Workshop:
Best practices for policy communication

Session 2: Developing a strong policy argument

May 26
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PEP Communication Team
Session 2 - Contents

- **What do policymakers need to know:** From research results to policy argument
- **Defining and organizing key messages for greater effect**
- **Adapting to your audiences**
"Communications are adequate if they reach people with the information that they need in a form that they can use."

Baruch Fischhoff, 2011
Applying the science of communication to the communication of science
What do policymakers need to know:
Turning research results into policy argument
What do policymakers need to know?

**Science**
- Identify/define problem
- Design research/gather data
- Apply method to produce/analyze data
- Produce new evidence
- Assess validity/robustness
- Communicate results/conclusions

**Policy**
- Decision (policy selection)
- Weigh/assess different policy options
- Define/advise policy option(s)
- Synthesize data/information + produce brief
- Gather evidence (information) on given policy issue/problem
- Identify/define problem

Research problem ≠ policy problem
What do policymakers need to know?

Science

Identify/define problem
Design research/gather data
Apply method to produce/analyze data
Produce new evidence
Assess validity/robustness

Communicate results/conclusions

Result = Difficult to translate scientific evidence into useful policy advice

Policy

Decision (policy selection)
Weigh/assess different policy options
Define/advise policy option(s)
Synthesize data/information + produce brief
Gather evidence on given policy issue/problem
Identify/define problem

Implementation
Evaluation

Science

Policy
What do policymakers need to know?

**Science**
- Identify/define problem
- Design research/gather data
- Apply method to produce/analyze data
- Produce new evidence
- Assess validity/robustness
- Communicate results/conclusions

**Policy**
- Need to position your findings in policy process
- Who needs this information?
- Decision (policy selection)
- Weigh/assess different policy options
- Define/advise policy option(s)
- Synthesize data/information + produce brief
- Gather evidence on given policy issue/problem
- Identify/define problem
What do policymakers need to know?

Understand the **POLICY PROBLEM** (vs research issue)

**POLICY QUESTION**

- Answer provides recommendation **FOR ACTION**

**RESEARCH QUESTION**

- Answer provides an assessment of the **SITUATION**
What do policymakers need to know?

Understand the POLICY PROBLEM (vs research issue)

What are the effects of non-farm diversification on rural women’s income?

Research or policy?

Research = Descriptive
What do policymakers need to know?

Understand the POLICY PROBLEM (vs research issue)

What type of intervention can effectively contribute to improving rural women’s income?

Research or policy?

Policy = ACTION-oriented
Understand the POLICY PROBLEM (vs research issue)

What do policymakers need to know?

Policy question

What type of intervention to improve rural women’s income?

What type = must compare options

Research question

Effects of non-farm diversification on rural women’s income?

Sufficient to inform policy decision?

Non-farm diversification = 1 option

Right question?

How do policymakers assess/compare policy options? What criteria?
What do policymakers need to know?

Governance – performance is “measured” by:

**Responsiveness:**
Extent to which delivered services are consistent with citizen preferences

**Effectiveness:**
Extent to which adopted actions are achieving desired goals

**Efficiency:**
Ratio between the quality of services provided (i.e. effectiveness) and the cost to provide them
What do policymakers need to know?

Important to assess the **feasibility** of a potential policy in a given context

- **LEGAL FEASIBILITY**
- **ADMINISTRATIVE FEASIBILITY**
- **TECHNICAL FEASIBILITY**
- **SOCIAL & CULTURAL FEASIBILITY**

If knowledge or recommendation is "inapplicable", then **may affect your credibility**.
What do policymakers need to know?

To become a **useful input for policy**, must be “positioned” into the broader context.

Context involve “priorities” and key considerations (criteria to assess good policy).
To succeed in any debate - incl. those intended to advise/inform policy
Must be aware of:
- potential objections or alternative proposals/options (i.e. counter-arguments)
- key considerations that will be used to evaluate their relative strength.

Science has the advantage of:
- Shedding light on the “unknown”
- Providing “reliable” information

Powerful arguments
What do policymakers need to know?

