

Campaign Skills Handbook

Module 5

Issue Identification and Policy Development *Identifying and Addressing Important Issues*



Introduction

Developing policy proposals that address societal problems, challenges and opportunities is a critical part of what political parties and candidates do. It is a core component of leadership and of governing.

It is also one of the most challenging functions that elected officials, candidates and political parties perform. Developing policies and programs informed by evidence can be difficult enough on its own. In countries undergoing significant political transitions, there is even more pressure on government leaders to generate policies that quickly deliver change and improve people's daily lives. As such, the process of policy development creates genuine trials for political parties and candidates for elected office, but it also offers opportunities to connect with citizens and understand their needs, and to take action to effectively address these needs and to shape the future of the country.

This module looks at options for approaching policy development, institutionalizing the capacity to formulate policy on a regular basis, and effectively disseminating messages on policy issues. Because policy development is most often undertaken by political parties, this module focuses largely on how a party as an organization would approach the topic. However, candidates also need to be able to articulate and promote specific policy solutions to show what they stand for and care about, what they would do if elected, and the difference between themselves and their opponents.

Topics in this module include:

1. [What is Policy?](#)
2. [Tools for Issue Identification](#)
3. [Tools for Developing Policy Options](#)
4. [Communicating Policy](#)
5. [Developing Internal Capacity](#)

What is Policy?

At its core, politics is meant to be a competition of ideas: how the country should be run, how the economy should be developed, how relations with neighboring countries should be managed, how the country should educate its young people, how public health should be managed, the rights and responsibilities of citizens, and so on.

In order for political ideas to come to life, they must be translated into policy. Policies are clear plans about how a political vision will be achieved and how ideas will be implemented as actions.

Consider the following example:

Political Idea/Vision	To eradicate illiteracy in our country, especially among women and girls
Policy	<p>Build 800 new state-funded secondary schools in target areas</p> <p>Establish 30% of secondary schools as single-sex in the areas with the most need and demand</p> <p>Offer material incentives (food or money) for families to keep young people in school until the age of 16, especially girls</p>
Indicators	<p>Within 5 years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All construction of new schools completed All transitions to single-sex schools completed Material incentives program in place nationally
Costs	<p>Restructure how the current education budget is allocated to shift money towards capital investment</p> <p>Reassign .8% of the national health and social services budget to cover additional costs</p>

In this example, the problem of high levels of illiteracy is addressed by making it easier for families to keep their children in school for longer, particularly girls who may be

more likely to leave school at an earlier age. This is a long-term solution, attempting to address an issue at its source.

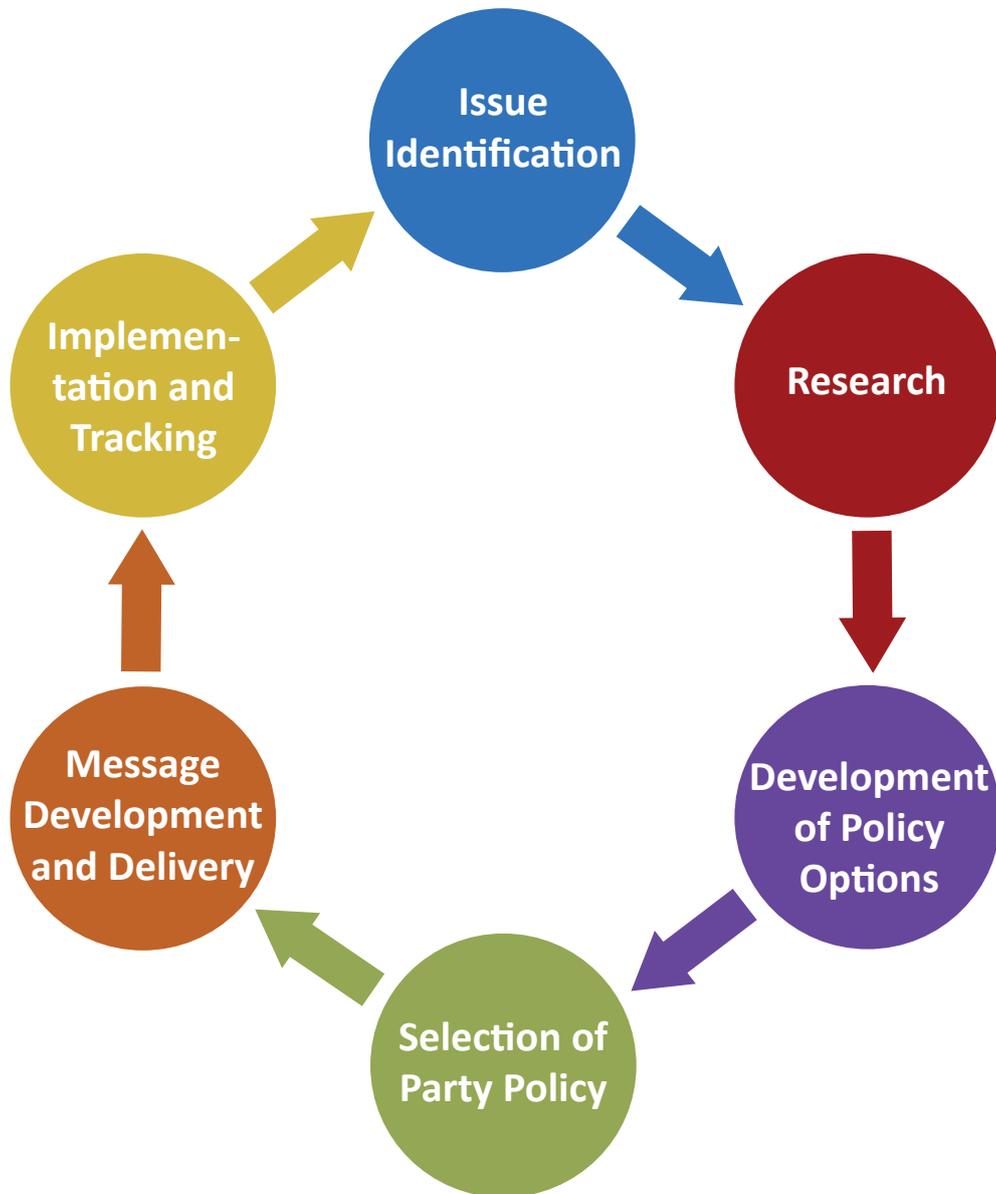
The most effective policies are those informed by evidence. This can mean, for example, that those who are most affected by the problem or most likely to be affected by the proposed solutions are offered opportunities to be consulted and to express their opinion. It can also mean that independent research has been commissioned (or simply gathered if it already existed) to offer a broader view of the issue and its root causes and an examination of what solutions may and may not work.

Political parties and elected officials develop policy for two main purposes:

1. In the context of an election: to present their ideas to the electorate and to contrast themselves with the proposals of the other parties; and,
2. In the context of governing: the governing party or parties must put forward a clear legislative and policy agenda for the country, and the opposition party or parties must advance their own ideas to challenge those of the government, while also holding the government accountable by monitoring the results of the its policies and expenditures.

