



Poverty and Economic Policy
Research Network



PEP Research Communication Strategy

PEP has developed a sophisticated program of technical, financial and scientific support to systematically remove the numerous obstacles that regularly prevent local researchers from conducting rigorous policy analysis and influencing national, regional and international policy debates. In fact, when undertaking initiatives to contribute to poverty reduction in their home countries, PEP researchers can rely on the Network's support every step of the way; from the development of their research capacities and expertise, to the communication of their findings and policy recommendations to national stakeholders.

In the particular area of research communications, PEP has recently devoted extensive resources to build its own expertise, collecting information from several sources - institutions such as IDRC, GDN, ODI, i.e. experimented knowledge-brokers – and from past experiences of PEP-funded researchers in the process of policy influence. This knowledge was synthesized and compiled into a single, brief document entitled “[How to Influence Policy](#)”, which has become a crucial reference for PEP researchers who intend to exert such an influence.

From the very first stage of their involvement with the PEP Network, i.e. the design of their research project proposal, applicant researchers are instructed to elaborate a clear and detailed strategy on how they plan to both involve and inform all policy-relevant stakeholders of their initiatives, progress and findings. In fact, the approval of their project for funding is, in part, conditional on that of this strategy, which is submitted as an integral section of their proposal.

Throughout the research process, research teams are required to regularly provide a detailed account of their key policy findings and of their efforts to consult with policymakers and other potential research users. Ongoing consultation with these intended research users – including policymakers and development partners at local, national and international levels – is now a required component of PEP-supported projects from the initial research design, through all stages of execution and culminating with several important final dissemination activities. Through monitoring, reminders and ongoing guidance, PEP helps ensure that our researchers never lose sight of the policy issues that their research seeks to address.

PEP Monitoring and Guidance in Research Communication

Realistically, for communication initiatives to be effective and lead to actual policy influence, a very specific set of skills and a strong network of personal contacts are often required. While many of

our researchers do already have good contacts in policymaking circles, notably among those who pursued their university degrees at the same time, they do not always have much experience in research communication.

In order to provide the best possible assistance and compensate any initial lack of experience, PEP provides a brief and, yet, highly informative “[Guide](#)” that can help researchers refine their research communication strategy and build a more effective policy influence plan. In addition, PEP General Meetings will henceforth include a special training session for participating researchers to be counselled on the elaboration of such a strategy and on the technical aspects of consultation and dissemination activities.

Following the implementation of PEP’s Monitoring and Evaluation System in 2010, PEP is now able to not only closely monitor the implementation of each team’s consultation and dissemination strategy, but also to provide them with timely advice and assistance in order to improve their chances of success. Please consult the [technical report template](#), which grantees are now required to fill out and update a minimum of 4 times over the course of their project.

In terms of research communications, support provided by the PEP Network to its funded researchers encompasses an array of activities at different stages of project execution.

1. Consultation



Before PEP approves the selection of a project proposal for support, the evaluators carefully assess the preliminary efforts by applicant researchers to design their project in consultation with national stakeholders and intended research users. These stakeholders should validate the project’s responsiveness to actual local and/or national emerging development issues and provide input to increase the project’s policy relevance. If such input shall be found either insufficient or questionable, specific recommendations and advice are provided for the applicant teams to collect the relevant input from the relevant stakeholders.

All selected country research teams will be required in the future to form a local policy committee of 4-5 relevant policymakers and other stakeholders to follow their projects from the initial conception of the proposal through to the final dissemination activities. This committee reviews the team's proposal and reports to ensure maximal policy relevance, helps the team access necessary data and information for their research, as well as promote and disseminate their final research results¹.

Consultation activities with the “policy committee” carry on all through project execution, with researchers keeping the committee members informed of their progress and the latter contributing

¹ In most cases, at the very least, research findings are taken up and disseminated by National Bureaus of Statistics, who are often engaged as initial data providers

with guidance on framing the key policy issues, as well as adequately capturing the policy and socio-economic framework. PEP staff continuously monitors these activities, providing advice and assistance when needed.

Initiated at the earliest stage, these interactions establish, for consulted stakeholders, a sense of ownership that increases the likelihood that the findings will be considered seriously and eventually acted upon.

2. Building networks

When regularly consulted, these parties often become the source of a network of contacts that can provide either support in the final dissemination of findings and/or a direct entry point in the policymaking process. In addition, when employed by or affiliated with academic/research institutes or government agencies, grantees may often rely on these national institutions to share their contact bases.

Through the monitoring of consultation activities, PEP ensures that these networks are maintained throughout project execution. Building relationships of trust takes time and devotion, and so contacts must be sustained and nurtured.



