals unimplementable due to lack of resources, instead placing the emphasis on mainstreaming change into existing work;**
- Obtaining basic missing information for analysis, before investing substantial resources in defining solutions;
- Use of rapid consultative assessment techniques, which can inform policy teams on constraints at the grassroots level and for traders and consumers (in only one intervention reviewed by missions was such work carried out); and
- Clear statement of whether there are environmental implications.

FAO's reputation as a favourable condition to the effectiveness of policy assistance projects:

The Evaluation of FAO's Policy Assistance carried out in 2001 gives insights into FAO's reputation in providing policy assistance. **FAO's reputation is found to be positive in general** and constitutes a favorable condition to the effectiveness of policy assistance projects. However, this reputation varies in function of regions and areas.

Indeed, FAO is seen either as good or better a source of policy support than other agencies in most subject matter areas. In East and Southern Africa, FAO **was not** looked to as a source of general sector policy support for agriculture, which was assumed to come from the World Bank. As FAO had not provided much sub-sectoral assistance, it had become a less significant source of policy advice. In West Africa, on the other hand, the mission found that demand remained strong. In Latin America, FAO was often stated to be the **partner of choice** but other sources of assistance were used because of **their timely availability**. They also found that line ministries frequently stated that FAO's advice was respected for its **neutrality and objectivity** in comparison with the IFIs and the bilaterals.

The IFIs, in particular the World Bank, see sub-sector policy and the policy-technology interface (including costs and benefits of policies) as the area of **FAO's relative strength**, rather than general agriculture sector work.

The evaluation concludes that **FAO had a relative strength in terms of demand for services, absence of competitors and quality of product**, in providing sector policy support for **fisheries and to a lesser extent forestry, including upland management**. This comparative advantage

was far from reflected in the actual work carried out, where the sector emphasis was in agriculture.

3.1.1.2 Action orientation and challenge to the status quo

According to Weiss (1980), policymakers find recommendation that **suggests a particular course of action** useful, as was research/analysis that challenged existing assumptions or institutional arrangements, even if it called for major changes in philosophy, organization, or services, because it raised new issues or ways of looking at problems. These two aspects are not mutually exclusive. Finding that challenge existing assumptions information was useful even when it recommended action that did not seem politically feasible somewhat goes against conventional wisdom, but it confirms that decision-makers pursue their own agendas and do not merely react to interest group pressure. Armed with knowledge, decision-makers can alter the policy space or hold onto findings and wait to use them in a moment of change. Other analysts have found that organizations are more receptive to information if it is produced internally. A legitimate inside sponsor can improve the likelihood that the information will be accepted and acted upon.

3.1.1.3 Long term collaboration and in-country presence

Having **experienced staff living and working in countries and regions over extended periods** is advantageous. This helps to build **mutual confidence and understanding**. The analyst/research fellow's presence on the ground ensures continuity of dialogue and flow of information. For instance, a residential presence can allow the participation in planning and discussion sessions that may not otherwise seem to merit a separate visit from the headquarters. For sustained impact, more than a few years of a residential presence in country appear necessary. Some supports long-term country involvement with the same policymakers so that advisers are able to observe whether the policies they advocate in fact work. As Weber et al. (1998) point out, demand and supply constraints to local policy research are most effectively addressed when applied research, human capital formation, and policy extension are conceptually and operationally treated as **joint products**.

Another rationale for out posting researchers/analysts over extended periods is the acknowledged long lead and lag times between the generation of process benefits and the realization of socioeconomic impacts from resulting policy changes. This requires constant advocacy and responsiveness. It also allows a better understanding of the challenges involved in implementing policy. In the process, it can help in the articulation of the ultimate impacts of policy research.

Comment: Selection of analysts/consultant with relevant extended experiences and residency in the country in question can improve effectiveness

Importance of the FAORs and of the collaboration with IFIs: Indeed, the Evaluation on FAO policy assistance (2001) confirms the importance of the FAORs to the effectiveness of policy assistance project. **The FAO Representatives (FAORs)** and their national professional staff were found to be central to FAO's work in policy support. Countries, in particular the former Soviet Bloc countries, where FAO was not present through an FAOR, were found to be seriously disadvantaged. FAORs fill three distinct roles which were very much dependent on their individual capacities:

- **Timely point of contact** with FAO Regional Offices and Headquarters on national policy assistance needs. This role was generally fulfilled to a satisfactory, or more than satisfactory, degree;
- Member of the UN country team and cooperative partner with the national representatives of the international community. All development agencies are becoming increasingly decentralized and the role of the FAORs is essential. **National governments and the international community very much regretted those**

situations in which FAOR posts had been vacant for extended periods. This was especially the case in countries where the FAORs had been chairing the development assistance groups for agriculture or forestry;

- Source of **ongoing advice to government.** In Turkey, the FAOR was found to be a source of advice at the highest levels. In Bangladesh, the FAO office was looked to for drafts of policy papers for the Ministry of Agriculture, an opportunity to support policy development that was not fully used. Both these cases were due to somewhat exceptional circumstances, but were important to build upon.

3.1.1.4 The value of Cross-country experiences

The cumulative experience of one organization in undertaking policy research and capacity strengthening in many countries serves to underpin its efforts in individual countries. Such experience is one of the main comparative advantages that FAO has to offer. This experience and its research structure can increase the probability of success, save time, and reduce the likelihood of wrong policy advice.

FAO's cross-country experiences as a favorable condition to the effectiveness of policy assistance projects: One of the most valuable things that FAO can bring to the policy process is experience from elsewhere and a substantial input of internationally experienced expertise was usually a necessity.

3.1.2 Process adopted for making recommendations

3.1.2.1 Timeliness and responsiveness

In the case studies conducted by IFPRI, while IFPRI can not take credit for the policy changes *per se*, IFPRI research can give policymakers confidences that a change will have beneficial effects. Information then is useful in speeding up policy decisions, increasing cumulative benefits over the long term. (Ryan and Garrett, 2003).

Communication of key results prior to publication of project reports and refereed publications helped researchers gain time, and enhanced the usefulness and impact of the results. Through seminars, workshops, training programs, policy briefs, and working papers, policy analysts proffered timely information and advice.

Issues regarding FAO's timeliness and responsiveness: According to FAO Evaluation of policy assistance (2001), flexibility of response is found to be the weakest aspect of FAO's policy work:

Response time: Indeed, there are periods of policy making when what is required is a rapidly available and relatively short input addressed at specific questions. The very limited resources available to Regional Policy Assistance Branches have restricted FAO capacity to respond to these requests. FAORs, almost without exception, singled out delays and incapacity to provide a timely response as the greatest impediment, along with limited resources, for the effectiveness of FAO policy work. Countries and donors also frequently raised this as a major problem. There were often delays of over a year between a request for policy support and the actual delivery of that assistance. It was noted that the time-consuming internal consultation to improve project documents in FAO often did not result in significant improvements. Delays could very considerably reduce the relevance of interventions. It was commented, for example, that IACA in Latin America could mobilize short-term technical inputs at a few days' notice, due to funds at disposal with country representatives. In Latin America and Southern Africa, it was observed by some persons interviewed, that a speedy negative response to a request was preferable to prolonged delays which reduced the eventual effectiveness of the input.

Administrative procedures: In a related issue, governments and development partners were **highly critical of the Organization's administrative procedures and lack of decentralized decision** making. It was considered very important for FAO to **strengthen the flexibility of response to policy needs** as well as **improving financial reporting**. In only two countries visited by missions was this not a constant strongly-voiced criticism, although missions were not actively seeking general views on FAO as an implementer of assistance.