Although elections and governance are very different, the process for developing policy in each situation is generally the same. However, as we shall see later in this manual, the pace at which a party develops policy tends to be faster in the context of governing than it generally is when preparing for an election.

The stages of policy development look something like this:



1. Issue Identification

Issue identification helps a political party recognize and target the specific social problems or policy areas on which it can and should act.

2. Research

Research involves gathering as much reliable information as possible to inform the party's understanding of and response to an issue. Good research focuses on outcomes: what do I need to achieve and how can I achieve this?

3. Development of Policy Options

There is rarely only one option available to address an issue or problem. The spectrum of choices typically starts with doing nothing and moves all the way to a large state-drive initiative to address a problem. A good response starts with assessing all of these, asking: what is likely to be most effective option given the available resources, and does this response address the problem as defined by the community that will be affected?

4. Selection of Party Policy

A political party must choose what its official position is based on the options available and what it is going to implement if elected to government.

5. Message Development and Delivery

At this stage, a party must effectively communicate with target audiences and stakeholders the specifics of its policy, why it has chosen this policy, what the benefits are to society, and what will happen when it is implemented.

If policy is being developed in the context of an electoral campaign, an election typically takes place at this point, between steps 5 and 6.

6. Implementation and Results Tracking

If a party is elected to government, the next stage is to implement the policies and document its achievements, evaluate the results, and ensure public funds are not being wasted. Opposition movements shift at this stage to monitoring the governing party's policies and results, and continuing to offer their own ideas as a contrast.

At times, the stages of policy development occur as distinct phases and the process moves step by step. However, when the political environment is more heated or energized or if an issue requires a rapid response, several of these stages can overlap or run consecutively. Some of them merge naturally. For example, issue identification and research often blend into one another as a party learns more about the causes of complex problems through building a base of evidence.

This manual will walk through some of the key stages of this process: issue identification and research, developing policy options and communicating policy. It will also focus on how a political party can develop the internal capacity to fulfill all of the functions outlined above.

Issue Identification and Research

How a problem or issue is understood affects the ideas that are put forward to solve it. Therefore, it is important to properly diagnose a problem before attempting to develop policy options.

Identifying a problem or issue starts with observation.

What are you seeing or hearing that looks like a problem or an opportunity?

Where are there crises in society now?

Where are there likely to be serious problems or crises in the future?

What are the assets or opportunities that are being under-utilized to address identified issues?

Identifying an issue can also begin by reflecting on a party or candidate's values or ideology.

What is most important to us that requires more attention or more investment?

What does the vision that we have promised to deliver look like and how can we achieve this?

What commitments have we made?

In order to verify or validate theories or ideas about where societal problems lie, the next part of issue identification involves building a base of evidence. This requires gathering as many reports, surveys, research projects, etc. as possible that examine the issue you are seeking to address. Exploring the evidence before developing policy is critical because:

- Many issues are more complex than they may appear at first;
- An independent voice on an issue can bring a new or vital perspective that may otherwise have been missed;
- Policy that is informed by first-hand or front-line experience of an issue is more likely to be successful at the implementation stage;
- It is important that stakeholders affected by a policy or issue have the opportunity to be consulted, as this also has a direct impact on the success of any proposed solutions;
- Proposals not informed by evidence risk wasting public funds; and,
- Evidence helps to distinguish between symptoms and causes of a problem.

This last point is particularly crucial. When engaging in policy development, it is very important to ensure that you understand and have identified the causes of a problem and not simply its symptoms. Consider the following example:

Symptoms/Effects describe WHAT	Petty crime, car theft, vandalism to public property on the increase Use of drugs on the rise; availability of drugs increasing Rising public disorder problems
Causes describe WHY	Young men between the ages of 18-30 are not able to find work
Policy addresses WHY	The causes and not the symptoms

This example distinguishes what is happening as a result of a problem (the symptoms) from what is the source of a problem (the cause). It is important to try to break down the cause as specifically as possible. For example, note that this analysis looks specifically at young men of a specific age, rather than young people, or men of any age. Identifying the cause of a problem too broadly makes it more difficult to address effectively.

Focus On: Gender Analysis

Consider the example in the box above about unemployment among young men. It is important that this analysis focuses specifically on young men, and not just young people. It is fairly safe to assume that if unemployment is high among young men, it is also likely to be high among young women living in the same economy.

The questions for policy-makers are whether the causes of unemployment for women and men are the same, and whether the symptoms would be the same, i.e., if there are also tens of thousands of young women without paid employment, would the outcomes be the same in terms of increased petty crime, drug use and public disorder? Or, would there be other effects? What could those be?

Many public policy issues are likely to affect women and men differently because of their different roles in society. It is therefore important that policymakers apply a gender lens to policy and legislation to assess what the outcomes would be for women and for men. This tool is called gender analysis. It is a critical device for contemporary policy development which, when properly applied, ensures more effective public policy and better use of public funds.

Gender analysis includes identifying:

- Gender differences in the division of labor (who does the work, and what kinds of work do they do) and access to and control over resources;
- Both the practical needs and the strategic interests of women and men;
- Power differentials and dynamics between men and women;
- Social, economic and political constraints and opportunities facing women and men; and,
- Lifetime opportunities and outcomes for male and female members of society.

There are a number of options for gathering the necessary evidence and information needed to fully understand and isolate the cause of a problem or the source of an opportunity, and begin to build a strong base of evidence at the same time. These include:

Academic Research Professional research from local universities and non-partisan think tanks can provide an independent analysis of a problem's causes, symptoms and possible solutions.

Asset Inventories Asset inventories are a great way to identify opportunities, so that policies are not focused solely on problems. To conduct an asset inventory, small teams of researchers observe a community or survey an issue, making note of strengths, skills, abilities, or chances for growth, rather than weaknesses or difficulties.

Audit Reports Countries with a professional and independent audit capacity – whether based in a government agency or provided by civil society organizations – can use assessments of government spending and responses to problems to evaluate how effectively issues are currently being dealt with and how public funds are best used to address societal issues.

Community Cafés A community café creates the atmosphere of a restaurant or café in which small groups of people from a local area or community discuss issues or questions asked by facilitators. These often help to create the relaxed environment necessary for some communities to discuss difficult or contentious issues. It is important that these consultations are organized in a way in which all members of the community can participate. For example, if young people or women do not go to such venues and they are also affected by the issue, then the model needs to be adjusted to accommodate their participation.

Committee Reports If they have fully developed their capacity, legislative committees at the national, regional or local level will frequently compile reports that examine societal issues or problems and make recommendations on how they might be addressed.

