

pep

partnership for economic policy

Policy research communication

Strategy, audiences, channels and tools

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PEP Annual Conference
Manila, Philippines
June 4, 2016

Contents

Communication: burden or opportunity?

Overview: audiences, channels and tools

Audiences: reaching and speaking to your target audiences

Tools:

- Policy brief
- Press kit
- Slide presentation

Channels

- National policy conferences
- Advisory meetings

Other communication tools, channels, audiences, etc.?

Why do it?

- Responsibility of the knowledge producer:
 - Scientific vs **policy-oriented research (PEP)**
- PEP objective = impact, via your findings and/or expertise

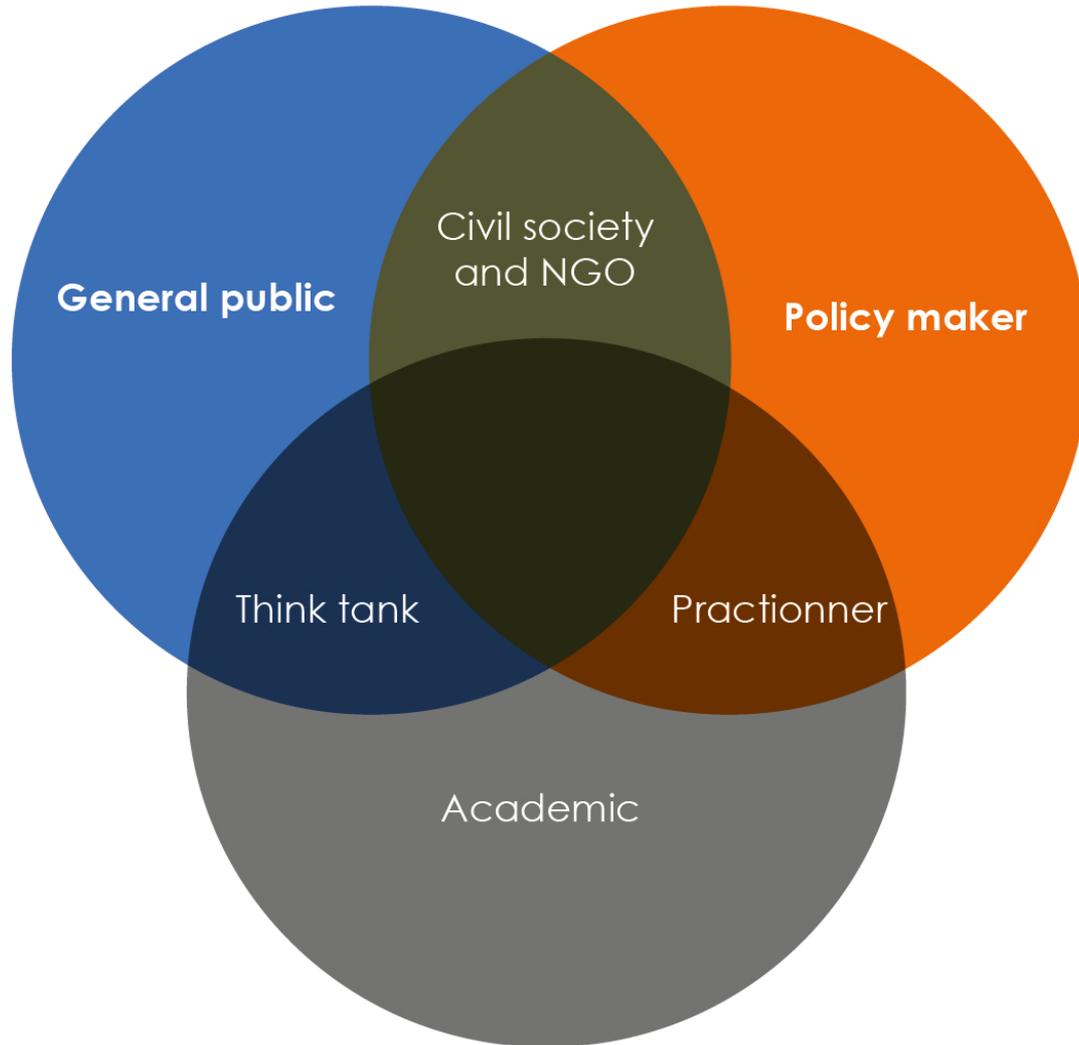
Communication can be seen as a burden, but it's really an **opportunity**

- **Reaching out to well-targeted audience(s) = exposure**
 - Exposure leads to acknowledgement as field expert
 - Can be highly beneficial for your career