Usual criteria to assess “good policy”

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- **Does the policy achieve the desired outcomes?**
- **Are there unintended effects to consider?**
- **What are the effects for different population groups?**
  **How do they affect equity?**
- **What are the costs/budget implications?**
- **Is this policy technically viable/feasible?**
- **How is this policy perceived by (priority) stakeholders?**
### Usual criteria to assess “good policy”

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**Does the policy achieve the desired outcomes?**

**Are there unintended effects to consider?**

**What are the effects for different population groups? How do they affect equity?**

**What are the costs/budget implications?**

**Is this policy technically viable/feasible?**

**How is this policy perceived by (priority) stakeholders?**
Research evidence usually informs 1-2 criteria, but NEVER THE FULL PICTURE

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And research largely tends to **overlook the “practical” constraints of policymaking**

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= **cost-effectiveness**
= **efficiency**

major consideration for Gov, yet rarely part of scientific assessment

Is it applicable/realistic??
What do policymakers need to know?

Difference between “COMMUNICATING RESEARCH RESULTS”

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What do policymakers need to know?

And communicating “EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY ADVICE”

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Position your research!
- Show how your evidence fills key evidence gaps in the policy decision framework..

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Identify the POLICY QUESTION(S) that your evidence can help answer..
**What do policymakers need to know?**

And communicating **“EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY ADVICE”**

A basic **“cost-benefit analysis”** can be a very powerful policy argument.

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Don’t underestimate the importance of **COST-EFFECTIVENESS**
### What do policymakers need to know?

That’s what your policy paper was about...

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- Your research
- Consultations
- Literature
- Find info on costs and analyse!

Policy paper = parallel ANALYSIS
What do policymakers need to know?

Questions that decision-makers always have
Gluckman, 2019

• Why do we have to do something now? Why is it a priority?
  ➢ What is the (political) risk of doing or not doing something?

• Have we got the OPTION that meets our broader needs?
  ➢ Who will it benefit? Does it benefit priority stakeholders?
  ➢ What are the risks and to whom?
  ➢ How does it compare with other options?

• What will it cost? (vs “benefits”)
What do policymakers need to know?

Questions that decision-makers always have

• Why do we have to do something now? Why is it a priority?
  ➢ What is the (political) risk of doing or not doing something?

Interest in issues that are important “NOW”

- Media – public perceptions
- Commitments – electoral cycle
- Especially for constituencies/core supporters

CONTEXT MATTERS!
What do policymakers need to know?

Questions that decision-makers always have

- Have we got the **OPTION** that meets our **broader needs**?
  - How does it **compare with other options**?
  - Who will it benefit? Does it benefit priority stakeholders?
  - What are the risks and to whom?

Who is “priority”?

What are the other “options on the table”?
What do policymakers need to know?

Questions that decision-makers always have

- What will it COST?

As economists, you can’t afford to seem unaware of cost implications

Cost-benefit analyses can be very powerful arguments...
Defining and organizing key messages for greater effect
Defining and organizing key messages

1. Defining your key messages

2. Organizing your key messages
Defining and organizing key messages

Think about your objectives

1. Why do you want to share your research?
   - Inform (upcoming) policymaking
   - Modify existing programme/policy

2. What do you want your audience to do about it?
Defining and organizing key messages

Got your answers?

1. Why do you want to share your research?
2. What do you want your audience to do about it?

Prioritize the message that is most relevant
Defining and organizing key messages

1. Defining your key messages

2. Organizing your key messages
Defining your key messages

A good key policy message is:

1. **Simple**  
   Straight-forward messages are more memorable

2. **Attractive**  
   i.e., interesting to your target audience

3. **Concrete**  
   i.e., indicates specific action

[Bonus] 4. **Shareable**  
   A really good message will be easy for your target audience to share
A good key policy message is simple

• 1 idea
• 1 sentence
• Plain language
Defining your key messages

A good key policy message is **attractive**

It should solve a problem that is

- Important
  - To the population
  - To your audience
- Current or (even better) urgent
Defining your key messages

A good key policy message is **concrete**

- Offer a solution
- Be specific
- Be realistic
Defining your key messages

Does this work?