Community Mapping Community mapping involves getting to know the social, economic and demographic characteristics of a community in order to map out services that are already being provided, to assess how well these are being used or serving the population, to identify essential services that are not being provided, and to get a clearer idea of all resources available

to the community. Community mapping can include demographic studies of the relevant population, economic assessments – including poverty and employment levels—and an inventory of civil society organizations and local service-providers. Community mapping is always a more valuable process when the relevant community is engaged and consulted directly, rather than simply observed externally.

- NGO and IO Reports** Some larger international organizations, such as UNICEF, UNESCO, the World Bank, UNDP, and others, address a number of common societal problems worldwide, particularly those connected to development, increasing standards of living, reducing poverty, protecting the environment and advancing Millennium Development Goals. In the course of this work, these organizations produce reports that are often based on extensive research on specific problems, their causes, and recommended policy responses. Local NGO's and policy research organizations can also be a source of this information.
- Focus Groups** Focus groups are a form of facilitated discussion in which groups of people are asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards a particular issue. It is helpful if the individuals recruited for the group are from a similar background, as this typically leads to a more comfortable environment for sharing ideas and feelings.
- Gender Analysis** Many public policy issues affect women and men differently because of their different roles in society. Gender analysis of problems and issues involves assessing how women and men, girls and boys are each affected by a problem, to what degree and with what results.
- Media Coverage** Monitoring media coverage of an issue can sometimes lead to good sources of information, such as newly-released data or experts on the issue.
- Official Statistics** Official statistics are figures published by government agencies or other public bodies which provide quantitative information on major areas of citizens' lives, such as employment, education, access to sanitation, electricity and clean water, relative age of the population and the male/female ratio. A country's census is an example of official statistics.
- Public Consultation** Public consultation on issues and policy involves engaging a large population – sometimes the entire electorate – in discussions around a problem and in the development of solutions by gathering their thoughts on the origins of the issue and how it should be handled.

Good consultation helps to improve the quality of the policy outcome and gets interested parties involved and invested in the issue.

Stakeholder Interviews Stakeholder interviews are structured discussions or surveys held with any group or individual affected by an issue, problem or proposed solution.

Surveys A survey is one of the best known and most popular methods of identifying problems and evaluating public opinion about symptoms and solutions. Surveys can be very simple, targeting only a small audience, or quite complex, sampling large segments of a population. If there are insufficient resources or time to conduct a standalone survey on an issue, consider adding a few questions to a larger survey (often referred to as an omnibus survey) which a government agency or private sector research or marketing firm may already conduct on a regular basis.

The choice of mechanism or mechanisms depends on the amount of time available, what you need to know and how complex the issue is. Typically, more complex issues require more consultative forms of research to engage the communities or groups most impacted by an issue, or who are more likely to be affected by proposed solutions.

[Problem Tree Analysis](#)

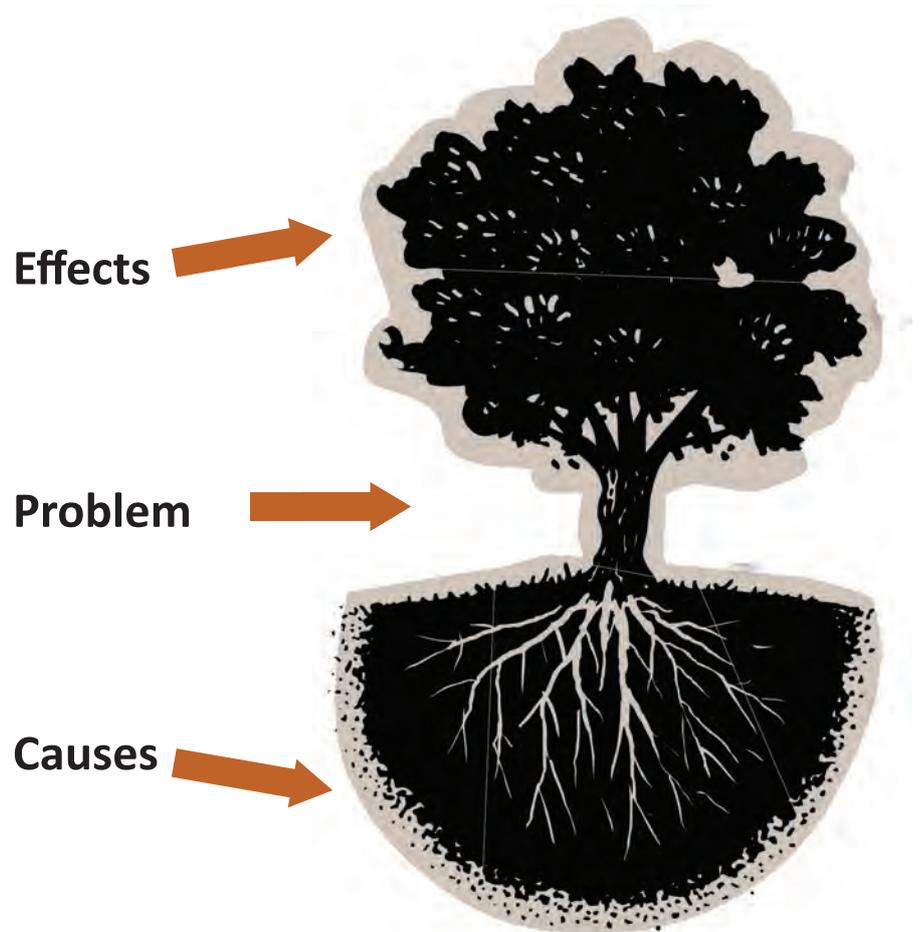
Another tool for identifying and understanding issues is the Problem Tree Analysis. This structure maps out the anatomy of cause and effect around a particular issue or problem and allows larger problems to be broken down into manageable and definable pieces.

Dissecting a problem through this type of analysis can be particularly helpful because many societal problems have more than one cause. These are sometimes interconnected and sometimes contradictory. Additionally, it is not uncommon for different populations to have different understandings of the same issue. And, as noted earlier, the symptoms or effects of a problem can sometimes appear to be causes.

The Problem Tree Analysis helps untangle varied perspectives and isolates root causes. It is a simple tool that is easily accessible to any political party. Its simplicity also helps to make it extremely effective.

In the Problem Tree Analysis model:

- the problem to be addressed is the trunk of the tree;
- the effects, results or symptoms of the problem are the branches as leaves (the part that is most visible); and,
- The causes or sources of the problem are the roots (the part that is most difficult to see or most deeply embedded).



To conduct the Problem Tree Analysis, start from the trunk of the tree, move down and then up:

1. Write down the problem or issue to be analyzed, as you currently understand it.
2. Write down what you consider the causes or sources of the focal problem to be.
3. Write down the consequences, effects or outcomes.

Now, review what you have written. Is the problem as you have currently defined it really at the core of the causes and effects you have identified? Do you need to refine the problem more, break it down into smaller pieces or use more specific language? What research or evidence do you need to bring in to help you understand the issue better?

Consider the example below from a country just coming out of a long civil conflict, struggling with high levels of poverty and unemployment. A political party in this country worked with several civil society organizations to formulate a policy to deal with high unemployment among young men, and the subsequent social problems this created.

