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NATIONAL TRAINING WORKSHOP

National Training Workshop: Strengthening Popular Development Organization's Capacity to Effectively Make Contributions to and Influence Policy Making Process

**POLICY ANALYSIS AND MONITORING
TECHNIQUES**

Organized by

The Public Administration, Human Resources and Social Development Division, within the framework of the Popular Participation in Sustainable Development Project, in collaboration with Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations of Uganda and PAPSCA - PCMU

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Introduction

The central theme of this paper is that for NGOs to influence policy and maximize their impact in mainstream development, they must acquire appropriate skills that can influence local and national policies, attitudes and practices which impede self-reliant and sustainable development. In other words, for NGOs to influence policy, be it at the macro or micro level, it is imperative that they create the space to step back from their conventional project work to be able to put effort into learning the skills of policy analysis to shape an alternative vision of development out of their experience of working with the poor. As Korten very aptly puts it:

*"influencing macro-policy reform is relatively easy. The government can alter the exchange or interest rates, remove bureaucratic barriers, and increase producer incentives through action at the political centre alone. Micro-policy reform, however, involves action throughout the country, the creation of new institutions (for instance to provide credit to the poor), mammoth retraining exercises (i.e to redirect agricultural extension services) and wholesale changes in attitudes (for instance to dismantle the barriers which hold women in a second class status)."*¹

The point is that NGOs need to strengthen their understanding of the macro-economic issues that impede activities at the the micro-level and they need to build up a pragmatic strategy for influencing the mainstream decision making process. This means developing new capacities and forging new working relationships with government and other officials at both national and local levels.

As a first step in this direction, the paper draws upon some basic methodological issues concerned with the policy process. The presentation

focuses on (a) the different usages of the term policy; (b) the various stages involved in the policy process and some important elements and distinctions; (c) how to analyse a policy; and (d) a step-by-step approach to Policy Action Planning.

1 Different Uses of the Word 'Policy'

Formulating policies and determining their content is a complex, amorphous and time consuming political process, involving many actors with varying interests that need to be balanced and compromised. As often stated, "it is not like an assembly line process, where a single-purpose tool can be applied repeatedly to whatever problem comes across. It is a multifarious process where the policy maker makes his choice in an environment restricted in a multitude of ways. Resources - whether human or material - are scarce, and their effective allocation are further constrained by political considerations or the limited capabilities of sluggish bureaucracies."² For decision makers, the choice among competing policy alternatives is never easy, as the future is always uncertain and the tradeoffs painful. The approaches and techniques set forth in this paper cannot completely eliminate these difficulties, but they can assist in managing them more effectively.

At the outset, it is important to understand that the term 'policy' is utilized in a variety of different ways. It is used:

- as a label for a field of activity (social or foreign policy);
- as an expression of general purpose or desired state of affairs;

- as specific proposals;
- as decisions of government;
- as formal authorization;
- as a programme;
- as an output;
- as an outcome;
- as a theory or model; and
- as a process.³

2 Defining Public Policy

Just as there are many everyday usages of the word policy, so are there many definitions of policy. A policy is subjectively defined and usually consists of a series of patterns of related decisions to which many circumstances and personal, group, and organizational influences have contributed. The policy-making process involves many sub-processes and may extend over a considerable period of time. The aims or purposes underlying a policy are usually identifiable at a relatively early stage in the process but these may change over time and, in some cases, may be defined only retrospectively. The outcomes of policies require to be studied, and where appropriate, compared and contrasted with the policy makers intentions. Accidental or deliberate inaction may also contribute to a policy outcome. The study of policy requires an understanding of behaviour, especially behaviour involving interaction within and among organizational memberships. Lastly, for a policy to be regarded as a 'public policy' it must to some degree have been generated or at least processed within the framework of governmental procedures, influences and organizations.⁴

The above ideas imply that policy:

- is not a 'decision' - it is a series of decisions which arise from a process over time;
- it is not easily distinguishable from 'administration';
- it is a purposive course of action but purposes may be defined retrospectively;
- it has outcomes which may or may not have been foreseen;
- it involves behaviour as well as intention and it involves action as well as inaction;
- it involves intra- and inter-organizational relationships;
- it involves a key, but not exclusive, role for public agencies; and
- it is subjectively defined.

