

Policy and Planning

Policy making and planning are core elements of public governance. A public policy is a deliberate and carefully studied decision that provides guidance for addressing selected public concerns. Policy making is 'the process by which governments translate their political vision into programmes and actions to deliver 'outcomes', in other words, the desired changes in the real world. Examples of "desired outcomes" include clean air, clean water, good health, high employment, an innovative economy, active trade, high educational attainment, decent and affordable housing, minimal levels of poverty, improved literacy, low crime and a socially cohesive society, to name a few. Policy also provides the framework and sets the parameters for planning. The purpose of public planning is to outline how policies will be implemented in practice.

Promoting citizen participation in policy making and planning is therefore fundamental to democracy and the delivery of quality outcomes for citizens. It also contributes to the development of effective, strong and inclusive public institutions. The tools in this category cover a broad range of approaches and methods aimed at strengthening citizen participation, as well as the active involvement of actors such as local government officials and parliamentarians, in policy-making and planning processes.

Tools in the Policy and Planning Category

Policy and Planning category includes eight tools. They are:

- **Participatory Policy-making** is more of a general approach than a specific 'tool', as the overall goal, no matter which method is followed, is to facilitate the inclusion of individuals or groups in the design of policies via consultative or participative means and to achieve accountability, transparency and active citizenship.
- **Participatory Development Planning** is also more of a general approach than a tool per se. The core aims of participatory development planning are to give people a say in the development decisions that may affect them and to ensure that development interventions are appropriate to the needs and preferences of the population that they are intended to benefit.
- **Future Search** is a participatory methodology that can be used in the context of both policy making and planning processes. Future Search facilitates discovering common ground amongst people from all walks of life, through a dialogue (that often takes place over several days) where participants share stories about their past and present and generate ideas and plans for the desired future.

- **Joint Policy Making Committees/Boards** are mechanisms driven by principles of inclusion and partnership that seek to take policy making beyond institutional boundaries. Such bodies not only enrich policy making with cross-sectoral knowledge but also bring the policy making process close to people. Joint Policy Making Committees typically involve representation from the legislature, multiple government agencies, domain experts and civil society organizations or citizen movements.
- **Educating/Supporting Parliamentarians** is more of a generic approach than a specific tool, aimed at strengthening the capacity of parliaments/parliamentarians to effectively contribute to, and promote public participation in, processes of policy making, planning, budgeting, expenditure tracking, monitoring of public programmes and services, etc.
- **Participatory Social Impact Analysis** is a mixed-methods technique for examining the various positive and negative effects of policy reforms. The goal of Social Impact Analysis is to determine the likely winners and losers from the direct and indirect effects of a given policy reform. It looks at three aspects: the impact of policies on people; the impacts of stakeholders on the reform; and how people respond to the opportunities that policy actions create.
- **Policy Audits** are participatory tools to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of both the policy interventions and their implementation i.e. to ascertain whether a given policy has actually achieved its intended goals and objectives within the set time frame and resource allocation.
- **Community-Based Monitoring System (CBMS)** is an organized way of collecting, analyzing, and verifying information at the local/community level. It can be used by local governments, national government agencies, civil society organizations and community groups for purposes of policy-making, planning, budgeting, and implementing and monitoring local development programs.

Benefits

- **Better informed policies and development plans:** Policy making and planning require diverse and complex information and expertise based on evidence from the ground. Widening the space for policy dialogue and citizen participation in policy making and planning brings a wider range of information, ideas, perspectives, and experiences to the process.
- **More inclusive and equitable policies and development plans:** Multi-stakeholder representation and citizen participation help to produce policies that are in tune with people's needs and therefore tend to be more equitable and inclusive.
- **Strengthened transparency and accountability:** The participatory process can have wider ramifications for the 'policy/plan-owning' body as it helps

create an institutional culture of openness and public service orientation. The process also encourages greater public attention to the way in which the policy is implemented, thus promoting accountability.