However, when they conducted their problem tree analysis, they found that the problems for these young men actually occurred much earlier in their lives, that these were the result of the effects of poverty and poor government investment in education at an early age, and that the core problem was that they were not completing secondary education and therefore were far less likely to be employed for the rest of their lives, even in a healthier economy.

Figure 1: Example of a Problem Tree Analysis



Activity 1: Issue Identification and Research

Reflect on the situation in your country and identify a problem affecting young people. Use the space below (or a separate piece of paper, or flipchart paper if you need more room) to construct a Problem Tree Analysis of the issue, bringing in your own understanding and as much research or evidence as you can access.

Clearly identify the problem, causes and effects connected to the issue. You can begin to think about what the solutions might be to address this matter, but you do not have to list them at this stage.

Activity 2: Gender Analysis

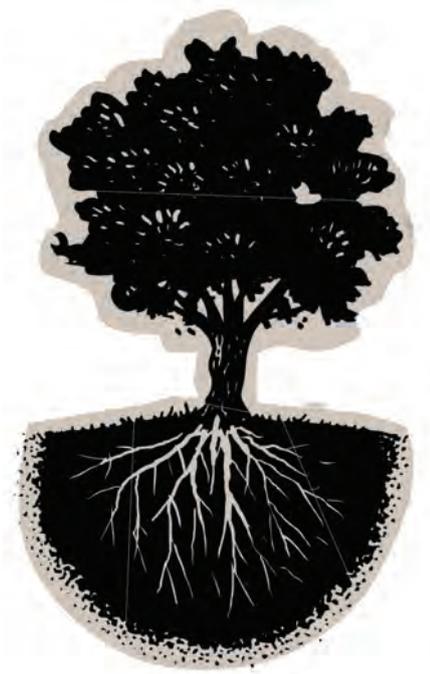
Review the Problem Tree Analysis you conducted in Activity 1. Consider whether the issue you identified as a problem is one that affects women and men (or boys and girls) differently. If you have identified a problem as it pertains to just one gender (males or females), consider what its impact might be on the other gender.

Use the space below to conduct a gender analysis of the issue by applying the following questions:

1. How are women affected by this issue? How are men affected by this issue?
2. What are the causes of this problem for women? What are the causes of this problem for men?
3. What are the effects of this problem for women? What are the effects of this problem for men?

Be sure to consider things like workloads inside and outside the home, access to resources (financial and material support, education, health care, etc.), basic survival needs (food, water, clothing, housing, etc.), freedom of or restrictions on movement, security and safety issues – all of these variables will intermingle and impact how an issue affects men and women differently.

When you have finished, discuss what you have learned by conducting this type of analysis, and whether or not you see this problem differently as a result.



Effects:

Problem:

Causes:

Tools for Developing Policy Options

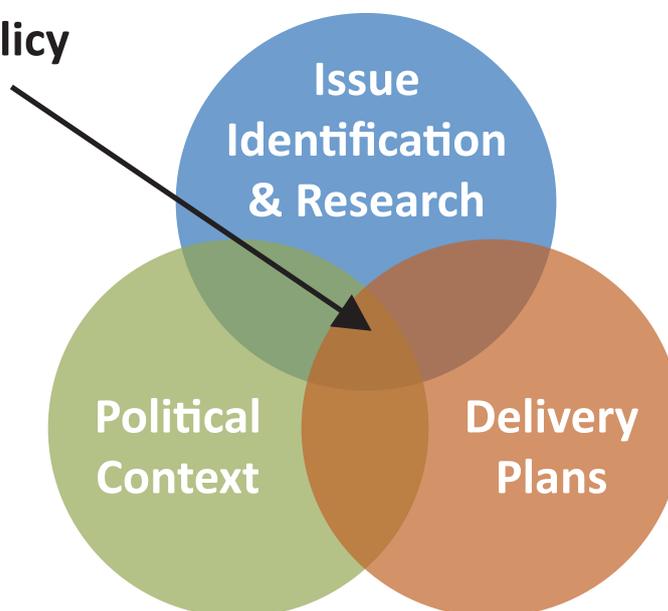
In policy development as in life, it is often easier to identify problems than it is to identify solutions. Developing effective policy solutions requires innovation, sound financial skills, and a solid base of evidence and issue identification.

The research, evidence and findings from any consultation that has been conducted all start to play a bigger role in this stage. However, so does the political environment in which any policy options will have to be implemented.

Successful policy options depend on three key elements:

- developing and using a sound evidence base, that comes from solid issue identification and research
- understanding and managing the political context, including public opinion and political leaders
- planning from the outset for how the policy will be delivered by setting SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely) objectives

Successful Policy Options



This section of the manual will walk you through how to manage each of these dynamics. One of the best ways to do this is to approach the development of policy options in four steps:

1. Clearly define the outcome or outcomes you need or want to achieve
2. Identify the routes for reaching or achieving these outcomes

3. Check the viability of options, including their cost
4. Check the clarity of options

1. Clearly define the outcome or outcomes you need or want to achieve

Outcomes are results. The best policy options are formulated by starting with intended outcomes and working backwards from there. In other words, what do you need to happen as a result of your policy? For example:

- What should be the minimum level of education reached for children and young people?
- What should the quality of life be like for pensioners?
- How easy should it be for small and medium businesses to start and grow?
- What should the maternal mortality rate be?
- What should life expectancy be?
- What should the rate of employment be?

Write down, using as many specifics as possible, what it would look like if the policy you are seeking to develop were successfully applied and implemented.

Another way of looking at it is to consider how you would reverse the terms of the problem you clarified in the issue identification stage. If the problem, for example, is that 51% of boys from poorer families are not completing secondary education, what is the opposite of this in realistic terms?

2. Identify all possible options for reaching or achieving these outcomes

This is where your base of evidence will be most useful. What have you learned from the work you have done on issue identification and research? What are the most efficient and effective routes to the outcomes you have defined in step one? Apply the following questions to the information you have gathered:

- If nothing is done about this issue, what is likely to happen? Does it get worse, in terms of human or financial costs? Does it get better? Does nothing happen? It is too difficult to tell?
- Is current policy dealing with the issue effectively? Does anything have to change?
- Where would change be most desirable?
- What are other policy areas with similar issues? How have these been addressed? Has this been successful or not?
- What are other countries with similar issues? How have they addressed these? Has this been successful or not?
- If we were to address this issue innovatively and creatively, what would solutions look like?

- What are those groups which are most affected by the problem asking for?
- What actions can be taken to address or neutralize the causes of a problem?
- What actions can be taken to mitigate some of the symptoms or effects of a problem?
- What approach(es) would best meet the needs of women? Men? Girls? Boys? Different minority groups?

These questions serve as a filter mechanism. As they are applied to the information that has been gathered during issue identification and research, policy options for responding to an issue or problem begin to emerge.

