



Pacific Office

Session 3: What is 'evidence-based' planning and policy-making?

Elements of the planning and policy-making cycle

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Evidence-based policy is...

- Public policy informed by rigorously established objective evidence;
 - an extension of the idea of evidence-based medicine to all areas of public policy;
- Popularized by UK's ex-PM Tony Blair in 1999;
 - Alternative to the ideology-based decision making for policy making;
 - Characterised as “policies that really deal with problems, that are forward-looking and shaped by evidence rather than a response to short-term pressures; that tackle causes not symptoms.”



- Australia PM Rudd in 2008 – another supporter of EBP;
 - “third element of the Government’s agenda for the public service is to ensure a robust, evidence-based policy making process”;
 - Strong link between EBP and good governance;
- Enabling factors for EBP:
 - high-quality information bases;
 - professionals with skills in data analysis and policy evaluation;
 - political support for using evidence-based analysis and advice in government decision-making processes.



coalition4evidence.org

- In the field of medicine, public policies based on scientifically-rigorous evidence have produced extraordinary advances in health over the past 50 years.
- By contrast, in most areas of social policy – such as education, poverty reduction, and crime prevention – government programs often are implemented with little regard to evidence, costing billions of dollars yet failing to address critical social problems.

US based organisation



How can evidence inform/improve policy?

- Need to understand the planning and policy framework....
- And the policy process, or cycle.



Policy and Planning Framework:

National Plan, Vision, Strategy

(can contain Development Goals, situation analysis, medium term strategic policy objectives)



Sector Plans (often included in national plan)

(Policy objectives and strategies for the various sectors of the economy e.g. agricultural policy, education policy)



Corporate plans (Ministry operational plans)

(Policy objectives and strategies of sector ministries which may be different from sectors above)



Budgetary and donor allocations

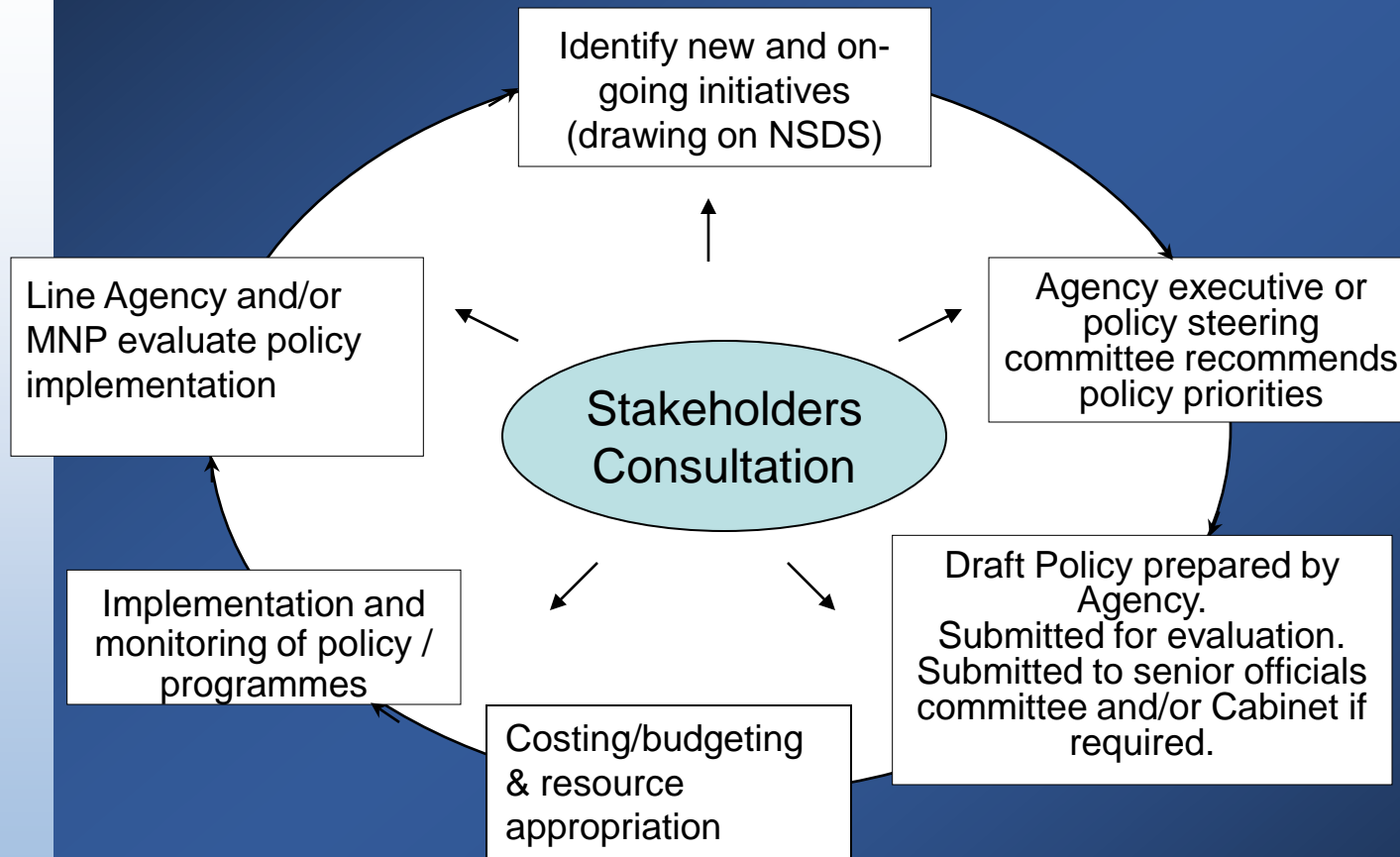
(recurrent budget, development/capital budget, aid resources)