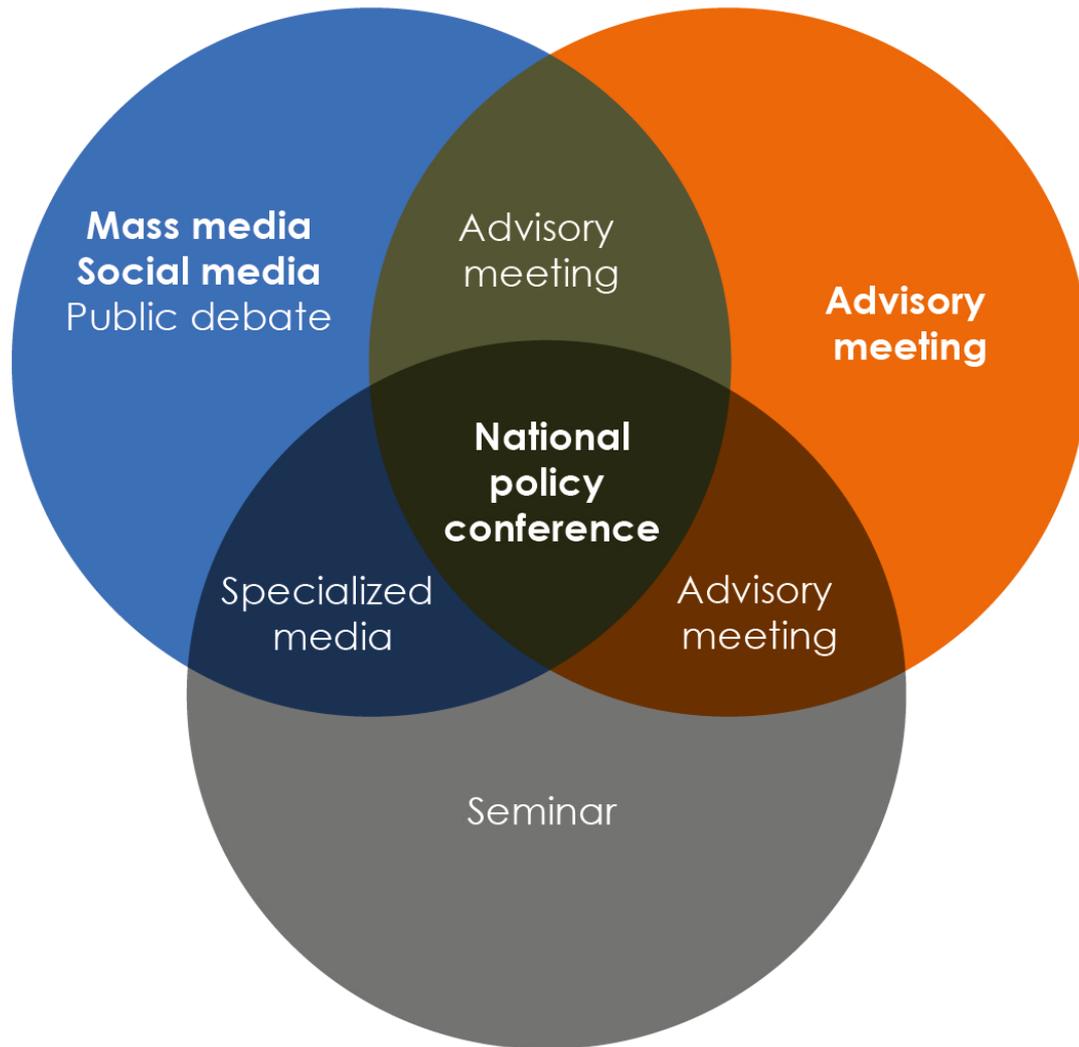
Having impact through communication can be seen as wishful thinking, when

- wrong definition of impact
- wrong approach to communication

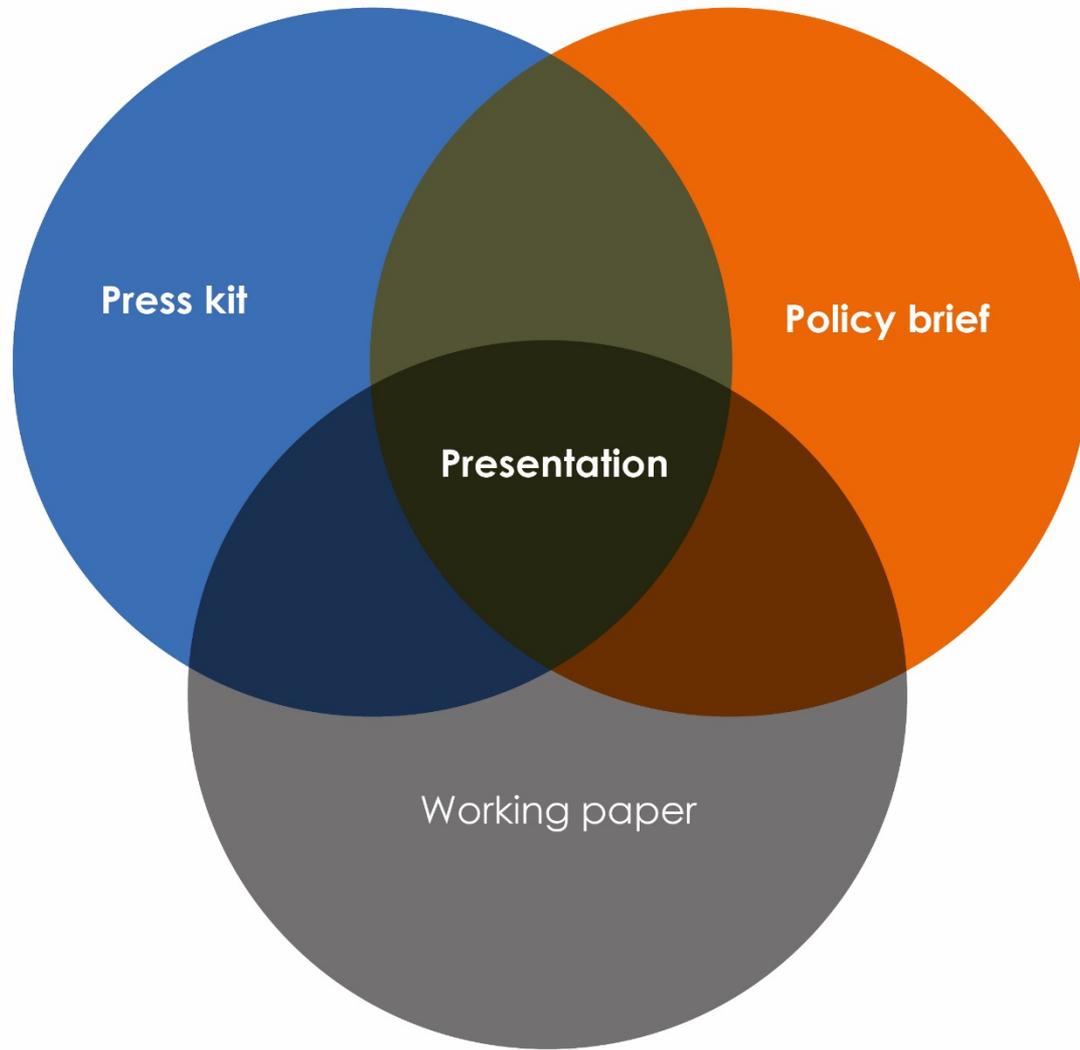
Audiences



Channels



Tools



Audiences

Identify and reach out to your key audiences

Should have been done at the earliest stage of the research project

Situational analysis

Understanding the **policy context** of your research

Ask yourself:

- At this moment, is there a **decision-making process or debate** around the issue and implications of my research?
- **Who is involved (stakeholders)?** And which party can make the best use of the findings and recommendations?