3.1.2.2 Communication

To influence policy change, it is needed to shape the beliefs, action and behavior of key external audiences. Good recommendations that are communicated well will have good effectiveness and then impact. Therefore excellence in both arenas is mandatory for policy assistance project to have effect and impact.

Garrett and Islam (1998) mention **content** and **packaging** as the two key dimensions of the research product. The **content** is the **message** the researcher/analyst has identified as important and wishes to transmit to the policymaker. **Content** can be evaluated using the characteristics that enhance the effectiveness: quality, objectivity, action oriented, challenge to the status quo... discussed above. **Packaging** of the project output has two key aspects: **format** and **style**. **Format** refers to the form or layout of the research product (is the product a hefty report, a policy brief, or a video?). **Style** is the way in which the material is presented. Clarity of exposition, use of technical jargon, and comprehension level are all aspects of style. Format and style must be geared to satisfy the intended, and clearly identified, audience. The packaging will determine how “user-friendly” the product is perceived to be, and hence the likelihood that it will attract the attention of the audience.

The content and packaging of a product must be adapted to each audience’s level of understanding and interest in the message. The behavioral changes desired by the communicator must be identified (additional ideas added to the public debate? actual policy change?). These specific behavioral changes can provide strategic and definable goals useful in focusing and evaluating the communications strategy.

Channels of communication: How the output is packaged will determine the channel through which it is best communicated? Examples of channels are newspapers, radio, the internet, a lecture, or a training course. The choice of channels will also depend on the size and nature of the intended audience, as well as the message to be communicated. Two important facets of communication are **time** and **timeliness**. The latter refers to whether the information was provided in a timely manner at the “right place” and “right time”.¹ **Time** refers to the question “how much time does the user have to absorb the information provided? Does the user have time to read a report, glance at a policy brief, watch a video, or attend a one-day workshop?”

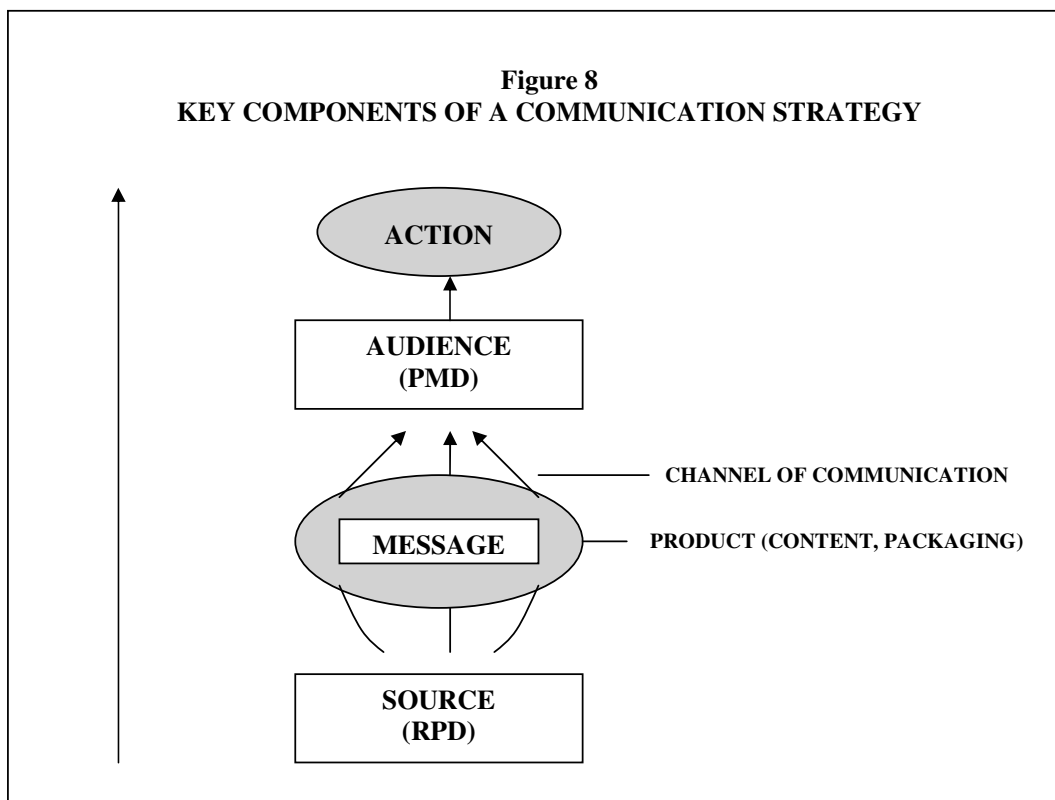
Communication strategy: To enhance effectiveness and impact, projects should have a clear communication strategy. “Good research alone is insufficient. To have impact, it must be communicated to the right people” (K. Grebmer, S. Babu, V. Roeh and M. Rubinstein, 2005).

The communication strategy should identify (adapted from K. Grebmer, S. Babu, V. Roeh and M. Rubinstein, 2005):

¹ This is different from the timeliness of the research itself, which refers to the relevance of the research topic and findings to the problem at hand or the interest of the policymakers.

- Target audiences. Policymakers are naturally one of the target audiences but an effective strategy should identify the specific policymakers to deliver information. They could be beneficiaries, advocacy group, policy advisors, policy analyst, political parties or the media etc. In order to target audiences, relevant actors must be identified. Two, usually overlapping, sets of actors need to be identified: those with a substantive interest in the issue and those with official standing in the decision arena.
- Motivations and beliefs of actors
- Policy arenas
- Policy champions/policy entrepreneurs (key opinion leaders, key civil servants...)
- Policy communication events (conferences, seminars, workshops etc.)
- Media communication
- Methods of communication with government, interest groups etc.
- Use of policy communication write-ups: policy briefs, Policy memoranda etc. Web-based product and translation of publications into more languages should also grow to broaden the audience.

The key elements of a communication strategy are shown in Figure 8. Essentially, the **message** is embodied in a good **product** emanating from the **source** (the project/program), and is communicated through various **channels** to the **audience** (primary policymakers), which then takes **action**.



Source: Garrett and Islam, 1998

Knowledgeable individuals within the organization, who know who the “intermediary” and “end-user” audiences are and develop appropriated strategies for each audiences, play an important role. Research organizations must be aware of the links between its research and end-users and be able to put themselves in a position to delve into their store of accumulated knowledge for relevant situation – or context – specific research and insights, and come up with products that can be strategically and proactively “wholesaled” to intermediaries, or selectively “retailed” directly to the policymaking audience through an effective communication strategy.

The Evaluation on FAO’s policy assistance also finds that the most striking examples of impact at policy level were not from policy-oriented projects but from projects which **demonstrated an approach**. It is probable that **demonstration is not only the most effective influence for policy change but also the best way of assuring that the approach is viable when dealing with institutional matters**. In Latin America, projects addressing land management policy included planning of pilot activity and exposing staff to experience in other countries. It may also be noted that country questionnaires found the **integration of FAO's policy cooperation with other project work one of the less satisfactory aspects**. However, **pilot testing of policies is not generally a genuine option for policies that are not area-specific**. What is needed is a **flexible process of adaptation and demonstration**. It is also clear that policy makers frequently do not have the possibility, and nor would it be desirable, to await the results of a pilot test.