3 Stages in the Policy Process

The following stages are involved in the policy-making process.

● **Issue search** (Initial state of society): This involves the identification and anticipation of problems or opportunities which suggest the need to consider action. Relevant approaches include the development of social indicators and various types of need analyses, demand forecasts, technological forecasts, etc.

● **Issue filtration** (Placing a condition on the political agenda): This entails making a conscious choice on the basis of explicit

criteria of which issues should be handled based on the resources of an organization.

- **Issue definition** (Direction of demands at relevant openings in government structures): Once a problem has been identified, this stage ~~(the issue)~~ requires further definition in terms of cause and effect.
- **Forecasting** (Reviewing resources and constraints): This involves speculating about alternative possible futures, given different assumptions about the development of both problems and policies.
- **Setting objectives and priorities** (Selection of option): This involves examining the relative priorities of various objectives competing for limited resources, identifying constraints and limiting factors.
- **Options analysis** (Legitimation of option): This involves appraising and comparing the best available option.
- **Policy implementation, monitoring and control** (Implementation, including the production of outputs): This stage is concerned with the implementation which must be seen as part of the policy making process, since the interaction between policy-making and policy-implementation is often very complex. Once a policy is underway, its

progress has to be monitored and controlled to check whether actual performance is according to the plans.

- **Evaluation and review** (Impact and its evaluation): This involves undertaking evaluation, at strategic points. Evaluation should not be left to the very end as the results may be impracticable and inconclusive. Who conducts the evaluation, techniques used and how evaluation results are consumed and utilized are important.
- **Policy maintenance, policy succession and policy termination:** (Feedback (a) to those who initiate and maintain process; (b) effect on state of society) The results of evaluation and review lead to this stage where the policy may be terminated, maintained or replaced.

At a first glance the above stages may seem tedious and time-consuming and perhaps irrelevant to the limited world of NGOs. However, for NGOs to demonstrate how current practices and strategies impact on poor people and to recommend alternative strategies which, while in keeping with national priorities, better serve the needs of the poor, they need to have a standard procedure (a framework of analysis) that will help one to commence on digging into a complex policy issue and to avoid going in circles. For example, a simple problem, of deciding how to give land and credit to those who volunteer to leave the slums, has so many ramifications. One can always muddle along, hoping eventually to develop an understanding of the situation, but such a hit-or-miss approach rather goes against the grain. As a start, it is preferable to have a framework of

analysis. This does not imply that an analyst will always proceed in an orderly fashion from one stage to the next. The conduct of an analysis, in practice, is usually an iterative process, with the analyst working back and forth among the various tasks of identifying problems, defining objectives, enumerating possible alternatives, predicting outcomes, establishing criteria, and valuing tradeoffs, to refine the analysis. As one gains experience in thinking analytically about policy choices, one can revise the framework and devise other operational procedures.

4 How to Analyse Policy

Policy analysis is a process of analyzing the activities of government in a variety of ways. The approaches frequently utilized for analysis of public policy can be classified as:

- **Policy Content:** This involves analyzing the origins, intentions and operation of specific policies such as health, education or social services.
- **Policy Process:** The concern here is with how policies are actually made in terms of actions taken by various actors at each stage.
- **Policy Outputs:** Here policy is seen as what government actually delivers as opposed to what it has promised or authorized through legislation. Outputs can take many forms - collection of taxes, delivery of services, distribution of expenditures or other indicators.