Development outcomes

(Activities, projects, programmes of government, NGOs, donors, communities).

The Government policy cycle





What is policy?

- Policy is a decision-making framework or course of action to achieve a desired effect or change.
- The terms "policy", "plan", "programme" and "project" are progressively more specific in time and place. Policies are usually national policies and are not normally limited in time: one does not usually speak in terms of "2-year policies" as one does of "2-year programmes" or "5-year plans".



What does policy do?

- In the context of the public sector, policies support political purposes of Government or administrative directions of organisations in response to the changing world around them. In this context policy usually:
 - Is broad and visionary;
 - Sets direction;
 - Expresses standards, behaviours, and expectations to guide actions;
 - States a position of intended outcomes;
 - Is a statement of principle;
 - Addresses resource distribution issues, protection of the vulnerable, social justice and human rights.



Elements of policy

- Policy has two essential elements:
 - **Policy objectives.** These are the "ends" of a policy and reflect the overall purpose or long-term aim(s); they are what the policy is intended to achieve (e.g. more beef exports or fairer access to grazing lands).
 - **Policy instruments.** These are the "means" of a policy, the actions used to carry it out and the methods by which its objectives are achieved (e.g. import tariffs on dairy products or a subsidy on an artificial insemination service).



Types of policies

- National plans;
- Sector policies;
- Cross-sectoral policies e.g. youth, women, children, disability;
- Sub-national plans and strategies;
- Ministry policy: Corporate plans, Business Plans, Individual Work Plans.



“Evidence based policy” and Strategic Planning

- Strategic planning principles require that policies and plans follow logically from a ‘situation analysis’, based on data/information;
- Logical framework approach uses same principle.

Strategic plan hierarchy





Plan logic

- A vision/goal is established;
- Policy objectives, strategies and actions are agreed based on the current situation.

- SO THAT

- IF actions are taken,
 - Then Policy Objectives are met.
- IF Policy Objectives are met,
 - THEN the Vision/goal is achieved.



Situation analysis

- Same as Environment assessment – SWOT etc
- Leads to key policy issues
- Leads to Objectives etc

Plan ‘core’ structure

- Vision/Goal
 - Key Policy Areas
 - Policy Objectives
 - Key Strategies (means to achieve the objective)
 - » Actions, Indicators/targets.



Developing SMART Policy:

- **S**pecific - Objectives should specify what you want to achieve
- **M**easurable - you should be able to measure whether you are meeting the objective or not
- **A**chievable - are the objectives you set, achievable and attainable?
- **R**ealistic - Can you realistically achieve the objectives with the resources you have?
- **T**ime-bound - When do you want to achieve the set objectives?



Example – objective and strategy

- Objective: To improve the quality of primary education;
 - Strategy: to provide more in-service training of teachers
 - Indicator/target: hours of in-service training per annum per teacher increased from 5 to 10 by 2011.



Moving towards evidence based policy

- Requires skills in data analysis, interpretation of causes and effects, identification of key issues, developing policies to correctly address those issues.
- These ‘policy development’ skills need building in most PICs.
- Using ‘evidence’ to make policy can minimise influence of other criteria, e.g.*:
 - Power and influence of sectional interests
 - Corruption
 - Political ideology
 - Arbitrariness
 - Anecdote.

* Scott C., “Measuring up to the Problem”, Paris 21, Jan 2005



However, Policy must take account of Politics

- The purpose of policy is to affect the real world.
- To do this, political realities must be fully taken into account.
- While imagination - and even a degree of daring - may be vital ingredients at the policy formulation stage, there is no point in proposing a policy which is bound to be rejected for political reasons.
- Policy proposals will not be accepted - and policies will not be effective - unless they have the support of prominent politicians and interest groups.
- Policy analysts must understand and take into account the concerns of politicians if viable policies are to be formulated.
- Politics and politicians are, in fact, central to policy issues and should not be viewed as irritating side-issues, to be ignored whenever possible.



Vinaka