

# CSOs & Policy Dialogue



A Manual for  
Civil Society  
Organizations in  
East Africa

# **CSOs & Policy Dialogue: A Manual for Civil Society Organizations in East Africa**

**Enhancing the Capacities of Civil Society Organizations to Engage in Policy Dialogue**

**2020**

With funding from



This manual was established within the Consortium Project “CSOs and Policy Dialogue: Further Strengthening Capacities of CSOs Engaging in Policy Dialogue”, implemented under the lead of HORIZONT3000 and funded by the Austrian Development Agency with funds from the Austrian Development Cooperation and by the Austrian consortium partners CARE Austria, Caritas Austria, SOS Children’s Villages Austria, Austrian Red Cross as well as DKA-Austria.

The manual is based on desk reviews and experiences made by a working group, composed of representatives of the partner organizations in East Africa and supported by the Project Coordinator and two external consultants. Cases and examples from CSO experiences were provided by the East African partners and by Mr. Cyprian Nyamwamu.

Pictures shown in this manual were taken during project activities and/or provided by the involved partner organizations.

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Printed:	Medienfabrik Graz, March 2020

## Acknowledgements

As the Coordinator of the Consortium Project, I would like to thank all working group members and supporting consultants, who contributed to the content of this manual, as well as the members of the steering group, who represent the Austrian Consortium Partners, for their valuable feedback along the process.

Additionally, on behalf of the Consortium, I wish to thank all Partner Organizations within the project for their tireless efforts to contribute to more just societies through inclusive policy frameworks, as well as the Austrian Development Agency ADA for their continued support in these undertakings.



Kristina Kroyer

## Austrian and East African Consortium Partners



List of Acronyms

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DESECE	Development Education Services for Community Development
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GROOTS	Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MIONET	Marsabit Indigenous Organizations Network
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PACIDA	Pastoralist Community Initiative and Development Assistance
PD	Policy Dialogue
WORUDET	Women and Rural Development Network

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

From 2014 to 2016, a Consortium of five Austrian NGOs led by HORIZONT3000 and involving the Austrian Red Cross, SOS Children's Villages Austria, Caritas Austria as well as CARE Austria, implemented a pilot project with the objective of strengthening capacities of East African NGOs in the field of policy dialogue. With funding from the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the operational unit of Austrian Development Cooperation, seven organizations in East Africa were trained on different tools and ways of engagement in policy dialogue and implemented action funds for policy dialogue initiatives.

The second phase of the consortium project started in January 2017 and is continued with the promotion and implementation of proven approaches and activities for a successful policy dialogue in order to support CSOs in promoting the interests and needs of marginalized populations in policy making processes. The project provides tailor-made capacity development and financial support for the policy dialogue engagement of partner organizations. In 2020 the project initiated its third phase.

The partner organizations involved in the project are: DESECE, GROOTS Kenya, Kenya Red Cross, Rwanda Red Cross, SOS Children's Village Uganda, SOS Children's Village Tanzania, MIONET, CARE Uganda, WORUDET and PACIDA. These organizations work in differing fields of action, including agroecology, civic education, women's rights, disaster risk management, first aid, children's rights and others. However, they face similar challenges when it comes to policy dialogue. In the course of their learning and sharing processes facilitated through the Consortium Policy Dialogue Project and their own policy dialogue initiatives, countless insights were generated, relevant knowledge produced and meaningful experiences exchanged.

In the first years of the project, important products have been developed collectively by partner organizations, network partners and other stakeholders, such as the "Guidelines on Policy Dialogue for Civil Society Organizations" (see chapter 9). Based on these products the partner community of the consortium project decided in the beginning of 2017 to call for a working group in order to steer the process of developing a "Policy Dialogue Manual", consolidating insights and learnings from the project.

The working group comprised shifting members from seven partner organizations representing the four countries the project is implemented in (Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda). The group was accompanied by the Project Coordinator of HORIZONT3000 and consultants and received feedback from their peers in the partner community of the Consortium Project.