Comment: Should we consider communication effort in the logical framework? For instance, in the logical framework add 7.iv. Communication effort

The Do’s and Don’ts of Communicating Policy Analysis are presented in Annex 3.

3.1.2.3 Advocacy Coalitions

Porter (1995) presents **policy advocacy** as a mean to **mobilize attention to the issue** and thus enhance effectiveness of recommendations. The systematic mobilization of attention is best achieved through broad-based advocacy coalitions. Coalitions mean alliances involving participants located (ideally) in a variety of positions in and around government, the academic community, the media, the private voluntary sector, interest groups, and business. But two institutions, the media and the interest or advocacy group, are especially important.

Media. Media are important to agenda setting in two general ways: first by constructing and conveying simplified and often symbolic understandings of policy issues; and second as gatekeepers.

When policy specialists try to explain their policy preferences to broader publics or to elites with only a passing interest in the issues, they must find intelligible and simplified ways of doing so. This means, however, that policy problems inevitably come to be understood in simplified and symbolic terms, even by the politically sophisticated. Media can play the key role in conveying simplified policy understandings and images to non-expert publics. As the tone of stories in the mass media changes, say from negative to positive, so too do opportunities for policy advocates mobilizing support for change.

But media are also important as **gatekeepers**. Public attention is a scarce resource, and the gatekeeping functions of media are a key determinant of which issues will receive public attention and which will not. Media are a potentially privileged means of communication in three ways: they help to coordinate and link policy relevant activity across a variety of institutional venues; they assist disjointed actors in keeping track of each other; and they monitor national or international trends in public opinion.

Lobbyists. Today’s lobbyists place a premium on information-information worked up into reasoned argumentation. In framing their arguments, they often turn to research and analysis that supports the case they are making. They choose information selectively, of course, and try to put

their own special interpretation on it. But their stock in trade with policy makers is their credibility. If they distort evidence, or fail to prepare policy makers for opponents' arguments, they will be found out. Their credibility and their access to power will come to an end.

Policy actors may even prefer to get their information from advocacy groups, rather than from academics or other neutral experts. With the advocacy group, they know which cause is being promoted and they can take this bias into account as they interpret information. Policy makers may be skeptical of the neutral expert, believing they really have some axe to grind-it is just that they cannot tell what it is. So neutrality does not necessarily guarantee credibility, and advocacy is not necessarily at odds with intellectual integrity.

A conceptual framework of research, analysis and advocacy is presented in Annex 2.

3.1.2.4 Building the consensus for change among stakeholders

It should be ensured that partners and collaborators respect the FAO's freedom to publish and provide data and information, even when they may make the government uncomfortable. Such freedom of ideas and debate is necessary to create an environment conducive to building a consensus around key policy decisions.

While perhaps unintended, media publicity can help build a consensus and in the process saved valuable time. Without compromising integrity or skewing results, a policy assistance project can utilize the media strategically. Indeed, media can help reaching policymakers and donors, increasing the credibility of your research, give the impression of importance and importantly, creating public awareness and public action "I saw it on TV, so it must be true" (K. Grebmer, S. Babu, V. Roeh and M. Rubinstein, 2005).

Certainly on some occasions, partner will prefer that the results of studies are kept in-house. But research organizations must ensure that they have the freedom to publish in professional outlets and in the media.

3.1.2.5 Expertise and experiences provided

Empowerment of stakeholders and ownership

Attainment of widespread **ownership** of and **support** for the policy in the country and throughout the population improves the effectiveness and the impact of any policy assistance project.

For that purpose, **involvement of key stakeholder in the policymaking process** is crucial. A stakeholder analysis for a particular policy can help identify those who should be involved in the policy making process.²

- **The choice of partners and collaborators:** Collaborators should have an **interest** in and **capability** for carrying out the work, as well as acknowledged independence and responsibility. There are examples of projects with some complex model that the Ministry of Food and Agriculture did not have the capacity to adopt. It is not rare that local partners/collaborators have limited capacity for food and agriculture policy analysis.

² For more information about stakeholder analysis, see DFID, Department for International Development, 2002 "Tools for development - A handbook for those engaged in development activity".

Involving the key ministries of government from the outset in design and feedback enhances timely response on the part of policy assistance project and encourages timely use by ministries.

- **Role of policy champion:** A policy champion/policy entrepreneur is a visionary advocate who clears the field for the triumph of the new policy. Policy champions at high level of government are crucial to playing the necessary advocacy roles in the executive and legislative arms. Although on *a priori* grounds one may question the wisdom of having a national as leader of an international team because of the political pressures that might be brought to bear on him or her, it seems that this doesn't prevent the achievement of significant process benefits and impact (Ryan and Garrett, 2003)

Comment: we can take into account the role of policy champion while analysing the expertise provided (step 7)

Some benchmarks for quality participation are (Marilee Karl, 2002):

- Provision of full information to key partners on past policy in the area concerned, its impact, need and rationale for new policy;
- Support to enhance capacity of key partners where necessary, to permit them to understand and utilize the information;
- Facilitated consultation and negotiation across different stakeholder groups to bring out diverse perspectives and priorities and attain agreement on the resolution of differences;
- A defined and publicized procedure for providing feedback to all key partners and supporting them in the fulfillment of their roles in subsequent implementation of the policy;
- Built-in monitoring procedure to provide feedback to key partners periodically throughout the whole process (McGee with Norton, based on Tandon 1999).

The Evaluation on FAO's policy assistance carried out in 2001 confirms the importance of involving IFIs in the policy making process. FAO should work in close association with IFIs as many of the decisions taken for the agricultural sector are taken outside the line ministry, especially by Finance and Planning for whom the partner of choice is the IFIs. In working on the implications of more macro-policy for the agricultural sector, FAO can thus often be most effective if it works to develop the viability of policies developed in this process. FAO's input can serve to improve the understanding of micro-issues by the IFIs and Ministries of Finance, etc. and also to increase understanding in the Ministry of Agriculture of the wider policy agenda. A major issue in ensuring participation and consultation remains the institutional location for the FAO part of the intervention, which may serve to reinforce the line ministry role in the dialogue or to have direct impact on the Finance/Planning team. FAO and the UN system may also be required to provide an alternative view from that of the IFIs to assist the government in making choices. FAO's role in each case should be clear.

On the other hand, there is a strong demand for use of national consultants to work with international expertise and missions find that the high involvement of capable nationals substantially improved the policy development process. Indeed the ideal situation is for a national team to take the lead with FAO providing international support. Not all countries could, however, provide a substantive national technical input and it is observed that, in some of the least developed countries, qualified competent nationals were over-committed and thus failed to deliver.

3.2 Exogenous factors

3.2.1 Policy context

A policy environment where the decision-makers are eager for good quality information and advice and where there is a momentum for change is the most favorable for project effectiveness and impact. **Political commitment** by the national governments played an important role in the case studies by Karl (2002).

The currency of the topic, timeliness of the information and advices, and sense of ownership by the collaborators and, importantly, the **key policymaking audiences** are critical ingredients for success. According to the case studies conducted by IFPRI (Ryan and Garrett, 2003), a feature of the policy environments was a particular concern that any policy changes have an **economic efficiency rationale** and not come at the expense of the poor and their food security. Indeed IFPRI's ability to address this specific set of trade-off questions in a convincing way was instrumental in effecting significant policy changes.