Understanding the policy context = **identify your key audiences**

Audiences

Identify and reach out to your key audiences

Two core types of audiences:

1. **Already concerned/interested**
 - Contact is relatively easy, because you have something they want
2. **Should be concerned, but aren't for various reasons**
 - This requires a more strategic approach and awareness campaign – **you have to “sell” your findings/knowledge**

Audiences

Identify and reach out to your key audiences

Clear understanding of policy context and target audiences is essential to:

- inform your research design
- keep focus on the potential use of your findings
 - Adapt the scope/nature of your policy recommendations
- know **how to talk to your audience**, i.e.:
 - What they want to know
 - How they will understand it

Audiences

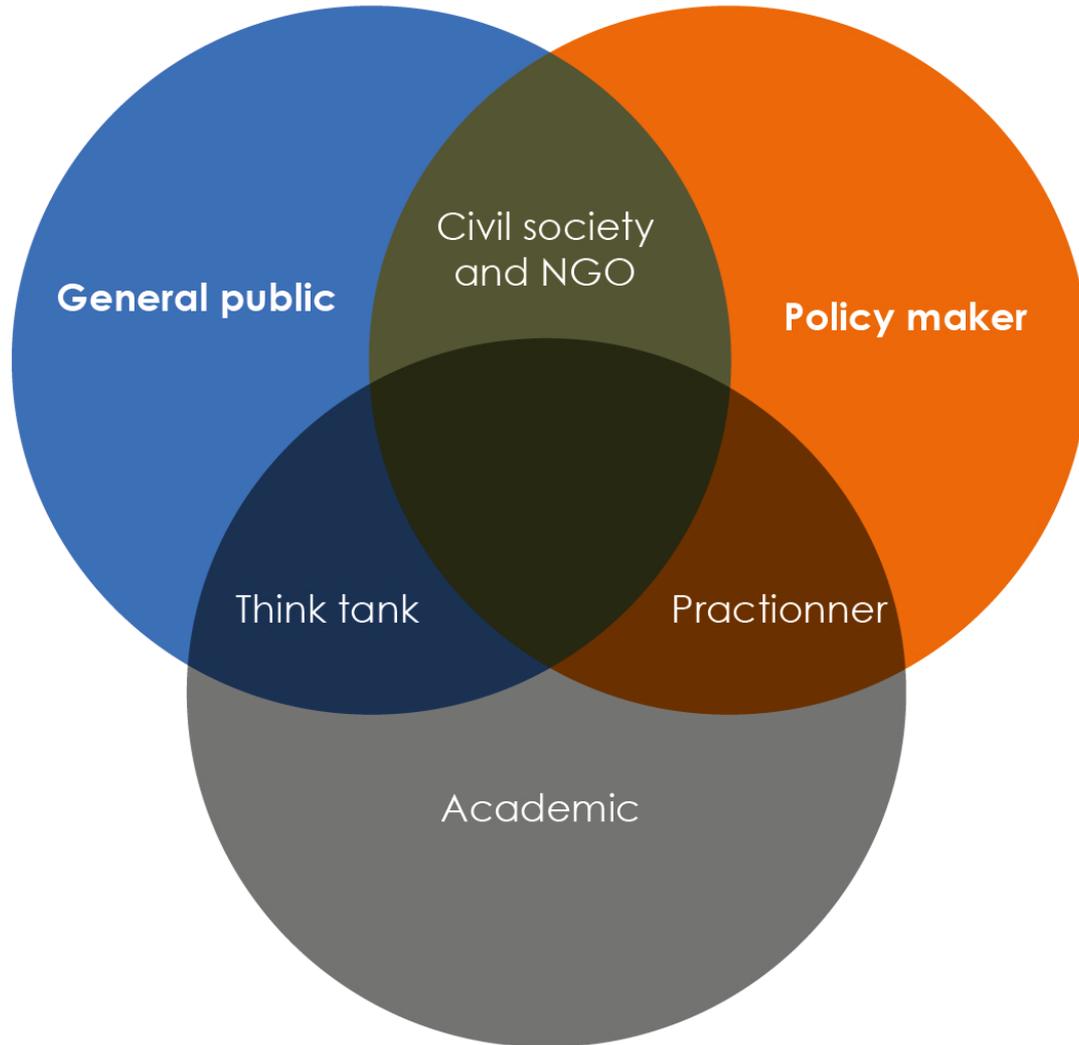
Identify and reach out to your key audiences