3. Isolate the most viable options

Successful policy applies the principles of good governance to the realities of the political environment.

Good Governance

Standards for good governance require that all policy options are checked for risk, value for money and gender mainstreaming.

There is always an element of risk involved in doing something differently. Check your policy options for the degree and type of risk, i.e., financial, physical, material, environmental or social. Is the amount of risk reasonable and manageable; does it justify the potential rewards?

Any policy option that requires the use of public funds must also be assessed for its value for money – whether the benefits to society justify the costs. Consider which options represent a smart investment for the country and sound use of public funds. Ask whether spending money in this manner represents good financial management, and also whether it reflects the values of society as well as those of your political party.

Contemporary standards for good governance also require a sound gender analysis of policy proposals to ensure there is no inherent bias. Check your emerging proposals against the following criteria:

- In terms of gender, what groups are most likely to be affected by the proposed policy and any required legislation to implement it?
- What is the estimated impact of the policy and/or proposed legislation on these groups?
- Does the policy change the activity patterns of men or women, and how?
- Does the policy increase or decrease women or men's workload (reproductive or

- productive)?
- Who (men or women) would make the decisions and who would do the groundwork to implement the policy?
- Would women and men have equal access to program events, benefits or services?
- Who would benefit the most from the policy?

In some cases, you'll want to evaluate the impact of emerging proposals not only with regard to gender, but also on other groups, including: youth, elderly, urban or rural populations, people living in poverty and people with jobs, etc.

Political Environment

There are also the realities of politics to consider. When policy proposals move from the development phase and enter the world of possibilities, they immediately confront the reactions and opinions of others. It is important to anticipate, understand and plan for a range of likely responses to any policy proposals, as these will significantly impact their viability.

Environment	What is current public opinion on this issue? What is current public opinion of major political actors on this issue?
Supporters	Who is likely to support the policy? Why? Will their support be strong or weak? How can I maximize their support?
Opponents	Who is likely to oppose the policy? Will their opposition be strong or weak? What will their arguments be against the policy? How can I neutralize these arguments?
Stakeholders	Who is most likely to be affected by this policy? What degree of change will they have to adjust to? What is their initial reaction likely to be? What information or interaction do they need to support the policy?

There is substantial debate about whether policy options should be compromised to meet the realities of politics. If, for example, the best policy on education is to advance mandatory, universal, state-funded secondary education until the age of 18, but the financial situation means that the country could never really afford this, and

the agricultural lobby would actively oppose this because it affects their access to an affordable workforce, is it worth insisting on implementing the policy in its purest form? Or, is it better to accept an incremental change, with the understanding that winning a short-term goal is a step towards achieving your long-term goal?

In most situations, whether there is compromise, when it occurs and to what degree depends on a number of factors, such as power relationships, the financial or economic situation, or whether an issue has reached crisis stage. Regardless, the political environment needs to be mapped out before advancing any policy options to ensure they have some degree of viability.

4. Check the clarity of options

Finally, check how well your policy has been formulated and devised, whether your objectives are clear, your action points are compelling and the language is lucid, even for complex issues. Clear and compelling policies are much easier to communicate and therefore more likely to be successfully implemented. Clear benchmarks help to measure the effectiveness and progress of the policy.

It might be useful to apply the criteria for SMART objectives to this stage. Check that the policy proposals you have created meet the following standards. Are they:

Specific

- described in precise or detailed terms

Measurable

- progress and achievement can be assessed and quantified

Achievable

- it can actually be accomplished with the time and resources available

Realistic

- it is a sensible and practical goal

Time-bound

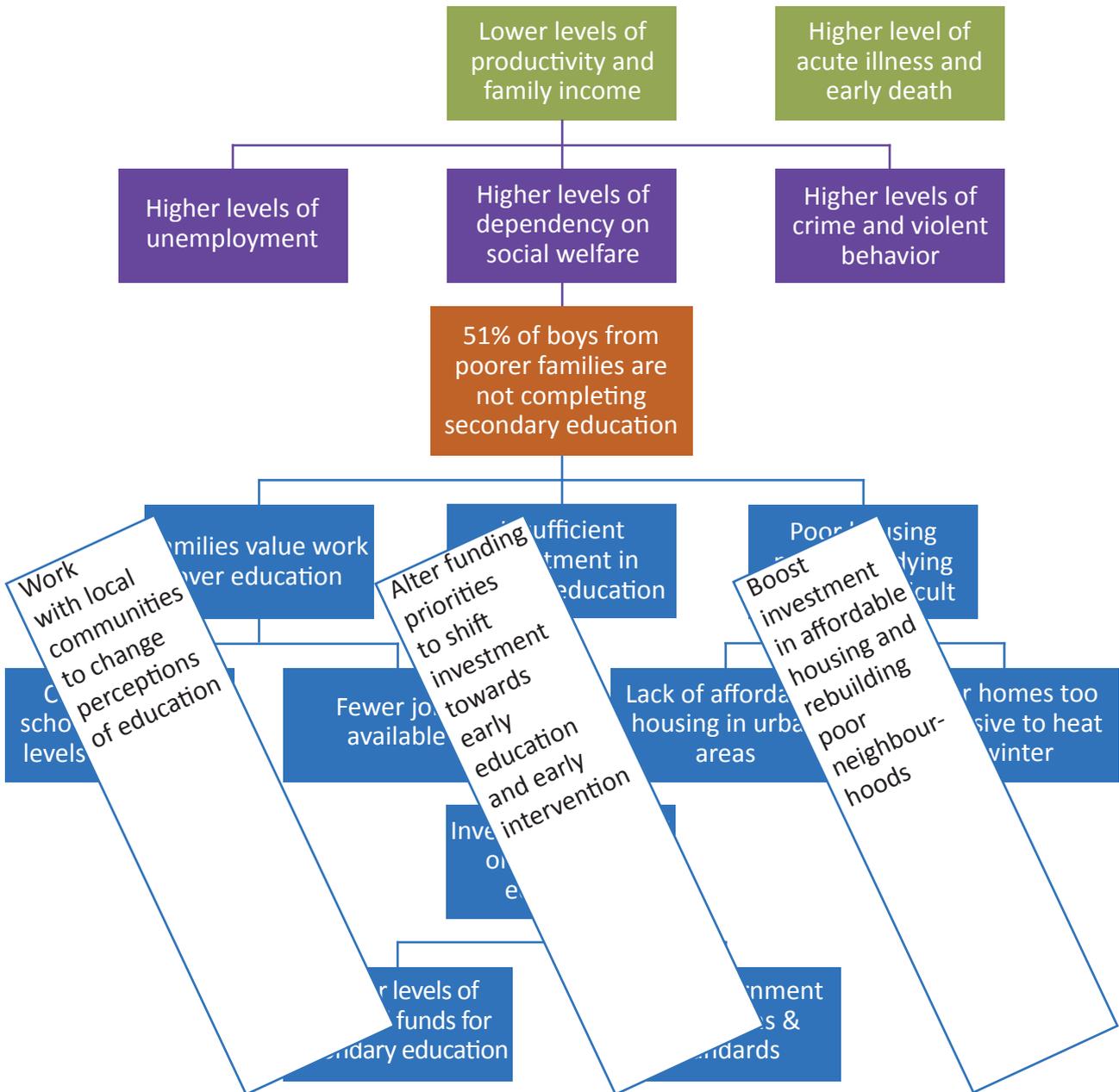
- a specific time has been set to achieve the objective