- *Strengthened ownership:* By involving a broader set of stakeholder groups in the design or reform of policies and plans, the participatory process helps strengthen their ownership and support for the policy and this in turn will promote more effective implementation and uptake.
- *Enhanced capacity and inclusion of marginalized groups:* Where participatory policy making/planning has brought neglected stakeholder groups to the table, or at least given them a voice, the process can help empower these groups to stand up for their rights and make their concerns known. The process can also contribute to changes in power relations between the various constituencies involved.
- *Enhanced capacity of local governments and parliaments:* Participatory processes combined with a focus on capacity development can help build the capacity of governments at all levels, and particularly local governments and legislatures, to recognize multiple views and address diverging perspectives. This new experience and the practical skills gained by those involved in the process will help in future interactions with different stakeholder groups.
- *Common understanding:* Finally, participatory policy making and planning can help nurture a common understanding of complex, misunderstood or even contentious issues.

Challenges and lessons

- *Time and resource needs:* Participatory policy making/planning will always take more time and can be costly, especially when large groups of stakeholders with diverse interests are involved.
- *Raising expectations:* Soliciting inputs from multiple stakeholders into the policy making and planning process is likely to raise their expectations of having their views taken into account; this is not always possible and these limitations need to be clearly spelled out from the beginning.
- *Creating conflicts:* Participatory approaches to policy-making and planning can bring to the surface conflicts among different stakeholder groups, by bringing opposing views out into the open and exposing any underlying tensions. Also, if participation fails to include some groups that feel they should have been consulted, this can lead to conflict and opposition to the process. Finally, the process can exacerbate divisions within the CSO community if different groups take different positions on the policy issue.
- *Loss of autonomy:* By aligning closely with a government driven process, CSOs can risk losing (or appearing to lose) their independence. This can have serious repercussions in terms of their credibility.
- *Political risks:* The flip side of the above risk is that, by getting involved in policy formulation and advocacy, CSOs can be seen by public officials to be interfering in “government matters”.

Key Resources and organizations

Court, J., Mendizabal, E., Osborne, D., Young, J. (2006). Policy Engagement: How civil society can be more effective. ODI, London.

<http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/160.pdf>

- ☞ This report provides strategic and practical advice for CSOs on how they can engage more effectively in policy processes, through evidence-based advocacy.

Food and Agricultural Organization(FAO):. 'Participation' website.

http://www.fao.org/Participation/ft_find.jsp

- ☞ This site is a 'one-stop shop' for information on participatory approaches. It includes a searchable library covering a wide range of issues and numerous case studies, and a comprehensive section on participatory approaches and tools, in both English and French. It also includes databases on organizations and other websites for further information. (Type 'policy' in the search box to access those tools most relevant to participatory policy-making).

Future Search Network

<http://www.futuresearch.net/network/whatis/index.cfm>

- ☞ Future Search Network is a collaboration of hundreds of dedicated volunteers worldwide providing future search conferences as a public service. The Network serves communities, NGO's, and other non-profits for whatever people can afford.

Parliamentary Centre

http://www.parlcent.ca/indicators/index_e.php

- ☞ The Parliamentary Centre is a Canadian not-for-profit, non-partisan organization devoted to improving the effectiveness of representative assemblies around the world. The Parliamentary Centre in cooperation with the World Bank Institute is developing tools to measure parliamentary performance.

Poverty and Social Impact Analysis Unit - The World Bank.

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/EXTPSIA/0,,menuPK:490139~pagePK:149018~piPK:149093~theSitePK:490130,00.html>

- ☞ The Poverty and Social Impact Analysis website of the World Bank draws on activities from other departments in the World Bank, particularly the development and presentation of a number of relevant social and economic tools by the Development Research Group. Country examples are mostly drawn from the activities of Regional divisions.

Reye, C and Due, E. *in_focus: Fighting Poverty with Facts: Community-Based Monitoring Systems*. IDRC (2009)

www.idrc.ca/in_focus_poverty.

☞ This publication *and* corresponding website of the Canadian International Development Research Centre is the single most exhaustive resource on Community-Based Monitoring Systems.

World Bank Institute: Parliamentary Strengthening Programme
<http://www.parliamentarystrengthening.org/humanrightsmodule/pdf/humanrightunit5.pdf>

☞ WBI's Parliamentary Strengthening Program has developed a series of thirteen learning modules for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff. The main objectives of these learning modules are to strengthen the capacity of parliaments to oversee the allocation and use of public funds, reduce poverty, improve public participation in the policy process, and reduce corruption, among others.