The type of **political regime** can also be a critical role for policy assistance effectiveness. "Depending on the context different strategies will be appropriate for engaging with policy processes. Different types of regimes can impose different constraints on what is achievable" (Keeley 2001). Key questions are:

- Is there a democratic government? What types of democratic structures and institutions exist?
- What is the degree of political stability in the country?
- Are there effective laws, legal frameworks and functioning legal institutions?
- Is there effective decentralization that brings decision making closer to the local level?
- Is there political commitment to policy change?
- What mechanisms exist to influence policy through political structures?
- Are there existing or potential development programmes and projects that could work with government to facilitate policy change?

The political context may change along with changes in government and the political parties in power.

Favorable economical situation as a favorable condition of the policy environment: The Evaluation on FAO's policy assistance (2001) finds that many of the middle-income countries have a greater absorption capacity for policy advice and also greater independent capability to act upon it.

3.2.2 Players and policy dialogue

Politics and power relations: Policy making is not neutral. It is impossible to ignore the existence of power relations between various stakeholders. Political capital is a critical element in influencing policy making. It is not static and is impacted by both internal and external factors in the environment; e.g. capacity building in negotiation, group formation, changes in government, and legislation. *Policy modifications are likely to alter the balance of power relations; therefore, attempts to influence policy are likely to be met by resistance and challenges from those who stand to lose in the power equation.* **When powerful groups also stand to gain, the recommendations have a greater chance to be adopted** (Karl, 2002).

Although examining the political capital of different groups may help to **identify those with more or less power to influence policy**, it is also essential to examine the **power relations within groups, communities and households**.

Comment: We can take into account policy environment as exogenous condition, e.g. add step 8.iii. Policy environment (political regime, commitment, power relations etc.)

Winners and losers in conflict equations: A dominant theme in formal political economy is the way in which proposed changes created material winners and losers. In the generic analytic case of the politics surrounding reform initiatives, losers are clearly aware of their potential losses and quick to oppose change, while winners are much less likely to benefit in the short term or be aware of long term gains. Losers have incentives to organize to protect the *status quo*; winners lack clear incentives to organize for change and therefore face difficult problems of collective action. Further, reform is politically difficult because electorally sensitive politicians have incentives to postpone it, given imbalances between the power of winners and losers. In this perspective, whether or not reforms are adopted and implemented is a consequence of the ability of losers to create obstacles to change. In the end, incentives for winners, losers, and politicians conspire against most reform initiatives.

Additionally, winners are not well informed of the benefits that will accrue to them, they are often unorganized, they often lack access to policy making circles, and the benefits they will receive are often too distant to be taken seriously. No doubt many winners also distrust government enough to such promises and yet have lived through a decade or more of disappointment with economic conditions and sluggish responses to state policies.

However “*change/reform is not a simple arithmetic of weighing winners and losers or assessing the relative power of institutional actors. It is instead a dynamic process in which actors and arenas change with time and the actions of protagonists have the potential to alter equations of power. Winners and losers do exist, institutions do indeed constrain actions, but strategic leadership and action, and perhaps a bit of good luck can make a difference in change/reform outcome*” (Grindle, 2001).

Institutions that empower losers. In the generic case of reform explained by institutionalists, interests defending the status quo tend to be more powerful than those that seek change. This is because anti-reformers are usually winners of prior contests over policy and as a consequence, they have colonized institutions of power in the society and government. They use these institutions to ensure that policy favors their interests. In this political economy tradition, institutions are generally treated as rules of the game that constraint the possibility of reform (Grindly 2000a). Institutional analyses also provide a model in which the cards are stacked against change.

Institutional tradition of executive dominance in policy making can also shift power relations among institutions, giving presidents much greater technical capacity than legislatures to design solutions to major national problems.

By treating structures and incentives as binding constraints, institutionalists tend to see reformers as narrowly confined. Change often happens, however, when reformers find ways to maneuver around such constraints (Corrales, 2000, Grindle and Thomas, 1991). In fact, institutional analyses underrate the importance of political entrepreneurship and how strategies for coalition building, communication, and legislative relations open up or shut when reform is viewed as a process, the ways in which winners, losers, and reformers interact in complex institutional arenas demonstrates that spaces for strategic action exist and that such actions can alter outcomes.

A framework of Institutional analysis is presented in Annex 5.

3.2.3 Policy issues

Relevance: The currency of the topic is one of the ingredients to policy research effectiveness. In the case of policy assistance projects, evaluation of the request is critical to assure the relevance of the issue addressed by the policy assistance project.

Ripeness: the ripeness of the issue decides greatly the effectiveness of the related recommendation as it is, among others, one of the ingredient for a successful policy dialogue. Often ripeness means that the full diversity of participants in the policy dialogue have become sufficiently frustrated with the traditional adversary process that they are willing to try a different approach.

Attention should be given to **new policy fields**, such as those associated with information and communication technologies where the growth and diffusion of technologies and their application to development problems is extremely rapid and, as a result of this diffusion, may have far-reaching impacts in many other sectors as well. Furthermore, because some of these fields (e.g., genetics, tobacco control) work towards policy development at the supra-national or global level, past experience may not be applicable to current issues in these areas.

4 Previous evaluation on the effectiveness and impact of FAO's policy assistance activities

Up to date, there has been only one Evaluation on FAO policy assistance carried out in 2001 which assessed the effectiveness and impact of FAO's policy assistance activities. The results showed that 68% of interventions had identifiable impact in terms of implemented policy changes and in 21% of cases the impact was high. **FAO policy work at the national level generally fed into a broader policy dialogue and process.** The number of interventions in which a specific government policy document resulted from FAO assistance was **high**, especially in the less developed countries with weaker national drafting capacities, and at least eleven clear instances of this occurring were documented. The fact that many of these agreed government policy papers did not result immediately in significant shifts in policy application illustrates that such papers often only document the status quo and where they do not, they are a necessary but not sufficient precursor to the actual implementation of policy change.

Forty-seven percent of interventions were found to have had moderate effect and thirty five percent high outcomes and effects. There was more likely to be high effect in middle-income countries and this contributes to the relatively high scores in Latin America and to some extent the Near East. In the case of Latin America, work was also often on the policy aspects of ongoing national programmes and the countries paid for the FAO input themselves. This facilitated national ownership. Such countries also had a relatively well-developed national capacity both for policy and implementation. In the less developed countries and low-income transition countries, there was less national capacity to absorb policy. In such cases, follow-up was greater where work fed into a process also assisted by donors, especially the IFIs. In addition, in all countries the process used for development of policy was particularly important in assuring national ownership and thus policy implementation.

5 Best practices to enhance effectiveness

5.1 Better design policy assistance project

Policies are continuously evolving and few countries have static sector policies; however within the policy mix there are intensive periods of work on certain aspects, followed by a move to implementation. This policy process can be characterized as having the following phases which are generally overlapping and iterative:

- advocacy and awareness raising on policy issues;
- information assembly and analysis;
- initial policy design;
- policy dialogue and draft policy revision;
- policy decision;
- design of policy instruments, normally leading to some reconsideration of the policy.

In the real world, policies are often not thoroughly thought through until it comes to the design of the implementation measures and this is likely to provoke a repeat of much of the above process.

The Evaluation on FAO's policy assistance finds that the design of the policy interventions can have better stated **how the intervention was expected to fit into the policy process continuum and what was expected in terms of policy results or development of strategies**. Application of a logframe to interventions (which was never done in a formal sense) would have assisted this. It is needed to have a better appreciation of how the policy change would take place and of how consultation, partnership and civil society involvement would be assured in the policy process (issues of process are addressed separately below). Where work was not carried out in cooperation with IFIs or other donors, there was also frequently no consideration in the design of the intervention as to how follow-up to the policy review and design work would be achieved. It was in the light of these inadequacies that missions were critical in their scorings of project formulation, which was only found to be good in 17% of cases.