Consider again Figure 1, the example of the Problem Tree Analysis from the previous section concerning education and young men. The research conducted in this case tells us a number of things:

- 10 – 30% of academic achievement (young people doing well in school) is connected to the classroom itself; 70-90% of academic achievement is connected to the home environment and the mother’s level of education
- Academic disadvantage (children not doing well in school) is embedded by the age of 5 – if young people are already behind in school by this age, it is very difficult for them to catch up
- Success in education is lower for children and young people whose housing situation is overcrowded or unstable (i.e., homelessness), especially for boys

The political party championing this issue came up with three policy options to address the problem. Two of these involve changing the way the government spends money, and the third involves working directly with local communities.

Figure 2: Developing Policy Options



Because the political party working on this issue was in opposition, it was not in a position to make the changes to public spending and investment on its own. After assessing the political environment, the party decided that public support for the policy changes was stronger than political support for them, so the party created a partnership with civil society organizations who worked together to mobilize citizens on the issue and used public pressure to change the positions of the parties in government.

Activity 3: Developing Policy Options

Below you will find briefing information on a critical issue for the fictitious country of Noura. Based on the information and evidence you have, come up with as many policy options as you can to address this issue.¹

Noura is a small country located along international trade routes. Noura can be described as a developing country. Per capita income, life expectancy and standards of living are below international averages and are even slightly below averages for the region, which includes a number of countries undergoing similar social and economic transitions.

The economy of the country relies heavily on the agricultural industry, in particular the cultivation and processing of cotton for which Noura is famous. Garment manufacturers and retailers worldwide prefer high-grade Nourian cotton over all other types. The softest and most durable cotton in the world is found in the southern region of Noura and is suitable for fine linen and clothing, making it a highly sought-after commodity on the international market.

However, according to the World Wildlife Federation (WWF), it can take more than 20,000 liters of water to produce 1kg of cotton which is equivalent to a single t-shirt and a pair of jeans (as documented in the WWF report *The Impact of Cotton on Freshwater Resources and Ecosystems*). Seventy-three percent of the global cotton harvest comes from irrigated land. Cotton farming in Noura constitutes the single largest demand on water resources at 90%. Until the early 1980s, traditional irrigation practices ensured a balance between agricultural supply and demand. Then, the introduction of deep tube wells led to a drastic expansion of land under cultivation. By 2005, 40% of irrigated areas in Noura were supplied by deep groundwater aquifers. Farmers began growing less of the local drought resistant varieties of wheat and corn – which helped to feed Nourians – preferring instead to farm cotton which produced higher yields and profits.

Noura now faces serious water shortages which has created contention over water rights. Although Islam teaches that water is a gift from God and cannot be owned, land can be owned. Under the current law, when a person digs or drills a well on his or her own land, he or she obtains the right to extract and use as much water as can be drawn. Well owners are trying to capture what remains of this valuable resource before their neighbors do.

¹ Large parts of this case study have been extracted from the Middle East Research and Information Project's review of water conflict and cooperation in Yemen, <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer254/water-conflict-cooperation-yemen>. Other elements have been adapted from NDI's gender analysis of the Water Law in Yemen.

You are a policy advisor for the party in government in Noura. What policy options can you come up with to address the issue described in the case study? Use the four steps to develop policy options outlined in this section and ensure that they meet the SMART criteria. You will have to make some assumptions about the political environment but be as creative as you can with the information you have.

Activity 4: Gender Analysis

The Beijing Platform for Action from the 1995 United Nations World Conference on Women compels policy makers to conduct gender analysis of proposals throughout the policy development process to ensure that any outcomes do not disadvantage one gender over the other. Gender analysis starts with collecting evidence about how draft policies might affect women and men or girls and boys differently.

Review the additional research below about the water situation in Noura and its impact on women and girls. Consider whether you would amend or add to your policy recommendations from Activity 3 based on this information.

Women in Noura, particularly in rural areas, spend a considerable amount of time collecting water. In some areas, women and girls often spend up to seven hours per day collecting water. Women who must spend a significant amount of time collecting water are less free to engage in other activities that might bring in income, increase their own levels of education or improve the health and education of their children.

The same factors affect opportunities for children, particularly girls. In a recent interview, the Nourian Minister of Education stated, "...water shortages keep children, especially girls, out of school because long, daily treks to collect water prevent them from attending classes. When girls grow up with little or no education, they generally have more children. And because groundwater in Noura is a finite resource, the more the population grows, the harder it is to find water. The next generation of girls is thus even less likely to get an adequate education as they will be collecting water for their families to survive."

The adult literacy rate in Noura is 62% - literacy among women is significantly

below that of men. Girls are also less likely to complete their education. The national enrollment rate for children in basic education in Noura is 83% but for girls it is only 70%. The secondary school enrollment rate is 54% but only 40% for girls.

Recent research found that a one-hour reduction in the time to retrieve water could increase school enrollment rates for girls and boys by 8-9%.

As the primary household collectors and managers of water, women and girls are also key consumers of the resource. Additionally, the great majority of agricultural work is done by women. More than 80% of employed women work in agriculture. Farming constitutes the single largest demand on water resources in Noura at 90%, followed by domestic consumption.

Based on this evidence, would you make any adjustments to the policy options you came up with in Activity 3? If so, what would they be?

Communicating Policy

Effectively communicating a policy and its purpose can be just as important as the policy itself. Consider the example of a public health policy enacted by a party in government. A policy decision was made to provide free vaccinations for children under the age of 16. However, it was not effectively communicated either to the public or to health care workers. As a result, the number of families choosing to take advantage of the free vaccines was relatively low, and many families who did want the vaccines were met by confusion and misinformation from health care workers when they asked for them. An evaluation of the program was highly critical.

Communicating policy is different during the campaign season. Parties and candidates who can articulate clear ideas, specific plans, and realistic outcomes around proposed policies have an advantage over those who over-promise, with no plan for delivering. Further, a well-researched policy agenda can support and strengthen a candidate or party's overall message, adding overall credibility and appeal to specific groups of voters.

Outside of the campaign season, effectively communicating policy has a number of objectives:

- Inform the general public, and particularly those who will be affected, about the policy
- Mobilize stakeholders who will be involved in implementing the policy
- Help change attitudes or behavior targeted by the policy
- Simplify complex issues so that they are better understood
- Prepare relevant government departments and agencies to respond

Use the following framework to work through how you would describe each aspect of a policy proposal.