- **Policy Evaluation:** This addresses specific policies in terms of the extent to which their outcomes have achieved the objectives of the policy. Evaluation can also improve one's understanding of the factors that shape policy as well as provide information which can be used in future policy-making.
- **Information for Policy-Making:** This refers to the collection and analysis of data with the specific purpose of aiding a policy decision or advising on the implications of alternative policies. Such work may be conducted within universities, independent policy institutions, commissions or committees of enquiry. Such analysis differs from 'content studies' in that it is designed to contribute to policy-making.
- **Process Advocacy:** The analyst here is concerned not simply to understand the policy-making process but to change it. The emphasis is less upon what any particular policy should be than how policies ought to be made.
- **Policy Advocacy:** This involves the use of analysis in making an argument for a particular policy. Advocates have to convince decision-makers that there are political or other benefits to them as well as to society as a whole.

- **The Analysis of Analysis:** The emphasis here is on a critical appraisal of the assumptions, methodology, and validity of policy analysis.
- **The Roles of Different Types of Analysis:** There is a place for most of the types of analysis outlined above, that is both 'knowledge of the policy process' and 'knowledge in the policy process'. The policy analyst must understand what he wants to change (knowledge of the policy process) and he must also develop a critical faculty about his or her own assumptions and methods as an important part of his training (knowledge in the policy process).⁵

In practical terms, for NGOs to analyze the policy environment, in any specific context, they need to deal with the critical areas outlined above. It is important to understand that policy analysis is a discipline of working within a political and economic system, not for changing it.

If NGOs are to win recognition and influence in the policy analysis process, there are a number of obvious, perhaps trite, but often overlooked guidelines which must be kept in mind.

First of all, if analysis is to be undertaken, let alone consumed and utilized, it must be of practical advantage to one or more of interested decision makers who are either interested in the substance of the issues or to use the analysis as a political justification for their position. Analysis should by no means be used to embarrass the government by, drawing

attention to the governments neglect of an issue or the poor quality of the analysis underlying the government's treatment of an issue.

Secondly, if the results of analysis are to be of practicable use, they have to be both comprehensible and timely. In other words, the selection of issues for analysis is of utmost importance. Where ever policy areas and issues are well chosen, it is possible to demonstrate a genuine contribution to the policy process.

A third issue of importance is that there must be a range of different types of analysts, some specialists in particular techniques others specialising in particular policy areas, all with at least some ability to communicate their findings to decision makers.⁶

The ultimate success of policy analysis would be achieved if it became so routinized that it was not seen as an activity separate and distinct from decision-making.

Lastly, the scope for analysis is so wide that training in the role of analysis is essential for further progress.

5 Policy Action Planning

Another methodology that this paper draws on is **Policy Action Planning (PAP)**. PAP is an analytical tool appropriate for guiding policy reform processes. The PAP design and approach is especially suited to complex policy reforms, involving several government agencies, and generally requiring significant preparation and commitment by the ministries,

agencies and other stakeholders involved. It is a systematic process of preparing a statement of measures to be adopted and pursued by a government according to its stated objectives. It is essentially a three-phase process:

PHASE I: This phase begins with the constituencies in a policy area - identifying the constraints and deficiencies the sector faces. It brings the various partners together to see each other's viewpoints and begin the difficult process of selecting a limited number of goals as priorities. These priorities are then transformed into specific objectives.

PHASE II: In the second phase, the partners define the measures needed to achieve these objectives. Many initiatives are proposed by the various actors and each is subject to close scrutiny to assess their feasibility and effectiveness in light of financial, human, and institutional constraints. These initiatives are then transformed from the desirable to the achievable, policy and action options are appraised in terms of their feasibility and effectiveness and recast into an action agenda.

PHASE III: In the third phase, responsibilities, resources and time-frame for implementation are determined. Participants determine which government and non-governmental agencies will be given responsibilities for carrying out the agreed agenda. A time frame is defined for putting in place the policy changes needed to implement the action plan and the operational steps to be taken. Lastly, the group identifies the resources - foreign or domestic - that

will be used to implement the programme. The phase ends with a commitment from the various partners to providing or mobilizing the resources.