Reaching targets

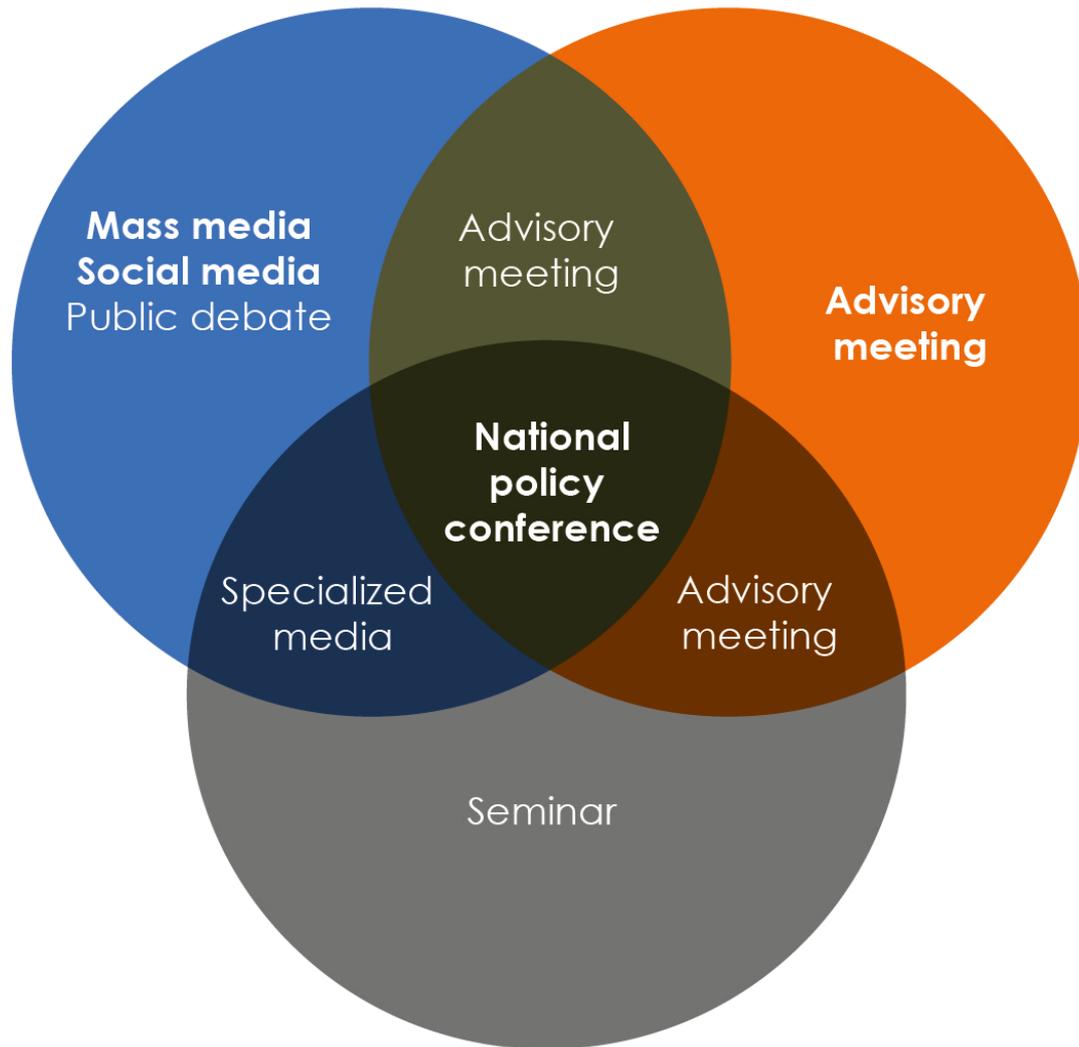
- Identify specific individuals or groups that you aim to inform:
 - Decision/policy maker
 - Decision/policy influencer
 - e.g. policy advisor or advocate, specific media or public opinion leader
- Contact them directly (phone, email, in person)
OR
- Find a relay/contact: **champion** (personal or institutional)
 - Affiliate to someone they already know and trust

In all cases, **adapt your tools/message** to the target's interest and context

Audiences



Channels



Tools

Adapting your tool to different audiences

Same research, different titles

- Heterogeneity in subjective expectation elicitation under ambiguity: evidence in experimental setting using Prelec weighting function
- Classification of individual responses in surveys : extracting better knowledge in uncertain situations
- How to know what they know when they say "I don't know".

Tools

Policy brief

Studies by ODI show that:

- 65% of policy makers point at **the lack of dissemination of research findings** to explain poor research uptake
- 79% of respondents (developed and developing countries) point at **policy brief as an essential tool** to disseminate findings
- 50% of **policy actors use existing relationships** (researcher) to learn about a new issue.
- On average, policy actor spend 45 minutes over a policy brief

Tools

Policy brief

An essential dissemination tool... Why ?

- Competing ideas – put your ideas forward
- Time constraint, lack of knowledge, emotion-based decisions
- Policy vacuum
- Responsibility of the policy-oriented researcher : **INFORM**

Tools

Policy brief

An essential dissemination tool... Why ?

- Way for researchers to:
 - trigger interest, engagement and uptake
 - gain credibility
- Effective in a **broader process** of dissemination

Tools

Policy brief

An ideal policy brief should :

- Explain and convey the importance/urgency of the issue
- Present the findings and **clear policy recommendations*** of your research project
 - Refine and transform evidence to make it comprehensible and meaningful for the chosen audience

*What is a (good) policy recommendation ?

- Building on current/existing strategy, policy or legislation
- **Providing an actionable framework**

Tools

Policy brief

What is a (good) policy recommendation ? EXAMPLE

Research findings regarding “Healthy nutrition in afterschool programs” (USA)

“More and more low-income parents working and commuting long hours, or working non-traditional jobs, leave their school-aged children in afterschool care for long hours.

Our results show that, compared to those who go home after school, these children are more inclined to suffer from malnutrition – in the form of hunger or overweight.”

Tools

Policy brief

What is a (good) policy recommendation ? EXAMPLE

Research findings regarding “Healthy nutrition in afterschool programs” (USA)

Vague/obvious recommendation:

Providing healthy (federally-funded) suppers will fight both hunger and overweight.