Almost no cases were found of FAO-TCP interventions completed in the foreseen 12 months. **A weakness of project design has been a failure to identify which phases of the policy process are to be addressed and thus what can realistically be achieved**. There has often been an assumption that all phases, including sometimes the design of implementation measures (such as legislation) can be tackled in one FAO-TCP project. Recognition of the longer-term nature of the policy process and the stages within it, means that individual interventions cannot generally address all stages of the process. Where feasible, **interventions also need to be designed for longer periods to support an iterative process**.

5.2 More attention to capacity building

To achieve effectiveness and then sustainable impact in developing countries, **strengthening the capacity of national institutions is vital** and should be a feature of all collaboration between international and national research agencies. Indeed policy research, capacity strengthening and effective communication are in effect joint products. Choosing to work in countries where policy research capacity is strong and data are readily available may offer greater immediate impacts than in countries with weak capacity and data. On equity grounds, however, there may be a stronger case for focusing on the latter group of countries. An implicit trade-off may have to be made in such instances. (IFPRI, 2001).

Training staff in communication (presentation skills, interaction with the mass media, and public awareness) can have high payoffs. These skills allow staff to work comfortably to broaden the audience for research findings beyond the original clients or partners and hasten the policymaking process (with information as input).

FAO policy work builds capacity at national level through:

- raising awareness and making available information on current policy issues in publications in paper form and on the internet;
- workshop training and providing training resource materials;
- networks and networking; and
- capacity building during advisory projects, through strengthening national teams and undertaking consultations and workshops.

According to the evaluation of FAO's policy assistance (2001), effectiveness and impact is generally in a greater or lesser contribution to a process in which other development partners and of course the national authorities are active. When a policy support intervention takes place, there is likely to be a lapse of time before this is translated into a policy instrument which can deliver development impact. Capacity building is generally even more diffuse in its final results but absolutely essential to the future of policy making. Notwithstanding the process for attaining effectiveness then impacts, there were an impressive number of occasions on which it could be said that a clear policy impact in terms of a definitive decision or policy instrument were very evidently accelerated by FAO policy work.

Often, the purpose of capacity-building is to enable the agricultural ministries to better participate in the policy process is a clear priority. In almost all situations, this needs to concentrate on raising the capacity to identify and resolve policy issues, including their costs and benefits, rather than on sophisticated analytical techniques. Capacity building also needs to recognize that many of the least developed countries and some of the transition countries are not at the stage where they can develop separate policy units, especially in line ministries. The emphasis in these situations needs to be on developing the capacity of line managers and senior civil servants to provide sound input to the policy process and developing a consultative and networked culture for policy development. Even in many of the more developed countries, this aspect will be important, as well as enhancing the extent to which policy is made on the basis of in-depth analysis by both government units and groups like university think tanks.

It is also necessary to support the development of capabilities for agricultural ministries to analyze the cost-benefits of their own programmes. This is important both to make them more effective and to better defend them against cuts.

5.3 More attention to communication, advocacy and awareness-raising on policy issues

At the institutional level, according to the evaluation of FAO's policy assistance (2001), FAO should further develop positions in a few carefully selected areas, in which the Organization campaigns for policy change. Such campaigns need to be selectively targeted on countries and situations where there is a priority need. The Policy Task Force could have a major role in developing those areas in which FAO could be more active in advocacy and the Department of General Affairs and Information would be an important partner.

In addition to advocating policy positions, more systematic attention can be given to raising awareness of emerging policy issues and their implications.

Greater attention needs to be given to how the Organization communicates considerations on policy issues to a wider group of policy makers. This includes:

- greater emphasis on synthesis, presentation and communication, including the continued use of workshops, internet publications and popular leaflets. Occasions such as World Food Day also present the opportunity for reaching a wider audience;
- reinforcing the moves to utilize the FAO Conference, Regional Conferences and Commissions as a means of communication, either in the meetings themselves or in parallel sessions.

The Organization has a unique point of contact with the sector ministries for agriculture and it can usefully cooperate with other organizations such as the World Bank and IFPRI to utilise FAO fora for consultation on policy documents and for dissemination of current considerations in policy arising from research and experience.

5.4 Identify constraints to policy change and provide relevant recommendations

Identifying constraints to policy change is also important in order find ways to avoid or overcome possible obstacles. Constraints can include lack of political commitment to reform, lack of effective decentralization, poorly functioning governance mechanisms, unresponsive bureaucracies, weak civil society, lack of trust, and lack of capacity in NGOs.

Another set of questions deals with power relations. Since policy modifications may alter the balance of power relations; those who stand to lose are likely to resist attempts to influence policy. Policy change may also challenge traditional or ingrained attitudes and ways of doing things. In this regard key questions are (compiled from Karl, 2002 and IFPRI, 2001):

- What power relations exist within groups, communities and households?
- How will power relationships be affected by the recommendation/policy change?
- Who stands to benefit? Who stands to lose?
- What are the resources available to lobby for or to block the policy change?
- What traditions may stand in the way of change?
- Will policy change challenge widely-held attitudes? How strongly held are these?
- How will policy change affect ingrained ways of doing things?

Constraints can also take the form of the lack of capacity to implement policy, weak legal frameworks and institutions and lack of financial resources. Questions need to be raised about each of these.

Because political situation in any country are subject to rapid change, missions should state their critical assumptions about the timetable they propose for completing the policy change.

Once constraints are identified, judgments need to be made as to whether policy change in a given area is feasible, whether there are alternative avenues to influence policy, or whether there are ways to overcome constraints. If proposed policy changes offer benefits to the non-poor as well as the poor and when powerful groups also stand to gain, the recommendations have a greater chance to be adopted. “The most influential policy research that presents the distributional consequences of alternative policy options – who gains and who loses – rather than research that only reveals the size of the efficiency gains”(IFPRI, 2001). **In addition to recommendations for policy decisions, recommendations regarding policy adoption/implementation can also be made to**

help government to overcome constraints through capacity building, training, awareness campaigns, and ensuring finances for implementation.

Important steps to overcoming constraints on policy change are (Marilee Karl, 2002):

- Identifying the constraints.
- Building support for change through awareness campaigns and explaining how people will benefit.
- Capacity building, training and strengthening of institutions to ensure implementation of policy.
- Resource mobilization including technical, managerial and financial resources to implement policy decision.

5.5 More attention to anticipatory research

Gaps or time lags in the policy process occur between the time when research generates information and the time when policies are formulated, from then to when policy changes are announced, and again from then to when the policies are implemented. The factors that influence these lags are good candidates for further research. Anticipatory research can be especially valuable in reducing time lags in policy adoption. Research that misses key policy decision-making events is much less useful than that which is available as an input into them, especially if the research results are not confirmatory in nature. When anticipatory research is not done, the cost in terms of wrong policy decisions can be high.

Annex 1: Models of Policy process

The incrementalist model

In this model, policy making is serial, you have to keep coming back to problems as mistakes become apparent and are corrected, and new approaches to the issues are developed. This model suggests that major changes occur through a series of small steps, each of which does not fundamentally “rock the boat”. The “policy process is one of disjointed incrementalism or muddling through (Lindblom, 1980).