Policy Communication Framework

Problem	One or two sentences defining or describing the problem
Reason for Bringing the Problem Forward	Explain why the problem is being brought forward
Symptoms	List how the problem manifests itself
Elaborate on the Symptoms	For each symptom listed, explain what is happening and the impact of the symptom (why it matters)
Context	Explain the history of the problem: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the trends that contributed to the problem?• Are other geographic locations facing the same situation?
Desired Change (outcome)	Describe the change that the policy response is expected to achieve (the outcomes) Outline the benefits of implementing the policy
Policy Recommendation	Recommend a course of action including chosen policy instruments. Describe your policy framed as a solution to the problem.

The language that emerges from walking through this framework can be broken down into a message designed for target audiences.

There are two communication tools that can also be helpful when attempting to create a discourse on policy. One is distinguishing benefits from features. The other is storytelling.

Features vs. Benefits

Features vs. Benefits is a tool which helps policy makers focus communication efforts specifically on what a society will get out of a new policy or program. There can be tendency among policymakers to focus on what a program contains (its features) rather than on what it will do or deliver (its benefits). This is in part because working out the features of sound policy can take so long and require so much hard work that we're eager to talk about them!

But what stakeholders generally need to know is what they will get out of a policy or program. Consider the following chart. It lists a number of common products and policies, their features and benefits.

Policy or Product	Feature	Benefit
Toyota Corolla	1.8-Liter 4-Cylinder DOHC 16-valve engine with dual variable valve timing with intelligence	Reliable
Tetley's Teabags	A multi-layered cloth bag with hundreds more perforations and a round shape to encourage centrifugal movement of the contents	Delicious and refreshing tea
Micro Economic Policy	Targeted investment in key areas that promote economic growth	Jobs and a better future for young people
Youth Mentoring Program	Direct intervention strategy to deter youth people from engaging in high risk behaviors by offering positive alternatives in training and employment	Safer streets and less crime
Reducing Gender Inequalities in Education	Incentive program to persuade younger women and their families to remain in school until the completion of secondary education	Families will have more money and fewer financial burdens for the rest of their lives

Storytelling

There is an adage in policy communication, "Never a statistic without a story, never a story without a statistic."

Much of the political discourse on policy can seem boring or irrelevant to voters. This is particularly true if the discussion is highly technical or involves measurements or statistics without context. Stories, which explain the relevance and the background of these figures, are a critical tool to help target audiences understand the importance of a policy issue.

Consider the case of a political party arguing for more investment in infrastructure. A party representative delivers the message, "There has been insufficient investment in the infrastructure in this country, particularly the roads and bridges. Twenty-five percent of the bridges are structurally unsound."

Now, consider whether the same information feels different when it is injected into a personal situation or story, “There has been insufficient investment in the infrastructure in this country, particularly the roads and bridges. One out of every four bridges that you drive over with your children in the car is structurally unsound.”

The target audience, the voters, has been pulled into the issue and the policy by creating a situation or story in which they can see themselves and how they are affected by the issue.

This is a simple example, but stories can be used to communicate even complex policy proposals effectively. A good story on policy:

- Enables a leap in understanding by the target audience so that they can grasp the problem and what the proposed solution would look like in practice
- Is short: (no longer than two minutes); the impact is not through transferring large amounts of information, but by catalyzing understanding
- Is generally true; they can come from research or experience on the issue, which describe its impact on individuals
- Contains at least one statistic that validates the key point

Activity 5: Policy Communication Framework

1. Return to the policy options you developed in Activities 3 and 4. Walk through each step of the Policy Communication Framework, using the briefing information and your proposed policies from these exercises.

Problem	
Reason for Bringing the Problem Forward	
Symptoms	
Elaborate on the Symptoms	
Context	
Desired Change (outcome)	
Policy Recommendation	

2. Who is your primary audience for this policy? Boil down the information you have outlined into a message that you can communicate to your target audience in less than one minute.

Activity 6: Feature vs. Benefit

Return to the policy options you developed in Activities 3 and 4. Use the structure below to separate the features of the policy with its benefits.