Good recommendation:

Federal nutrition programs should reimburse afterschool programs (both school-based and community-based) in low-income areas for suppers when care goes into the late afternoon or evening.

Tools

Policy brief

An ideal policy brief should:

- Outline the **arguments for choosing a particular policy alternative** or course of action in a **current policy debate**
 - show your recommendation is relevant, credible and feasible
 - layout a **cost assessment** (expected benefit, cost-neutrality)
- Outline the potential implications of **action vs inaction**

Tools

Policy brief

How to achieve this ideal :

- **Step 1: Understand the **policy context**** and take into account:
 - Key players and interests
 - Current priorities, cultural values, historical background
 - Windows of opportunity
 - Elections, reforms, strategy revisions
- **Embed this knowledge in your communication strategy**

Tools

Policy brief

How to achieve this ideal :

- **Step 2:** Identify the **purpose** of your brief:
 - Draw attention on an issue or a policy problem
 - Inform new legislation or government strategy
 - Suggest change in existing strategy
 - Show potential improvement of existing policy
- **Step 3: Tailor** your recommendations
 - according to both the context and the purpose



Tools

Policy brief

Target audience of the policy brief:

- Policy makers, advisors, administrators, analysts

The argument in the policy brief must :

- build on **their** understanding of the **policy problem**
 - provide insight **on what they don't know** and need to know in order to formulate sound policy
- **Non-academic:** methodology and procedures are not important

Tools

Policy brief

Other qualities of a good policy brief

- **Standalone**
 - Limited, short, repetitive, succinct
 - Tell a convincing story, engage the audience
 - Anticipate questions readers might have throughout the text
 - Expose a « **problem – solution** » relationship
 - **Clearly state your policy preference**
 - Accessible
 - As a product – put it out there!
 - As a document : multiple points of entry (graphs, pics, bullet points)
- 

Tools

Policy brief

Other qualities of a good policy brief

- **Credible**
 - Quality of research-based evidence
 - Don't overstretch the findings
 - Branded : institutional affiliation
 - Credibility of the author/organisation producing the information
 - Co-organization ? Co-diffusion ? Champion ?
 - Use international examples if possible and/or relevant

Tools

Policy brief

What you should not do in your policy brief:

- Draw conclusions that are **not** based on data
- Stretch the meaning and implications of your data and findings
- Provide **generic** recommendations or **vague** conclusions

Tools

Policy brief

Structure of the policy brief : 1 to 3 pages (max 1500 words)

- (1) **Title** - tailored
- (2) **Summary** (3 to 4 sentences) – similar to “press release” (see p.35)
 - **Statement of purpose:** Specific issue/problem addressed
 - **Policy recommendations**
 - Findings (evidence base) : often revealing actual policy failure
 - If relevant to audience: research/method that has led to produce the evidence

Tools

Policy brief

- (3) Introduction, **context**
 - Present and explain the issue - **tailored**
 - Identify root/causes of the problem
 - Show evidence gap/need
 - (4) Approach/method (very limited) and **results**
 - Methodology (not always necessary)
 - **Findings** - policy failure? (impact, shortcoming)
 - State reasons to act differently, to change the current policy approach
- 

Tools

Policy brief

- **(5) Policy recommendations:** clear, actionable, credible and tailored
 - Convince the reader you understand how policy systems and government programmes work
 - Specific set of actions
 - Demonstrate the feasibility and fitness of the option
 - **Who supports your claim ?**
 - Others have the same conclusions and recommendations
- **(6) Link to your (source) research/paper**

Tools

Policy brief

What is a (good) policy recommendation ?

Example of a good policy recommendation from a recent PEP project:

- Project:
 - Using CGE model to assess the impact of policies aimed at reducing poverty through formalizing the labor market in Cameroon
- Policy recommendation :
 - It not enough to bring workers out of the informal sector, the government needs to enforce the minimum wage policy, especially for the low-skilled workers in the formal labor market.

Tools

Policy brief

Other practices that we want to encourage

- **Include :**
 - Sources (consulted, recommended)
 - Contact detail
- **Disseminate**
 - Targeted distribution - differentiation
 - Follow up on dissemination activities
- **Publicize**
 - Writing a blog post about the policy brief/findings and recommendations

Tools

References

Some useful references and guidelines :

How to write actionable policy recommendations

<http://www.researchtoaction.org/2013/07/how-to-write-actionable-policy-recommendations/>

Example of policy influence toolkit

<https://www.odi.org/publications/9591-global-mental-health-policy-influence-toolkit>

Policy brief as a communication tool for development research

<https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/594.pdf>

<http://www.policy.hu/ipf/fel-pubs/samples/PolicyBrief-described.pdf>

Writing effective reports

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/014/i2195e/i2195e03.pdf>

Tools

Press kit

Electronic (online or USB drive) vs paper

➤ **Policy brief** is your "backgrounder" (to find out more)

Women's entrepreneurship and access to microcredit: Evidence from Bangladesh

➤ **Press release**: short summary article

Title – **tailored** (differs from PB – more like Twitter)

Microcredit programs to help women start businesses in Bangladesh help more men than women

MAKE IT EASY FOR THEM (media)

- Provide "copy-paste" material
- Provide credible sources
- Make yourself available – provide contact info
- Follow up