The mixed scanning model

This covers the middle ground between the rational and incrementalist models. It essentially divides decisions into a macro (fundamental) and micro (small) classification. It involves the policy maker in taking a broad view of the field of policy. A mixed-scanning approach suggests taking a broad view of possible options and looking further into those which require a more in-depth examination. (Sutton, 1999, p. 10).

Policy as interactive learning

This approach is rooted in a criticism of development policy as being “top-down”, not generated from the communities in which policies are implemented. It argues for an “actor-perspective” emphasizing the need to take into account the opinions of individuals, agencies and social groups that have a stake in how a system evolves. The approach promotes an interaction and sharing of ideas between those who make policy and those who are influenced most directly by the outcome. (Sutton, 1999, p.11).

Public choice model

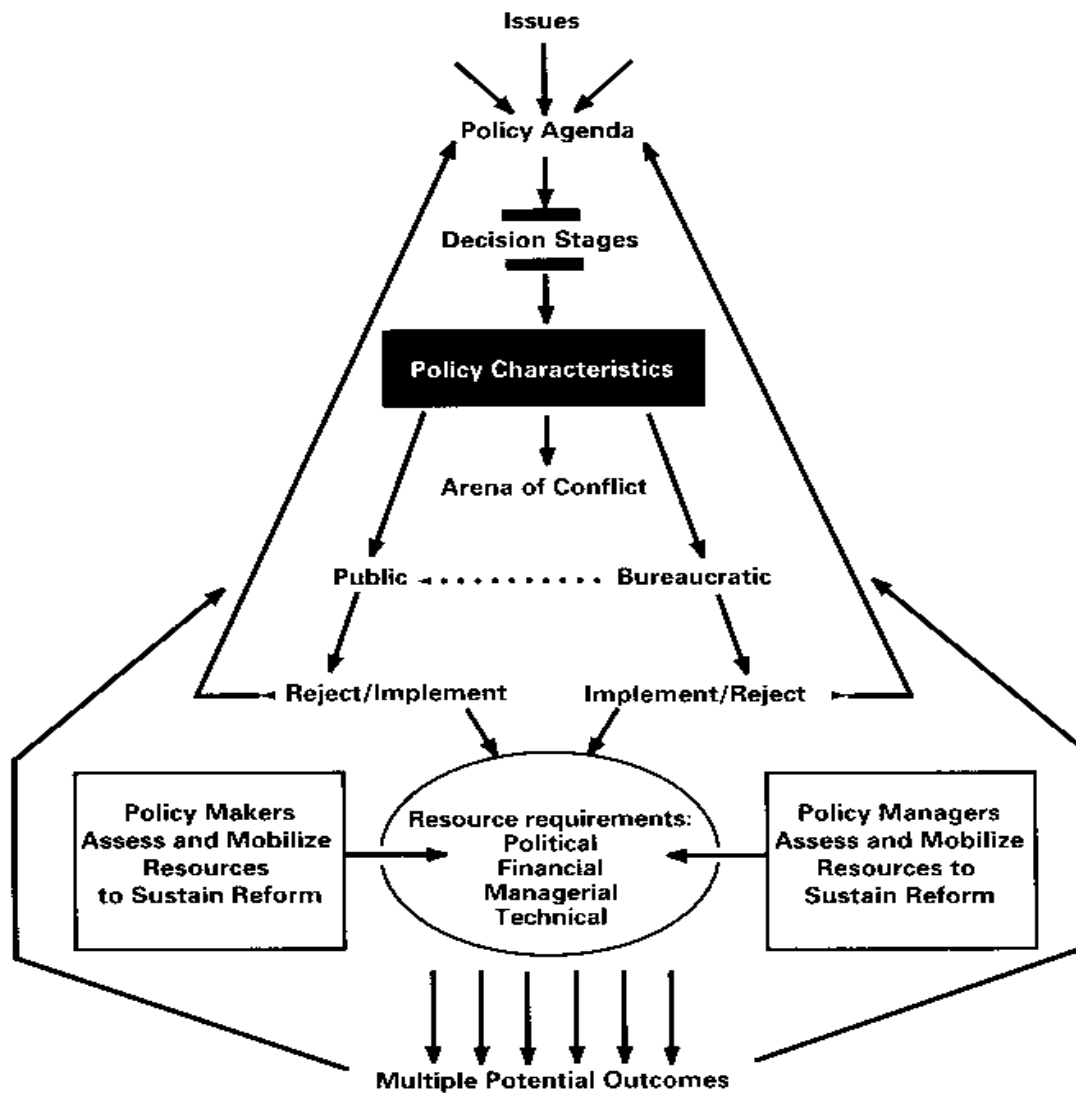
Admittedly, rational, apolitical models are a poor guide to policy-making reality. If it is recognised that there are practical constraints on rational decision-making (“bounded rationality”), it should be acknowledged that decision makers choose compromise policies **that satisfy (rather than maximise) organizational goals**, and which are acceptable in the face of competing demands. The modern positive theory of public choice sheds some light on these competing demands, seeing pressures to further private interests as rational actions by individuals and groups to improve their own welfare, rather than as an obstacle to the optimal functioning of the political process.

Interactive Model

The focus of this approach is on the implementation phase of the policy process and originates from a political economy perspective. The framework for this model was developed by Grindle and Thomas (1990) and is based on the policy reforms undertaken in developing nations. For these two authors, central to the model is the idea that,

The primary distinction that Grindle and Thomas make between the interactive model and the rational models is that the interactive model takes policy change as the central analytical feature with respect to the difference between policy adoption and policy implementation. The authors make clear that it is the implementation phase which they see as being crucial to the policy making process.

Figure 3
An Interactive Model of Policy Formation



Overall, although this model makes external contexts explicit, similar to the previous rational models, the interactive model focuses on policy elites in the policy development phase and assumes research is used directly in the policy making process. Additionally, it appears that the interactive model, as presented by Grindle and Thomas based on the reforms of the 1980s, is no longer appropriate to the current contexts since many of those countries have since experienced extreme external shocks making the previous reform process irrelevant.

Another important distinction between this framework and the previous two rational frameworks is that Grindle and Thomas make the developing country experience explicit in their model. This interactive model is set on the following propositions, which, according to the authors, appear self-evident, yet “stand in direct contradiction to major bodies of theory about the sources and dynamics of public policy” (Grindle and Thomas, 1991, p.19):

- Decision makers are not fully constrained by the interests of social classes, organized societal interests, international actors, or international economic conditions, but have space for defining the content, timing and sequencing of reform initiatives.
- Decision makers often have articulate and logical explanations of the problems they seek to resolve based on their experience, study, personal values, ideology, institutional affiliation, or professional training.
- Decision makers may alter their perspectives on what constitute preferred or viable policy options in response to experience, study, values, ideology, institutional affiliation, and professional training.
- Decision makers often take active and formative roles in shaping reforms to make them politically acceptable to divergent interests in society or in government.
- Bringing about changes in public policies and institutions is a normal and ongoing aspect of government and a normal and ongoing function of many officials.

The key factor for this model is an understanding of the relationship between the policy elites and the political environment or context surrounding the policy elites in relation to the issue at hand

Policy Network Models

Policy network models derive from political pluralist approaches. Grindle and Thomas write that in pluralist approaches to political analysis, “public policy results from conflict, bargaining, and coalition formation among a potentially large number of societal groups organized to protect or advance particular interests common to their members” (Grindle and Thomas, 1997, pp.22-23). Consistent with this, Reimers and McGinn state that, for them, “policy change is the result of a process of negotiating competing interests within the education organization and with the external environment where the system operates...” (Reimers and McGinn, 1997, pp.19-20). The approaches outlined here differ from the rationalist models in that these models explain policy change as a function of the diverse actors and/or groups of actors found within the policymaking system and, therefore, better illustrate the complexities of the system.