Policy or Product	Feature	Benefit

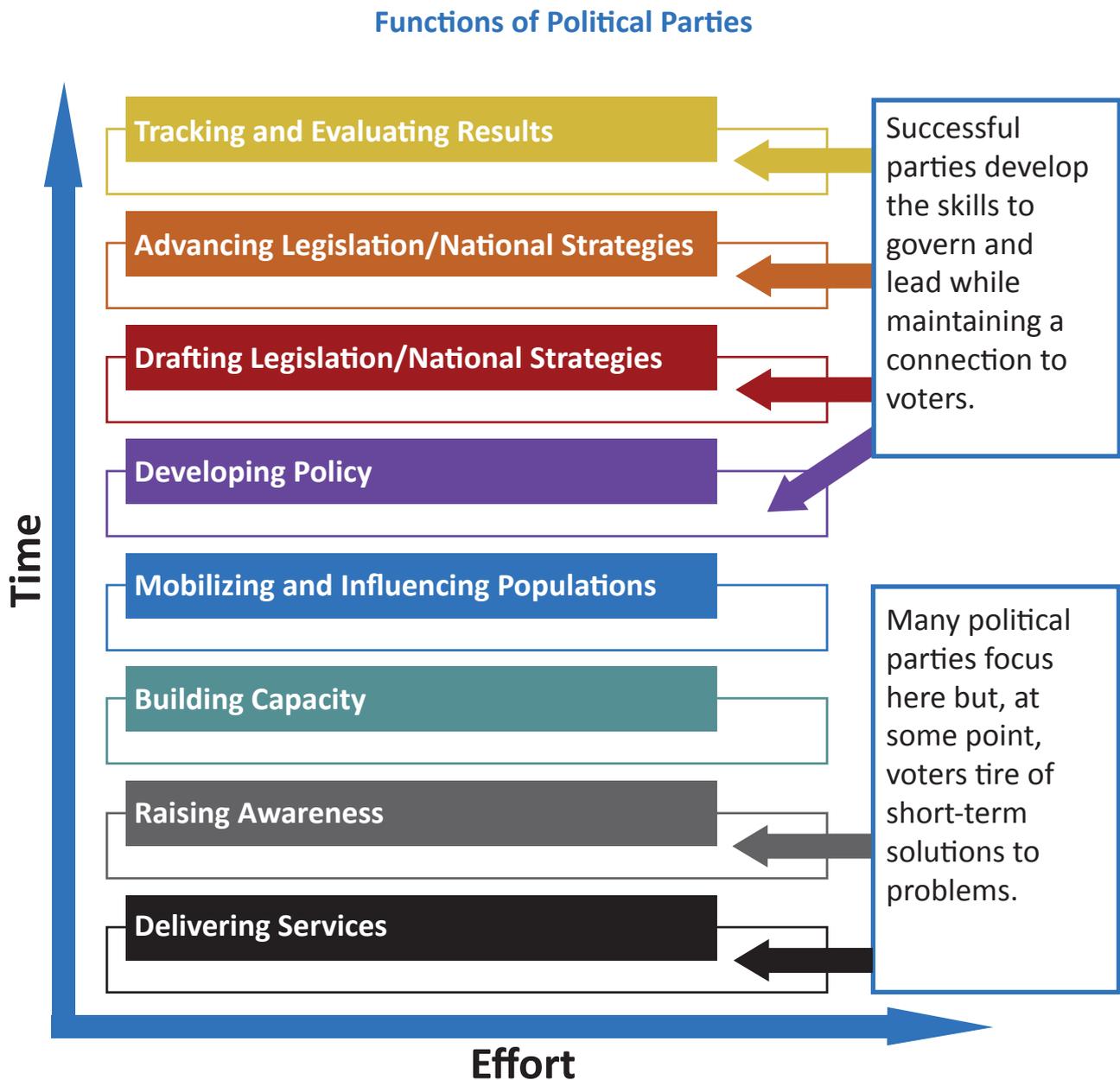
Activity 7: Storytelling

Return to the policy options you developed in Activities 3 and 4. Write a story that explains the context behind your policies and describes what the benefits might be to target audiences.

Developing Internal Capacity

Building the internal capacity to develop viable policy options takes time. There is no single way of conducting policy development and each political party or campaign must come up with a model to suit its needs, circumstances and ideology.

Consider the Functions of Political Parties chart below and the capacities parties need to develop in order to become healthy and competitive organizations in a democratic system. While there is always a degree of trial and error as a political party builds new strengths and abilities, the electorate begins to expect competent policy formulation skills from its political parties fairly quickly.



Most political parties begin to expand their policy development capacity by bringing in assistance from three different types of resources: internal party researchers and policy specialists, external experts, and general party members.

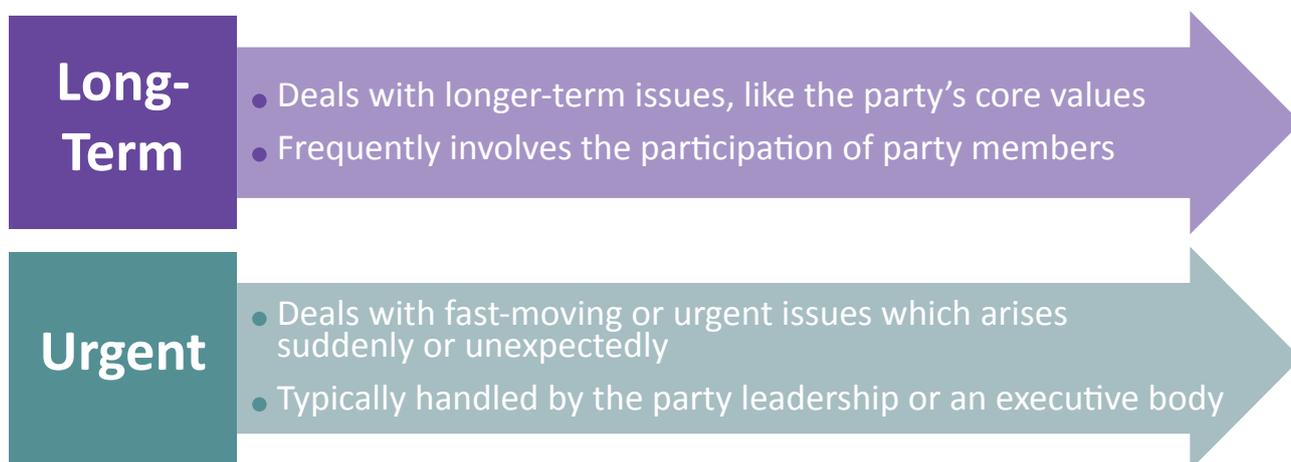
Internal Researchers and Policy Specialists	<p>Work directly for the party</p> <p>Policy and research professionals who support the party politically</p>
External Experts	<p>Recruited by parties because of specific issue expertise</p> <p>Frequently volunteer to serve in this capacity</p> <p>Academics, researchers, journalists, practitioners, professionals, etc.</p> <p>May be supporters of the party or may be independent</p> <p>Can work through permanent issue-based committees or as ad hoc groups</p>
General Party Members	<p>Depending on the party’s structure, regular party members can make contributions to policy ideas either as individuals or through party branches or party committees</p> <p>Many parties use their conferences or congresses as a means to gather the ideas and opinions of members on policy issues</p> <p>Members tend to be engaged more on longer-term or permanent issues, such as the party’s ideology, values and vision for the country</p>

Parties will recruit and engage each of these groups differently depending on the issue and the amount of time available to respond to an issue. However, the pace at which policy issues require a sound response has sped up to such an extent in recent years that some parties are struggling to keep up. Additionally, many issues have become much more technical, exceeding the internal capacity of many parties. To deal with this, many political parties have established a dual-track system for developing policy. In this system, a rapid response team is put in place to deal with emerging, unforeseen and urgent issues. This team typically includes the party leadership, executive

members and members of the parliamentary caucus, and can pull in technical experts to contribute to policy ideas if necessary.

At the same time, a permanent mechanism is created for the review and revision of longer-term policies. These are enduring issues, such as the party's ideology and core values, and how these can and should be reflected in the issues and policies it promotes while in government or opposition. Because this involves a more deliberate process and moderate pace, it is easier for a party to engage its general membership on these issues through the party congress, branch, or committee structure. Some parties will develop their electoral manifesto in this manner, with party members involved in building the policies that make up the party's offering to the electorate.

Political Party Policy Development Structures Dual-Track System



Focus On: Policy Development Through Consultation

Worldwide, political parties are shifting towards more participatory models of policy development. Participatory models of policy development are those in which a broad population, such as party officials, members, supporters and even external groups, has a say in the policies proposed and advocated by a particular party. These can include a wide range of topics, from the national budget and economic development to education and health care; from infrastructure and transportation to childcare and parental leave; from private sector development and jobs programs to even a party's core values and beliefs.

In some systems the move towards participatory or consultative policy development is driven by party leaders trying to keep members more engaged

in crafting and articulating policy options that are more meaningful to voters. In other cases, the movement towards participatory policy development comes from the members themselves, or even from external organizations with a special interest in policy who are demanding that political parties become more open and inclusive in their policy development processes.

Whether the shift to participatory policy development comes from a party's leadership, its members or even external pressures, the outcomes for parties themselves are almost universally positive. Participatory and inclusive policy development processes have direct, long-term benefits to political parties and to systems of government. These include more sustainable policies and stronger, more competitive political organizations.

Activity 8: Developing Internal Capacity

Consider the manner in which your party currently approaches policy development. Does it have the capacity to deal with highly technical or urgent issues? How does it deal with more enduring issues, like ensuring that policy development reflects the party's core values? If you had to make any changes to the party's structure in order to improve its capacity to develop policy, what would those changes be?