Tools

Press kit

- **Press release:** short summary article **STRUCTURE**

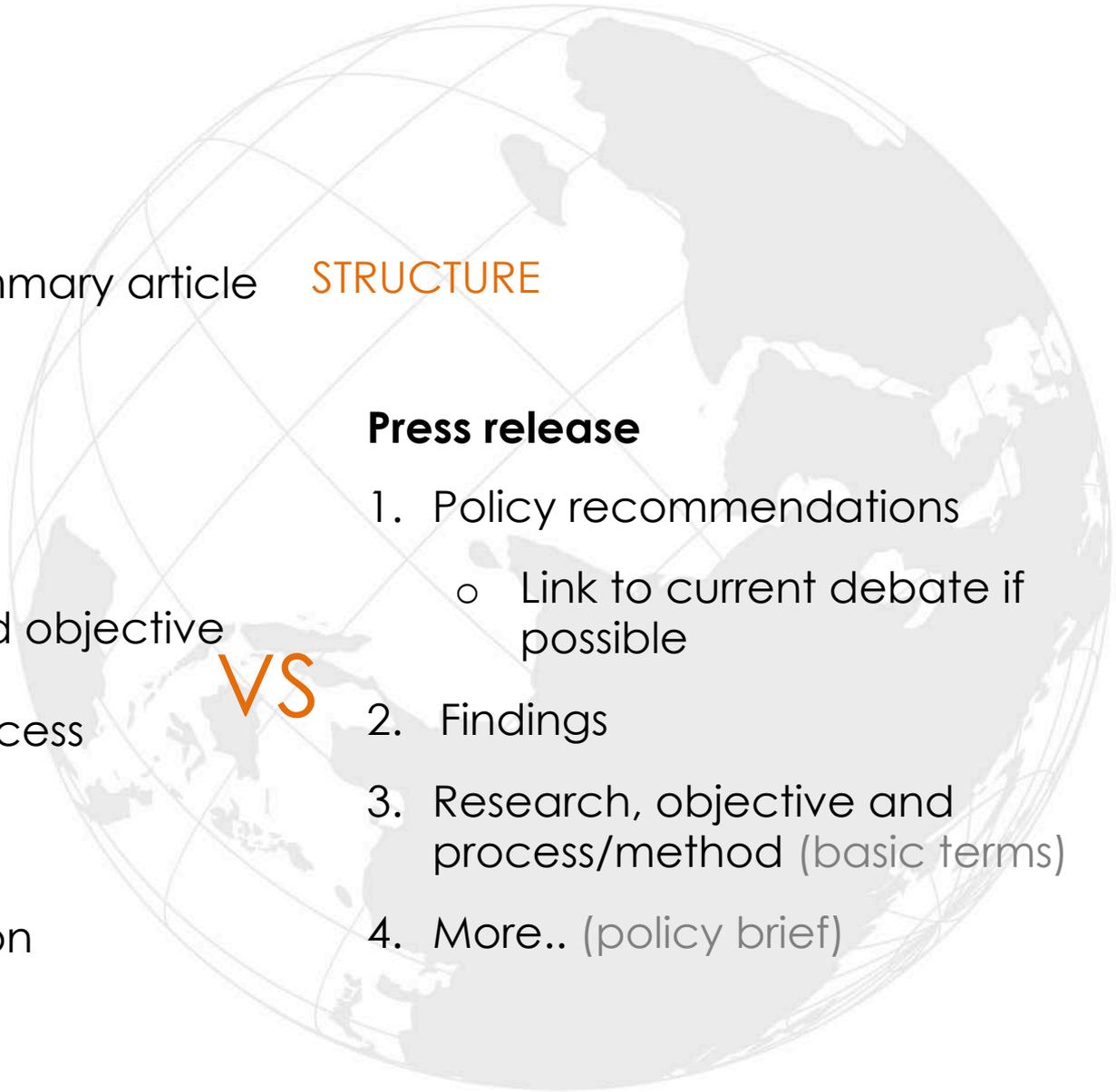
Executive summary

1. Context – debate
2. Research question and objective
3. Research method/process
4. Findings
5. Policy recommendation

Press release

1. Policy recommendations
 - Link to current debate if possible
2. Findings
3. Research, objective and process/method (basic terms)
4. More.. (policy brief)

VS



Tools

“Microcredit programs to help women start businesses in Bangladesh help more men than women”

Press kit

➤ **Press release:** short summary article

Local researchers advise to redesign microcredit programs in Bangladesh, to prevent highjacking of women's loans by male household members.

Policy recommendation

A recent study led by (...) shows that women's access to microcredit significantly increases the probability of their male household members to become entrepreneurs. Their recommendation is thus for microcredit programs to enforce the obligation for the female recipients to use loans to start and manage their own microenterprises.

Findings

As microcredit programs increasingly tend to be targeting women first, the objective of the researchers was to assess the actual impact that microcredit currently has on female entrepreneurship in Bangladesh. To do so, they used advanced microeconomic analysis on data from the 2010 national household survey.

Research objective and process

Find out more about the research project, methods, findings and recommendations through the enclosed policy brief ([link](#))

More

Tools

Press kit

Press release can be followed or accompanied by a..

➤ **Fact sheet** : bullet points

In Bangladesh,

- Only **35%** of women are part of the workforce

When given access to microcredit:

- **3.5%** of women become entrepreneurs, **vs only 1.3%** of women who do not have access
- **39%** of men become entrepreneurs, **vs 20%** of men who do not have access

Also, **1%** increase in the total amount of microcredit received leads to:

- **3%** increase in probability of woman to become entrepreneur
- **14%** increase in probability for men to become entrepreneurs

Tools

Press kit

➤ **Other materials** you may have, such as:

- **Photos** : high resolution, relevant to theme – take yourself

- Video (interviews), press reports, PEP project webpage, etc.