An eminent writer in the policy process field, Diane Stone refers generally to policy network approaches as “knowledge communities”. In her book, *Capturing the Political Imagination: Think Tanks and the Policy Process*, Stone captures these various different “policy network” approaches and outlines their contributions to the field, as well as how they differ amongst each other. These can be referred to as (1) issue networks; (2) epistemic communities; (3) policy communities; and (4) advocacy coalitions. This section will provide a brief overview of each of these policy network models.

Although Stone argues that the role of vested interest is a more important variable in issue networks than for epistemic communities, it is still knowledge, as Heclo points out below, that is important for issue networks, and not beliefs or belief systems, as with the advocacy coalition framework where belief systems are central to the framework.

Issue Networks

The first to systematically examine these groups of individuals that are found within the policy process system was Hugh Heclo. In his work *Issue Networks and the Executive Establishment*, Heclo writes “[l]ooking for the few who are powerful, we tend to overlook the many whose webs of influence provoke and guide the exercise of power” (1978, p.102). He calls these webs ‘issue networks’.

According to Heclo, “issue networks...comprise a large number of participants with quite variable degrees of mutual commitment or of dependence on others in their environment; in fact it is

almost impossible to say where a network leaves off and its environment begins” (Heclo, 1978, p.102).

Specifically, however, Heclo defines issue networks as a shared-knowledge group having to do with some aspect (or as defined by the network, some problem) of public policy. It is therefore more well-defined than, first, a shared-attention group or “public”; those in the networks are likely to have a common base of information and understanding of how one knows about policy and identifies its problems (Heclo, 1978).

He goes on to say that since issue networks are based on knowledge (first), they do not necessarily produce agreement or consensus and as a result, will not necessarily form a coalition or what he refers to as a “shared-action group” or become an interest group where shared beliefs is paramount (Heclo, 1978). Consistent with this, Stone writes “an issue network is...characterised by participants with conflicting interests, a lack of common values and little consensus regarding problem definition or the outcomes of policy interventions” (Stone, 1996, p.90). It is the issue, or policy debate, that is of significance for issue networks rather than their own personal or vested interests in that issue or debate. Further, it is their knowledge of the issue and not their professional training that makes them an expert in the area under debate.

Annex 2: Research, Analysis, and Advocacy-A Conceptual Framework

The short-term impact of policy relevant research on decision making is typically difficult to discern, and that limiting the assessment of impact to relatively restricted time frames will generally underestimate its influence. Knowledge may gradually creep into policy making, or it may be stockpiled for future use, but in either event it tends to influence policy only over the longer run.

Bringing policy analysis and policy advocacy together within a single conceptual framework is only a first step in developing a comprehensive strategy for promoting a more informed or enlightened policy process. We can make a first cut at such a framework by identifying the strategic elements and activities that would make up a program in "policy communications" (for lack of a better term). The framework (outlined below) is organized around agenda setting and advocacy coalitions. Agenda setting involves processes and activities through which policy researchers and analysts can exert the greatest influence on decision making. (Some would argue more generally that agenda setting is the most important phase of the policy process.) The advocacy coalition, as we define it, is the network of individuals and organizations concerned with a specific set of policy issues. We can think of it as the infrastructure underlying the flow of policy communications.

Agenda Setting

Focal Areas	Activities, Tactics, Questions
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<i>Problems</i>	Working from the technical, scientific base, subject problem definitions to legitimate transformations rooted in (country specific) organizational and political interpretation and judgment. Recognize that every issue and problem has an interpretive, emotive element. Understand that the emotional "tone" of a policy problem largely determines how people will respond to it. Remember that decision makers are complex people too, and that attracting them to an issue may involve much more rhetorical or emotional work than is captured by the cognitive model of rational problem solving.
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Two important questions: Is a policy problem amenable to clear-cut solutions, or is it highly intractable? Do our definitions of problems (child mortality, non-literary, malnutrition, etc.) make them immediately relevant to a variety of publics or stakeholders?

<i>Solutions</i>	Policy alternatives or solutions need to be clearly linked to a compelling problem if they are to rise on the agenda. A tactical question here is whether the problem-set (which a proposed solution attacks) should be narrowed or widened. Often, the more links that can be plausibly built between a solution and a set of problems the better. At the same time, however, explanations of proposed solutions (particularly to non-expert publics) will need to be clear, straightforward, and not terribly complex. They must be technically and
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scientifically accurate, of course, but remember that decision makers (politicians) must be able to translate policy solutions into explanations, accounts, and arguments that make sense to their own constituents.

Images and Understandings The image or simplified understanding of a problem is crucial in generating support for it. It is also crucial to plausibly making the link between a problem and a proposed solution. Typically, however, policy problems and proposals have a number of faces. The aim is to select the image or face that is most relevant to the interests of the particular audience and venue. Managers in the finance ministry will be more concerned with the cost implications of a policy proposal, who will pay for it, and who will control the flow of funds. Leaders of national medical associations will be more concerned with the technical soundness of the proposal and its acceptance by recognized medical authorities, but they may also be mindful of the proposal's financial impact on their members' practices. Managers in the ministry of health may be more concerned with the organizational and administrative implications of a proposal - will it change the way front-line health workers do their jobs, will they be asked to do more than they are already doing? Finally, top-level decision makers in the MOH will also be concerned with the broader political appeal of a proposal, how it is viewed by outside agencies and publics.

Institutional Venues The more venues or arenas for policy discussion, the greater the chance for policy learning, as well, of course, as for wider participation in policy making. At the same time, expanding a policy issue beyond a limited set of venues creates greater problems for issue management. Widening the policy debate, bringing other participants to it, is a good strategy for undermining policy monopolies. It is also a good strategy for building new advocacy coalitions. [11]

Policy Learning Reverse the knowledge utilization question. Don't ask, "why are they not using our technical analyses and recommendations?" but instead, "how do organizations, and their members, learn?" Reframing the question in these terms brings us closer to the organization's (or client's) view of our research/analytic products. And it is their perception that really counts.

A general strategy for promoting policy learning includes three elements: (1) spread technical data and analyses around; (2) help experts understand (this is probably the greatest challenge) that how they translate technical or scientific facts into political and social facts is the key to generating wider understanding of and potential support for policy reforms; and (3), build local capabilities for informed policy debate and advocacy.

Advocacy Coalitions

Focal Areas	Activities, Tactics, Questions
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Policy Communities Map the various political and policy communities working on or interested

in the issue. Locate the relevant policy expertise, find out who is most knowledgeable and influential. Determine who talks to whom and in what settings.

- Stakeholders* Identify broader constituencies or publics with a stake in a policy problem (or a proposed solution). Determine who speaks for their interests (or purports to) both in government and outside of government.
- Media* Develop a targeted media relations program, involving article placement, educational workshops, press conferences, linkages between local and international press, media tours, highly visible spokespersons, etc. Create focusing events that provide solid platforms (stories) leading to media coverage of policy issues.
- NGOs* Advocacy coalitions require local leadership, so it will be important to identify organizations in a position to coordinate and support advocacy and policy communication activities. NGOs may serve as vehicles for funneling technical assistance into local policy communities, particularly if the aim is to broaden the base for informed policy discussion beyond government proper.
- Policy Entrepreneurs* Identify and cultivate individuals with a strong claim to a hearing. This claim has three sources: expertise; an ability to speak for others (i.e., the leader of a strong interest group); or an authoritative decision-making position. Policy entrepreneurs also have strong political connections and negotiating skills, and most important, are persistent.