This manual is therefore based on the knowledge gathered by the participating organizations in the course of the pilot and the follow-up phase of the Policy Dialogue Project. It draws from inputs received from experts in the fields and experiences made by partners in implementing their policy dialogue initiatives and is backed up by a research on existing manuals, referring to further readings and proven tools. It is meant to support different stakeholders including CSOs in East Africa in their engagement in policy dialogue processes. The manual can serve as an introduction to or a "refresher" on policy dialogue related concepts, tools and "things to do", as well as a handy reference in providing individual/group training. It also outlines case studies regarding the four countries (Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda and Tanzania) as well as challenges CSOs may face and inspiration on how to handle them.

### Why the Policy Dialogue Manual?

This policy manual has been developed to respond to a big need for a highly cooperative and effective approach to sustainable development coordination, governance and administration. The following are some of the reasons why this manual has been created.

- To facilitate value for money and aid effectiveness, which is necessary for impactful programing and interventions in the developing world.
- To popularize and enhance the use of the policy dialogue approach to development administration and initiatives.
- To help technical staff at CSOs, trainers and researchers on policy dialogue to understand this approach and to widen and deepen their understanding.
- To aid partnerships in development at a local level, which is necessary for enhancing resource mobilization and sustainability of investments and programs.
- To share findings and learnings from the initial and successive policy dialogue workshops within the mentioned project.

## HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL?

This manual is supposed to support CSOs, which aim at initiating or improving their engagement in policy dialogue. It gives an overview on aspects to consider, steps to take, ways to engage, capacities to build and challenges to expect.

It shall inspire organizations for what they can do in this broad field of engagement without intimidating them by presenting one right way of doing things. There is no one-size-fits-all solution for policy dialogue. On the contrary, CSOs should feel encouraged to try and test new approaches, methods and tools in order to find out what works in their specific context of influence. Whether they engage on the local community level or on the county or even national level, whether they engage because they are invited by government actors to participate in policy making processes or because they claim spaces of participation in challenging political contexts: The manual shall help CSOs to prepare for challenges and mitigate risks, emphasizing the benefits of a dialogue approach to policy change.

The manual, therefore, serves as a handy reference for the various steps a CSO takes in its PD engagement. It is recommended to read chapter 2 “Conceptualizing Policy Dialogue” before diving into the other chapters. While many CSOs are already engaging in policy dialogue without calling it that way, this chapter shall help analyze their own engagement in a more systematic way in order to approach activities more strategically and target-oriented and, by doing so, also more effectively.

Chapter 3 “Preparing for Policy Dialogue” outlines certain aspects to consider when engaging in policy spaces. It is closely related to chapter 4 “Engaging in Policy Dialogue”, where the main groups of actors to be involved in policy dialogue processes are highlighted. These chapters may be consulted in the needed moment. They include guidelines and recommendations on how to approach a certain step or actor, many including tools as well as templates that can support a CSO in putting theory into action.

Chapter 5 “Strategies for Effective Policy Dialogue Engagement” provides support in combining the various methods in a way that fits the CSO’s mandate, context of involvement and type of organization. Such strategies should be combined with a

reflection on the various “Skills for Successful Policy Dialogue Engagement”, compiled in chapter 6, and a clear plan for the “Monitoring and Evaluation of Policy Dialogue Initiatives”, for which chapter 7 gives food for thought and advice.

Chapter 9 “Challenges Faced by CSO Engagement in Policy Dialogue” compiles common difficulties experienced by CSOs and gives suggestions on how to overcome and mitigate them. The chapter is strongly based on the experiences made by the project’s implementing partner organizations in East Africa and directly links to the “CSO Guidelines and Recommendations” in chapter 10 that were established within the project.

Case studies and examples can be found throughout the manual in order to support the reader in relating theoretical concepts and methodological approaches to their own work. Additionally, the manual closes with a compilation of case studies from the project, conceived as an easily consultable source for inspiration to others.



## 2. CONCEPTUALIZING POLICY DIALOGUE

### Understanding Policy Dialogue

**Policy:** A policy is a set of rules, regulations or guidelines that are sector specific and include a strategy/program, budget and institutional arrangements for its implementation. A good policy is a product of a democratic process and of exercising civic mandates and obligations towards the various segments of a society.