- **VISUAL documentation**: Examples from PEP-PAGE Macedonia team:

- Prezi presentation: <https://prezi.com/personal/gallery/>
- Infographics: **Here is a website where you can make your own infographics easily and for FREE:** <https://venngage.com/>

Tools

Press kit

As part of your press kit/strategy, you also want to prepare:

➤ Social media posts

- Facebook, Twitter, others.. Which do you follow?
 - Must be very short (1 sentence) and “punchy” – challenge common knowledge. Add link for more
 - E.g. your twitter post can also be a title of press release
Example: “Microcredit programs to help women start businesses in Bangladesh help more men than women. Find out more: ([bit.ly?](#))”

Tools

Press kit

As part of your press kit/strategy, you also want to prepare:

➤ **Blog posts:**

- Create and propose blog pieces to different organizations
 - Select and adapt to type of blog (scientific, practice, opinion?)
 - <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/series/global-development-blogosphere>
 - <https://dfid.blog.gov.uk/>

Include your contact information and bio

Tools

Slide presentation

What NOT TO DO – example from a former PEP researcher's PPT:

- “The results suggest that although women entrepreneurs appear to be credit constrained overall and at different firm sizes, the difference in credit constraint between male and female entrepreneurs is not statistically significant.
- The effect of age on the probability that a firm will be credit constrained is statistically significant and the results show that firms with ageing owners overall, are 12.5% more likely to be credit constrained.
- Firms with experienced managers are significantly less likely to be credit constrained, other things being equal. This is true for all firm sizes. Managers with experience can manage the firm's financial and credit policies better than inexperience ones.
- Firms whose top owner is also CEO are 10.4 percent more likely to be credit constrained. This may be related to risk-averse policies the owner may adopt or skepticism of the loaning financial institution.”

Tools

Slide presentation

A few tricks and rules to apply

- Deconstruct your text
 - Select and highlight key words – use **bold** and **colors**
 - One line for each idea – split sentences!
 - Full sentences (subject, verb, complement) are NOT necessary!!
 - **KEEP ONLY THE USEFUL**
 - Hierarchy of ideas (main vs sub-ideas)
 - Use lines that start with stats/numbers
- Use graphs and images

Tools

Slide presentation

And here is how the same example (p.40) should/could look like:

“The results suggest that, although women entrepreneurs appear to be more credit constrained:

- **the difference between male vs female entrepreneurs is not significant**

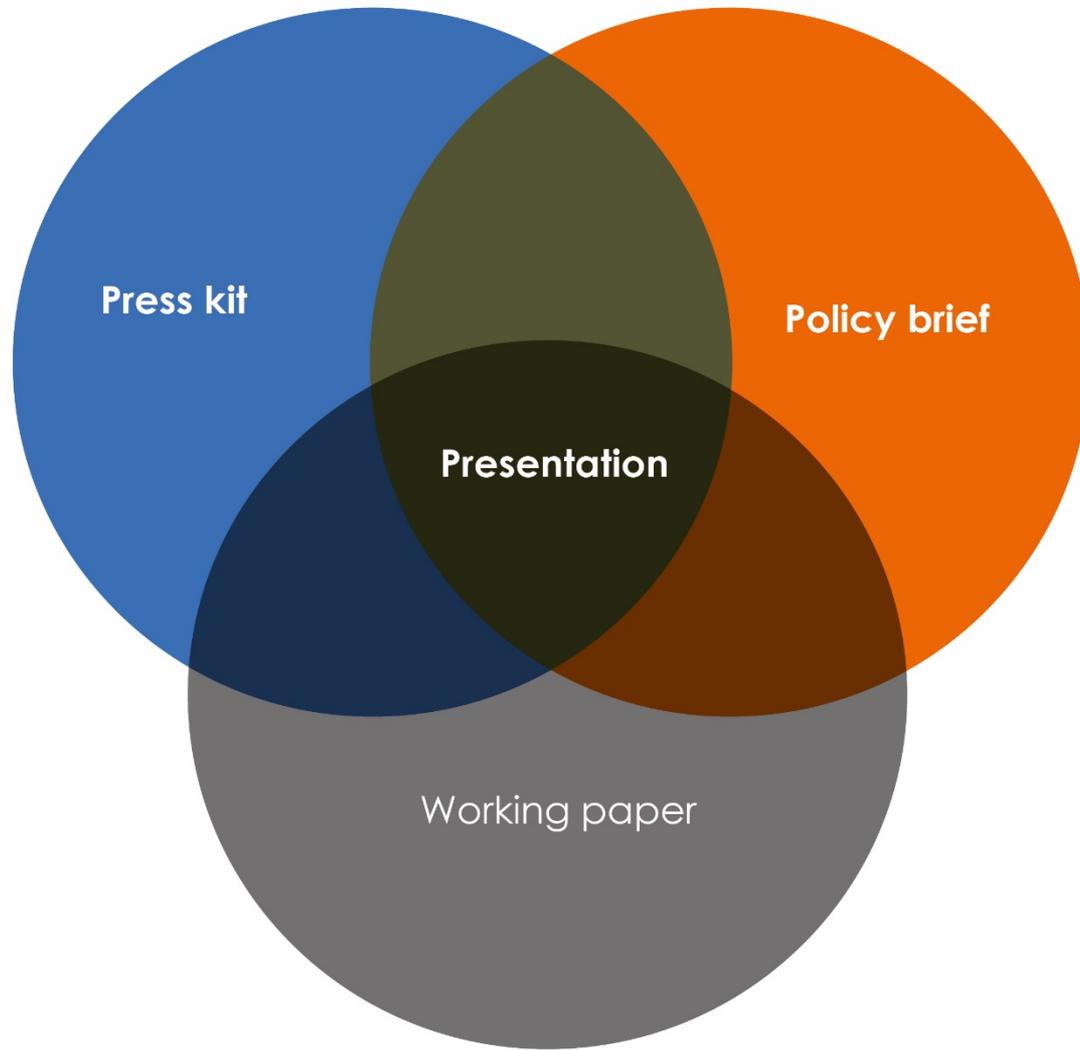
Are more likely to be credit constrained:

- Firms with **ageing owners** - 12.5% more likely
- Firms whose **top owner is also CEO** - 10.4% more likely
 - may be related to adoption of risk-averse policies or skepticism of the loaning financial institution.