This framework outlines the elements of a systematic policy program under conditions of politics as usual. More important, however, it also lays the groundwork for developing packages of policy options and tactics that can be quickly produced when windows open as a consequence of unanticipated shifts in the broader social and political environment.

The idea here is succinctly captured by an anonymous political appointee interviewed by John Kingdon (1984) in his study of agenda setting in the federal government.

Source: Porter, Robert D. with Irvin Hicks, 1995. "Knowledge Utilization and the Process of Policy Formation: Toward a Framework for Africa".

Annex 3: Do's and Don'ts of communicating Policy Analysis

Do: Remember the client! Keep in mind that policy analysis has little meaning without a client

Set priorities! Organize your information carefully (essential material in text, supporting material in appendices)

Decompose your analysis into component parts

Use headings that tell a story. Avoid abstract heading such as market failure (these are to organize your analysis, not to write your report)

Be balanced! If 90% of your analysis is on “the problem” or 90% on “the solution” it fails this test

Acknowledge ambiguity but then make sure you provide your resolution of the ambiguity. (Provide sensitivity analysis where appropriate)

Be credible by documenting as extensively as possible

Be smart on the margin! In other words, first make sure you're competent before you try to be brilliant

Be succinct and only use as much jargon as is needed to communicate the point: clearly explain technical terms.

Be value overt: rather than implying some goals is important, argue its importance explicitly

Write crisp text. Favour short and direct sentences, use the active voice

Don'ts: Write an essay! The differences between an essay and a policy analysis should be clear to you by now

Tell the client everything you know as it comes into your head. It's fine to think nonlinearly, but write linearly.

Write a mystery! Instead, state your important conclusions up front in an executive summary

Source: Weimer, D.L. and A.R.Vining. 1999. Policy Analysis. Concepts and Practices. Rentice Hall. N.J. 07458

Annex 4: Lesson-drawing and best practice' approaches

In development circles the language of best practices has become lingua franca. The best practice approach is inherently comparative in that it “distils the many experiences of several countries into a manageable synthesis” (Radaelli, 2004). However, best practice approaches suffer from decontextualisation that is they “externalise the costs of applying advice onto policy-makers who carry the burden of figuring out how to endogenise the political realities left out in abstract prescriptions” (Rose).

Decontextualised lists of best practices have three limitations. First, they see the tree but not the forest. Second, even when they come close to the suggestions of the lesson-drawing approach, they remain rather vague and third, by focusing exclusively on success, best practice ignores the useful contribution of negative lessons and may trigger inefficient cascades of adoption. (Radaelli, 2004).

<i>Alternative ways of drawing a lesson</i>	
<i>Photocopying</i>	Producing an exact photocopy with a minimum of change in the names of institutions and places and dates.
<i>Copying</i>	Duplicating almost all the elements of a programme already in effect in another place.
<i>Adaptation</i>	Altering details of the design of a programme elsewhere without removing major elements.
<i>Hybrid</i>	Combining elements of programmes with the same objective in different jurisdictions.
<i>Synthesis</i>	Combining in a novel way familiar elements of programmes with the same objective.
<i>Disciplined inspiration</i>	Responding to the stimulus of programme's inspiration elsewhere by creating a novel programme not inconsistent with foreign examples.
<i>Selective imitation</i>	Adopting attractive, but not necessarily essential, parts of other programmes while leaving out awkward but essential bits.

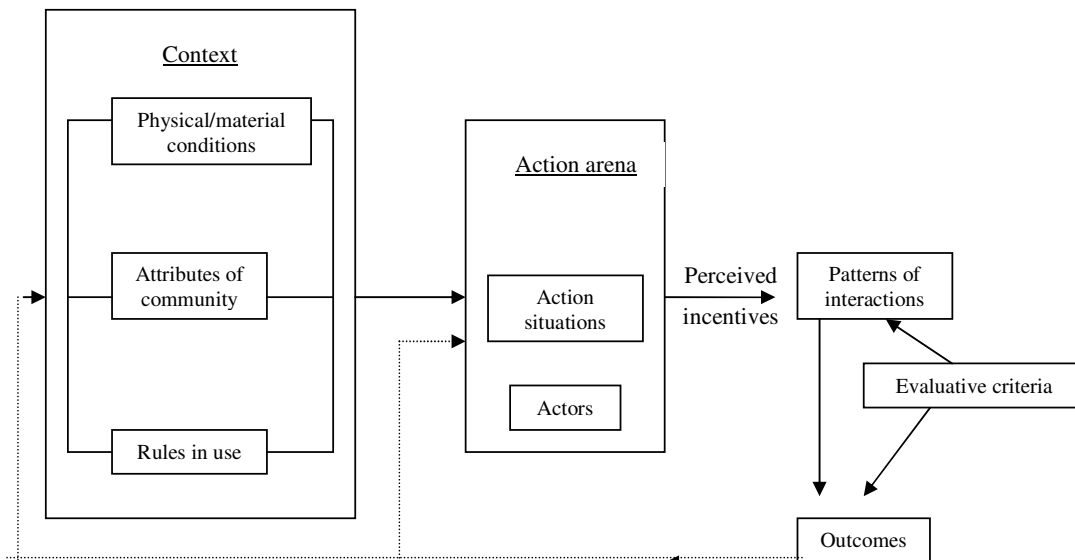
Source: Richard Rose, October, 2004. Drawing policy lessons from Cross-national experiences. **Center for the Study of Public Policy, University of Strathclyde, United Kingdom**, TCAS working paper No 59.

Annex 5: Using institutional analysis as a diagnostic tool for policy making

Institutional analysis helps to identify constraints within an organization that could undermine policy implementation. These constraints may exist at the level of internal processes, relationships among organizations (e.g. between ministries), or be a product of the way that the system is organized (reporting hierarchies) or operation in practice (the financial year is not followed in practice and accounts are not closed). Institutional analysis evaluates formal institutions, such as rules, resource allocation, and authorization procedures. It also evaluates "soft" institutions, such as informal rules of the game, power relations and incentive structures that underlie current practices. In the latter sense, it identifies organizational stakeholders that are likely to support or obstruct a given reform. The analysis is most useful for complex reforms that affect institutional responsibilities or coordination, such as delivery of public services, regulation of markets or decentralization.

Comment: a little long compared to other definitions. I think the sentence in () is not really needed

A framework for institutional analysis (Ostrom, 1990)



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Relevant web-links

FAO	http://www.fao.org
FAO Evaluation	http://www.fao.org/pbe/pbee/default.asp
GTZ	http://www.gtz.de
FAO Participation Homepage	http://www.fao.org/participation/
IAIA (International Association for Impact Assessment)	http://www.iaia.org/
GTZ Project cycle management (PCM), Objectives-oriented project planning (ZOPP) and Monitoring documents	http://www.gtz.de/pcm/download/english/zopp_e.pdf
USAID Center for Development Information and Evaluation	http://www.dec.org/usaid_eval/
IFPRI (International Food Policy Research Institute)	http://www.ifpri.org/
World Bank's Operations Evaluation Department	http://www.worldbank.org/oed/
World Bank's Poverty Net	http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/impact/index.htm