Is it...

1. Simple
   - Implementing policies that increase rural women’s household and farm productivity

2. Attractive
   - alongside the Rural Electrification Fund capital subsidies for mini-grid developers can increase women’s income and household well-being.

3. Concrete

4. Shareable
Defining your key messages

Does this work?

Is it...

1. Simple
   Land reform to increase women’s access to agricultural land can improve food security in Nigeria

2. Attractive

3. Concrete

4. Shareable
Defining your key messages

Does this work?

Is it...

1. Simple
2. Attractive
3. Concrete
4. Shareable

Enforcing the 2016 Land Act within communities will help more women make decisions over inputs and harvests.
Defining and organizing key messages

1. Defining your key messages

2. Organizing your key messages
   - Pyramid principle
   - AIDA
Organizing your key messages

The pyramid principle: benchmark model of “persuasive communications”

- Start with the point you most want remembered
- Make your argument
- Provide evidence
The pyramid principle

• **Situation**: A statement about the subject with which you know the reader will agree

• **Complication**: The complicating event that creates tension in the story

• **Question**: The implicit question that results from the complication

**Answer:**
States the answer to the question raised in the readers mind

**Key Line:**
Major points which, taken together prove the answer

**Support:**
Data and facts that support the key line

**Supporting Logic**

**Supporting Facts**
The pyramid principle

- **Recommendation:** Implement land reform to increase women’s access to agricultural land can improve food security.

- **Logic (conclusions):** Increasing women farmers’ access to land is the most effective and economically efficient policy option for achieving the goals of the National Food Security Program.

- **Facts (findings):** Out of the available policy options, increasing women farmers’ access to land would increase agricultural productivity the most, lead to the most economic growth (GDP at market prices) and significantly increase wages for rural households and hired female labour.
You are trying to “sell” your policy messages as solutions to current development problems.

You can use the **AIDA** rule of marketing and advertising:

- **A**ttention
- **I**nterest
- **D**esire
- **A**ction

**structure**
**but also language**
AIDA rule of marketing and advertising

- **Attention**
- **Interest**
- **Desire**
- **Action**

• Think about the story you are trying to tell and how this can lead to action *(your objectives)*

• **Use your knowledge of your audience** and your experience of the policy context
Organising your message using AIDA

Example

Core messages

• Minimum wages have a positive effect on wages

• Compliance measures needed to prevent migration from the formal to the informal sector
Organising your message using AIDA

**Attention** Minimum wage policy means more domestic workers move to the informal sector.

**Interest** New findings show that compliance measures, such as inspections and awareness campaigns, can offset these effects.

- Minimum wage policies need to include provisions for working conditions inspections and awareness campaigns

**Desire**
Organising your message using AIDA

**Attention**
- Increasing women’s access to agricultural land can improve food security in Nigeria

**Interest**
- New findings show that when women have access to more land it promotes effective, equitable and efficient agricultural development.

**Desire**
- Land reform is vital to provide this essential access.
Organising your message using AIDA

Attention

• New findings show the Farm Input Subsidy improved agricultural productivity but reduced women’s empowerment.

Interest

• Enforcing the 2016 Land Act in communities will boost women’s decision-making power.

Desire

• Incorporating women-focused measures into the policy can help increase gender equality and ensure the success of this policy.

• If Malawi’s women continue to be disempowered, food insecurity and poverty will persist.

Action

• New findings show the Farm Input Subsidy improved agricultural productivity but reduced women’s empowerment.
**Uses:** AIDA rule

- **Attention**
- **Interest**
- **Desire**
- **Action**

• Use when you want to inspire action

• Suitable for formal tools

• & informal tools

• PEP policy brief
• National Policy Conference presentation
• “Elevator” pitch
• Social media post
Strategizing your communications

• Creating an effective dissemination package
  ➢ Select contents to the right channels & tools
  ➢ Adapt and visualize contents effectively

• Your PEP policy brief
Breakout room with your team: access your slides

Slide 3: Review your key policy messages

- Do they speak to actual policy needs?
- Re-write to make sure they are: simple, attractive, concrete
- Organize them to achieve greater effect