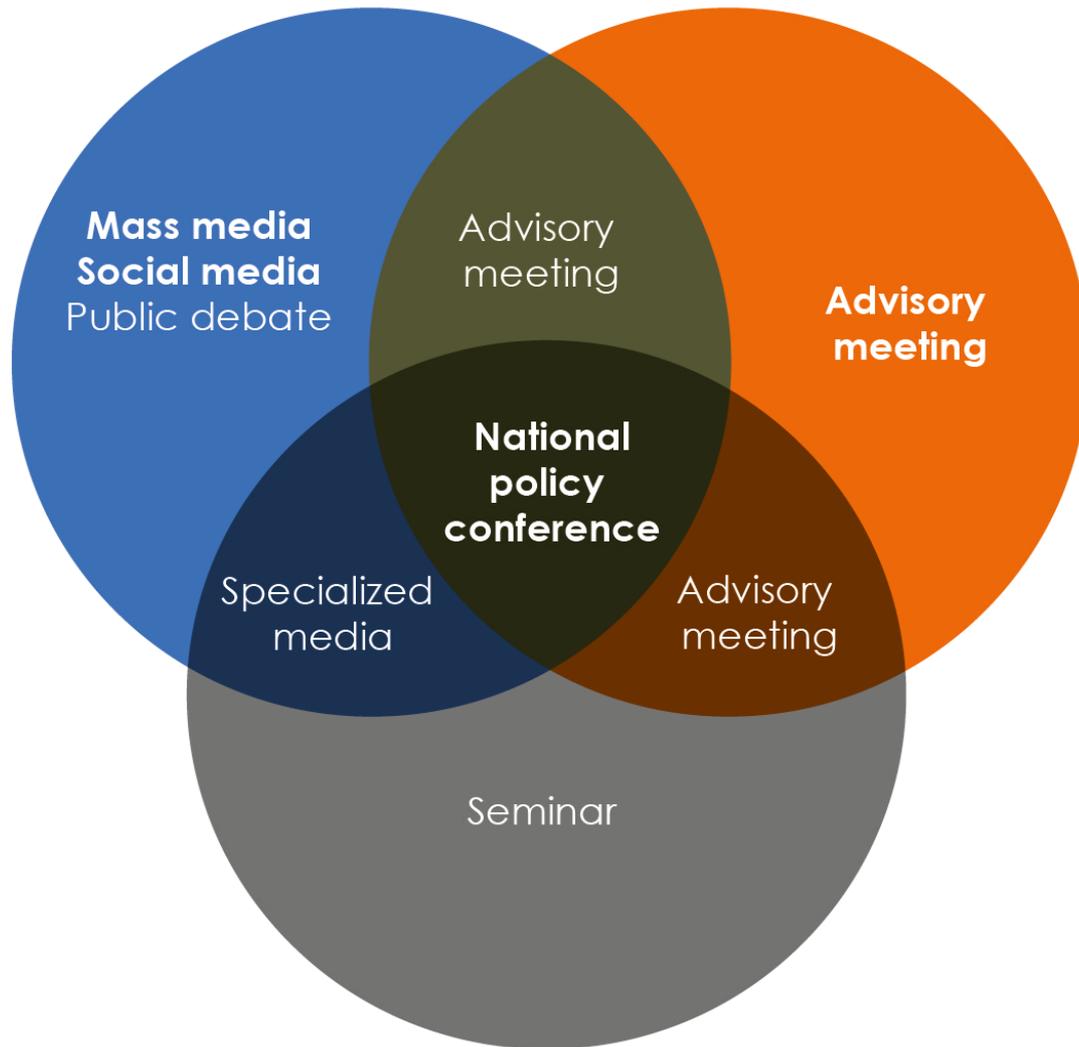
Are less likely to be credit constrained:

- Firms with **experienced managers** (true for all firm sizes)

Tools



Channels



Channels

National policy conference

PEP Grant (USD 2500) : how to get

- See guide: general requirements
 - Final report accepted
 - Submit proposal – we review, advise and accept
 - Ex-post report (see template/questionnaire in advance)
- In your case (final PAGE round): must do it before the end of the year!

Advantages

- Direct contact with audiences
- Reaching all audiences at once – policy, practitioner, NGOs and civil society/groups, media (public) and academic.
- **Exposure!**

Objectives

- Communicate results to a wide audience
- Get direct feedback from different perspectives
- Confront different views and trigger debate

Channels

National policy conference

How to?

- **Step 1: Find a co-organizer or sponsor:**
 - Reach, credibility, funds, venue?, collaboration and networking
 - Identify key invitees (main stakeholders or research users)
 - **Pair up!** With other research team/projects (same topic or not)
- **Step 2: Prepare concept note/proposal**
 - State main objective/theme
 - Structure/program – should include:
 - Interventions from key invitees
 - Interactive discussions, comments, debate
- **Step 3: Find a venue and a date**
 - Checklist venue (comfort, access, audiovisual, etc.)
 - Checklist date (conflicting events and availabilities of top guests)

Channels

National policy conference

- Step 4: Promotion and invitations
 - Invitations adapted to audiences (VIPs, medias, NGOs, colleagues..)
 - Use the right tools, channels, contacts
 - Policy brief, press kit, champion
 - Medias (ID, reserve area for cameras, etc.)
- Other considerations:
 - Brownbag : banner, poster, etc.
 - Lunch/coffee break/gift
 - Pictures/videos

Channels

Advisory meeting

- Know the people in the room
 - Their interests, background, position, responsibilities, etc.
- Use this knowledge to customize your:
 - Presentation
 - Policy recommendations
 - Policy brief
- Follow up
 - Ask for business cards and give yours (contact info).
 - Make yourself available for future consultation
 - Follow up after meeting to inquire about next steps

Thank you!

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