PAP incorporates the following five basic components:

- i **Main Policy Direction** The main policy direction is an explicit formulation of a fundamental policy reform derived from the empirical perceptions of issues and needs in a given country and tailored to the conditions and circumstances prevailing in that country. It entails:
 - an analysis of issues, needs and national conditions
 - an assessment of priorities and objectives
 - identification, appraisal and selection of options.
- ii **Key Measures:** The key measures are selected option(s) and are designed for the purpose of putting the fundamental policy direction into practice. They are the 'backbone' of the Policy Action Plan methodology.
- iii **Supporting Measures:** Supporting or complementary measures are designed to support the key measures with a view to securing operational success of the policy reform and/or creating favourable conditions, and/or neutralizing adverse side effects.

- iv Responsibilities:** The policy action plan requires an outline of the Executing Agencies and Institutions participating in policy implementation along with a brief description of their roles and responsibilities, together with a statement on the authority and capacity which must be assigned to them for successful policy implementation.
- v Time and Resources:** To render the policy action plan feasible, it is important to determine the sequence and the time required for all necessary key and supporting measures. It is also necessary to identify the resources required.

The first step in Policy Action Planning would therefore require NGOs and GOs to get together and:

STEP (i)

Identify key issues and priorities where change should be effected.

This information will help define the need and specify the target. There are a number of techniques that can be used at this step. A common practice is to select strategy groups in various organizations to identify key issues, constraints and functional deficiencies.

STEP (ii)

Decide what policy objectives are needed to address the priority issue. Broad, far reaching, or amorphous goals are narrowed to one or two specific measurable ones in order to give the action plan a clear direction.

STEP (iii)

Identify and appraise Policy Options relevant and applicable to achieve the selected Policy Objective with regard to the overall objective. The choice of policy options may be based on the following:

- Conditions for success i.e. which options are likely to meet with more success;
- Possible consequences and effects;
- Contribution to objectives; and
- Cost.

STEP (iv)

Identify and specify key measures necessary to implement the selected policy options. As these key measures are the backbone of the Policy Action Plan, they should be central to goal achievement and geared towards implementation.

STEP (v)

Identify conditions of success and inhibiting factors for the stated Policy Option and Indicate supporting measures (governmental action) required to meet these conditions/factors. The supporting measures are aimed at creating facilitating or empowering conditions either within the main agencies destined to implement the key measures, or in their environments where constraints to successful policy implementation could be expected.

STEP (vi)

Appraise the PAP outline with regard to the Policy objective and overall objective along the following criterias.

- a Is it feasible?
- b Is it sufficient to achieve policy objective and overall objective?
- c Is it consistent?
- d What are its benefits/costs and significance?
- e What potential hazards may emerge?
- f Which actions are urgent? Short term and Long term requirements?
- g What is the technical and organizational capacity?
- h What is the domestic resource potential?

STEP (vii)

Indicate agencies and institutions whose participation is necessary to execute the action plan. Generally the following agencies and institutions may be participating bodies:

- Parliamentary Institutions,
- Governmental Agencies, Ministries,
- Executing Agencies
- Political Parties,
- Legislative Body,
- Multilateral and Bilateral Agencies,
- Advisory Councils.

STEP (viii)

Describe and assess the tasks and functions of the participating individuals, agencies, and ministries and what they will need to execute the action plan.

Define who does what in the action plan with regards to:

- a Detailing content of action plan,
- b Decision-making,
- c Execution,
- d Coordination,
- e Monitoring,
- f Control.

Assign responsibility for achieving each goal to one person, even though the contribution of many may be essential for success. Give them responsibility for one to two months to achieve the target. Make sure that team members clearly understand their responsibility and do not permit them to turn offers of help and support into opportunities to pass the buck.

STEP (ix)

Estimate the time required for initiating and achieving general commitment and for detailing the PAP-outline (PHASE II) to achieve national commitment for planning and implementation of measures.

STEP (x)

Determine sequence and time allowance for planning and implementation of the key and supporting measures.

STEP (xi)

Estimate the point in time when measures will take effect.

Provide rough estimates for the time needed for:

- the progress towards reaching agreement on the need for reform (commitment);

- preparatory studies;
- consultations with parties to be affected by the policy actions;
- detailing of reform contents;
- going through legislation and making the necessary administrative arrangements up to a roughly estimated point in time when the measures may become effective.