Finally, where available, PEP can also connect funded researchers with other strategic contact resources – from collaborating institutions or past funded projects – in their home countries to assist in the organization and publicizing of their dissemination activities, such as the national policy conferences.

3. Publications

Once a PEP research project is completed, final results and findings are edited and published in two distinct formats: working paper and policy brief².

Working Papers: The working paper is the main output through which a research project is publicly reported in its entirety, from context to methodology and progress to results. PEP assists researchers in editing (including proofreading as English is often not their first language), translating³ and formatting documents for standard publication. PEP working papers are posted on the PEP website, disseminated through its main communication activities (social networks, newsletters, etc.) and listed with both SSRN (Social Science Research Network) and RePEc (Research Papers in Economics), which ensure maximum visibility.

Policy Briefs: These are one-page, non-technical summaries of the main conclusions and policy recommendations of a research project. As they are best acquainted with the study issues and

² Find all PEP policy briefs [here](#), and all working papers [here](#).

³ PEP research in general can be produced in either French or English, but all officially published outputs (Working Papers, Policy Briefs) that are initially written in French are automatically translated into English. English documents however, are not translated in French. PEP provides the services of professional translators.

findings, researchers are requested to write these briefs themselves, based on a template and clear instructions for format. The submitted draft is then revised by PEP staff to ensure both clarity and simplicity of the text. Upon approval of modifications by the authors, the one-pager is published on the PEP Website and disseminated through the Network's communication activities (social network, newsletter, etc.), whilst a printed version is distributed, by the researchers themselves, to all policy-relevant stakeholders and contact resources. These printed versions are also distributed at the occasion of the national policy conferences (see the section below).

External publications: PEP resource persons provide support when requested by researchers to write scientific articles that are intended to be published in international peer-reviewed journals. This effort is also encouraged by a \$2000 CAD award for successful publications. According to a survey conducted in 2011⁴, 55% of PEP research project findings were published in a peer-reviewed journal or as a chapter in a book.

4. Events

National policy conferences:

Upon approval of their final research report, the next step for a research team is usually to carry out the organization of an event (conference, seminar, forum, etc.) that will allow them to personally communicate and debate their findings and policy recommendations with key stakeholders at the national level. In collaboration with PEP staff, organizational details are meticulously planned and contact resources mobilized.



In almost all cases so far, these initiatives have been successful in attracting the intended mix of policy makers and advisors, representatives of international institutions, development partners, NGOs and civil society groups, as well as fellow scholars and students from academic/research institutes.

In order to maximize the potential impact and success of the event, the organizing team usually chooses to:

- 1) Collaborate with a well-established and -connected institution, whose association may incite greater participation through reputational effect and/or contribute to expand available resources, in terms of venue for example⁵.
- 2) Select timing of the event in terms of policymaking process (transitions, budget, anti-poverty events, etc.)

PEP provides a \$2000 CAD subsidy to finance these events. Plus, through its guide on "[How to Influence Policy](#)" as well as direct assistance, PEP can provide guidance and advice to help

⁴ See [PEP Internal Monitoring and Evaluation Report 2011](#).

⁵ PEP may provide assistance through established contact resources and partner institutions in the country.

researchers plan, prepare for and organize the events⁶. In order to be granted the national conference subsidy, research teams must submit an application including a preliminary program, information on expected location, guest list, etc., based on which PEP can provide advice.

Besides the main presentations given by PEP researchers, many of these events also feature a forum or roundtable through which key invitees can discuss the findings and policy-related issues, as well as a period of questions and debate.

International conferences

According to the 2011 survey, 75% of PEP-funded research teams are invited to present their research findings in international conferences, intended for either academic or policy audiences, all around the world. Researchers can apply for a PEP subsidy to finance the expenses related to their participation and count on PEP staff to help refine their presentations.

5. Interacting with media



PEP researchers are advised and encouraged to interact with mass media in their home countries. Again, timing is found to be particularly relevant when contacting media, i.e. connecting the research issue with current events.

Reports from PEP research teams suggest that national policy conferences tend to be widely publicized through national radio, television and press organs. Such media coverage ensures that research findings are reported to the general public, whose knowledge can incite political leaders' response.



In a vast majority of cases, through these interactions with policymakers and media, expansion of contact networks, conferences, publications, etc., PEP researchers are soon acknowledged as experts of poverty-related issues - both nationally and internationally - and referred to in specific policy debates. Beyond capacities and expertise, PEP is devoted to build the reputation of developing country researchers who, at the end of their PEP project, often find themselves hired or promoted to a position that allows them to exert direct influence on policymaking. This reputational effect is, in itself, a confirmation of the success of the PEP Network's initiatives.

⁶ Guidance may include suggestions on choice of collaborators, location, invitation format, visual (PowerPoint) and oral presentation, etc.