**Dialogue:** To dialogue means to enter into negotiations with an open mind and to share viewpoints and experiences, while treating each other with mutual respect and consider each other as partners not adversaries. A dialogue intends to achieve a common goal in the interest of all parties. It is based on transparency and accountability.

**Policy Dialogue (PD):** Policy dialogue is an approach of development, which emphasizes cooperation, relationship building and common understanding between various actors including governments, intermediaries and communities. It favors a dialogue approach so that development is understood as a partnership rather than a competition or a battle field. It is an approach that emphasizes sustainability of initiatives, because transparency, accountability as well as resource mobilization and utilization are observed by all actors.

PD involves people from different interest groups sitting together to focus on an issue that they have a mutual, but not necessarily common, interest in, while recognizing the contributions of each group to the issue at stake.

PD is a continuous process going beyond individual events or campaigns and built upon strong relationships with all stakeholders. It is not a mass meeting, neither an event controlled by a single interest group, nor an event for sharing research results with the public or an occasion to present prepared resolutions or deliver an ultimatum.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> WIEGO (2013): Conducting a Policy Dialogue to achieve results. [http://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/resources/files/WIEGO\\_Policy\\_Dialogue\\_Guide\\_English.pdf](http://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/resources/files/WIEGO_Policy_Dialogue_Guide_English.pdf) [accessed 7.7.2018]

Policy dialogue helps organizations to:

- Work with the government and other stakeholders harmoniously and in a cooperative working relationship to identify a policy gap/need and respond to it in a concerted manner.
- Mitigate harm that comes from poorly conceived, badly formulated or inadequately implemented policies and unreviewed policies, which may cause long-term damage to the affected communities.
- Strengthen the partnership between government and non-governmental agencies and actors.
- Get policy makers to hear the demand side of policy and to increase the delivery of goods and services (quantity and quality) for the beneficiary population.
- Deal with cynicism and despair in the community that may find it challenging to engage with public officers in government.

The possible outcomes/results of successful policy dialogue processes include:

- Formulation of reformed policies and laws with clear budgetary allocations.
- Increased awareness of justice and changed opinions of leaders, the community or other specific interest groups.
- More democratic, inclusive, transparent and responsive decision making processes at the national and local governance level.
- Empowerment of the rights holders (citizenry) to participate in policy processes and hold the duty bearers (government) accountable.
- Increased unity, tolerance and solidarity amongst beneficiary groups because of availability of information and involvement.
- Improved governance and service delivery on a sustainable basis.
- Inclusion of minority groups' voices and rights in policy processes.

### What Is Policy Advocacy?

Policy advocacy is a strategy in the policy dialogue approach and sometimes used synonymously. It is the deliberate process of persuasive communication aimed at influencing policy change and implementation. Policy advocacy is mainly used by the intermediaries (non-state actors) to assist the beneficiary or affected communities to get the government authorities to adopt a policy and deliver a service or to take action, where it is most needed. It can include activities such as campaigning, lobbying, consultation, negotiation, community engagement, media engagement, development of position papers, policy briefs, petitions etc.

It has to be noted that policy advocacy is part of policy dialogue. However, policy dialogue is bigger and a complete approach to development partnership, not just getting government or policy makers to embrace the proposals of the communities or citizens, but recognizing their roles and ability to participate in the process.



### Who Initiates a Policy Dialogue Process?

Communities, CSOs and governments are at times willing to initiate PD relationships. Although CSOs in many contexts have proved more than willing to engage in PD, it must not be assumed that only CSOs can initiate such a partnership. Government officials often are highly interested in initiating a cooperative relationship with civil society actors for service delivery, to carrying out a research, mobilize resources etc. Also donor agencies have in many cases been the ones initiating policy dialogue to ensure that the implementing CSOs that they fund do not fail in creating the impact they had planned for due to a lack of cooperation with the governmental agencies on the ground.