STEP (xii)

Estimate the resources needed to plan and implement the key and supporting measures.

STEP (xiii)

Look for institutions to provide these resources.

Initiation Committee

Once the Policy Action Plan has been outlined it has to be strongly supported and monitored by a group of influential politicians, authorities and other actors to achieve the national commitment for policy reforms, to formulate them in detail and to implement them. The follow-up program consists of:

- preparatory actions formally necessary for commitment and
- supporting actions to influence positive policy decisions

For the purpose, an Initiation Committee has to be established. The following steps need to be considered:

- Who are to be the members of the Initiation Committee to initiate and monitor the outlined Policy Action Plan?
- Who will be the person in charge of PAP in the Initiation Committee?
- How shall the members communicate and cooperate?
- What are their roles and responsibilities?
- When and where will the Initiation Committee meet?

Once an Initiation Committee has been formed, thought should be given to what preparations are necessary to bring about national consensus and institutional cooperation. Accordingly, the Committee has to decide how to follow-up to initiate the policy reform:

- Which activities are necessary to achieve the general national commitment for Policy Action Planning?
- Which activities are necessary to overcome political obstacles and to get political support for going on?
- Who takes care of these activities, who is involved?

When shall these activities be finalized?

Some Basic Considerations of this Methodology

Given the variety of issues and diversity of problem mix, prefabricated action plans cannot be implemented randomly. Instead, policy actions have to be derived from the empirical perceptions of issues and needs in a given constituency/sector/country and tailored to the conditions and circumstances prevailing in that environment.

An issue that runs through all stages of delineating policy measures is the importance of recognizing interdependencies or "system effects" in designing policy actions. Measures that are considered important in solving one problem may create another problem in some other area. In this way the success of policy actions pursued to enhance efficiency in public sector operations is often limited and far from satisfactory, unless appropriate complementary actions are put in place to compensate for impeding effects.

Once some success has been achieved on a first set of objectives, it should be possible to repeat the process and provide reinforcement to shoot for more ambitious targets which may be extensions of the first goal or additional goals.

Work-planning disciplines are essential to successful implementation of the action plan. In many instances, individuals/agencies responsible for each goal or subgoal are expected to provide a written work plan of steps to be taken to reach the goal, how progress will be measured and how it will be reported. It requires the joint efforts of politicians, policy makers,

authorities and other actors to achieve the national commitment for policy reforms and to formulate them in detail and implement them.

Lastly, policy action planning, if implemented with care, at the level of the government, assists in critically analyzing problems of policy formulation, planning and implementation. At the level of the NGOs, the methodology increases their knowledge in strategic planning and aids in developing strategies to implement policy actions/objectives. It also fosters better cooperation and team spirit among the policy makers at the top and various actors/groups/constituencies. At the grassroots level, action planning increases awareness of the issues and problems related to the various units and it equips them with skills necessary to cope with and manage change.

Workshop on Action Planning

A training workshop can be conducted to introduce the action planning method to strategy groups or country teams to develop outline versions of action plans to address problems in their constituencies. The workshop provides a forum for free thought where, detached from everyday pressures some fundamental thinking can be done as to what strategies would really be desirable for addressing the crucial issues in individual constituencies, agencies or countries. The basic idea is that the strategy groups or country teams outline a strategic framework indicating the basic policy direction, identifying areas for decision and action, and outlining the means for those actions.

Notes

- ¹ David Korten, *Micropolicy reform: The Role of Private Voluntary Agencies*, Working Paper No. 12 of the National Association of Schools of Public Administration Washington D.C.: 1986.
- ² Edith Stokey and Richard Zechauser, *A Primer for Policy Analysis*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1977, pp. 320-25.
- ³ Brian W. Hogwood and Lewis A. Gunn, *Policy Analysis for the Real World*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1986, pp. 13-18.
- ⁴ Ibid., pp.23-24.
- ⁵ Hogwood and Gunn, Ibid., pp.26-29.
- ⁶ Ibid. p.269.