## CSO Approaches to Policy Dialogue

### Civil Society Organization (CSO)

A CSO is a group of people operating in a community or society in a non-state related and not-for-profit oriented way in order to pursue shared interests in the public domain.<sup>2</sup> CSOs can have various degrees of formalization and include village associations, community-based and faith-based organizations, non-governmental and social movement organizations, interest groups and professional associations, research institutes etc.

Although any CSO can and should engage in policy dialogue, this manual mainly addresses CSOs as formalized organizations with a clear organizational structure and budgets to operate with.

### Scales of Engagement

No matter on which policy level (community, district, county, national, international) a CSOs is engaging on, it should rather strive to approach policy dialogue on a strategic organizational level than merely as a project or program in order to promote its sustainability.

<sup>2</sup> OEDC (2009): Better Aid. Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness: Findings, Recommendations and Good Practices



The two levels are as described below:

- **Project scale:** Under project scale, PD engagement is bound and limited to project activities. The whole organization including the board members may not be aware of this kind of engagement and therefore may not be sustainable.
- **Organizational (strategic) scale:** This is where PD is owned and driven by the leadership of an organization (Executive Director and members of the board). This includes having PD embedded into the strategy of the organization (with budgets allocated for its implementation) and having all staff inducted and implementing it. Long-term engagement leads to greater success, stronger coalitions and greater organizational capacity.

For effective and meaningful policy dialogue engagement, the organizational structures from the field staff to the director have the obligations to make it work. It is important that senior or top management take lead in the institutionalization of policy dialogue through providing strategic guidance, support and allocation of resources to the staff to implement the agreed on policy dialogue actions. This is why it is crucial to have strategies and structures in place.

### Strategy for Engagement

Having an organization-wide policy dialogue strategy is one of the ways to ensure integration, sustainability and collective understanding of PD in an organization. The strategy should include:

1. Goals and objectives
2. Problem statement (based on evidence)
3. Target beneficiaries and target actors
4. Stakeholder-focused outcomes (as a basis for monitoring the progress)
5. Activities (including audience, channels, messages)
6. Roadmap (considering political schedule/events)
7. Monitoring and Evaluation plan
8. Budget (plan)

### Organizational Structures

For effective policy dialogue to be sustained there is need to put structures in place that make strategy delivery possible. These are mainly structures to facilitate the following:

- **Communication:** Involved persons should know everything they need to know in order to do what they need to do effectively. Therefore, communication structures that ensure a good information flow are key.
- **Cooperation:** Participatory and inclusive policy dialogue is only possible when relevant actors cooperate. For cooperation to work and be nurtured there is need for trust building.



- Coordination: Actors need clear coordination in order to move and pull in the same direction consistently and avoid episodic or even contradicting actions that can ruin the cooperation.
- Control: Clear direction is key to ensure that the PD engagement achieves efficiency and effectiveness, but also to ensure that involved persons are acting consistently to the values and principles set out at the start of the engagement.
- Cohesion: Effective structures ensure that involved persons work as a community that is pursuing common goals and objectives. This is not achievable, if the structures are not oriented towards achieving a cohesive working relationship.

Roles and Ways of Engagement

CSOs can assume different roles in policy dialogue engagement and may combine them to achieve greater results including but not limited to:

- Informing/advising the constituency, duty bearers and partners through research and presentation of findings/results, media engagement and awareness raising
- Influencing/lobbying decision makers through joint action approach (supporting and supplementing their work) or duty bearer obligation approach (holding them accountable for their responsibilities)
- Confrontational or integrative approaches, negotiating win-win solutions in a give-and-take atmosphere

CSOs could apply any of the approaches and strategies mentioned depending on:

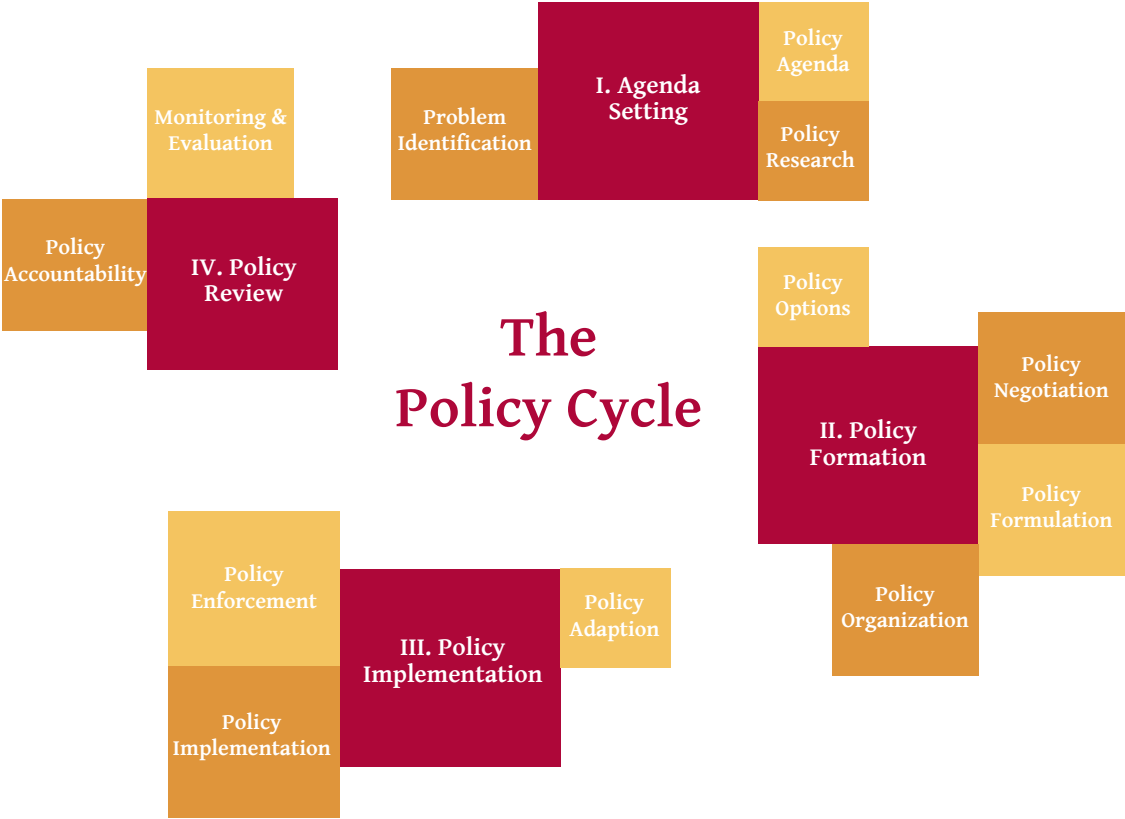
- The type of stakeholders they are dealing with (community, policy makers, media etc.)
- The level of engagement (local, regional, national levels) or the phase of the policy (whether it is at a policy agenda setting, policy formation, policy implementation or policy review stage—see next page for the policy cycle
- The issue/topic at stake (issues with good government reception vs. “hot” issues suppressed by the government)
- The general mandate of the CSO (service delivery/complementing government work) in the decision influencing and policy shaping area

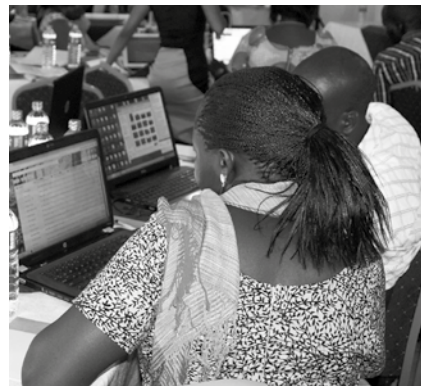
<sup>3</sup> Ecoinformatics international: The Policy Cycle. [http://www.geostrategis.com/p\\_policy.htm](http://www.geostrategis.com/p_policy.htm) [accessed: 7.7.2018]

Policy Cycle and CSO Entry Points

CSOs entry points in a policy dialogue can occur in four different phases of the policy cycle namely agenda setting, policy formation, policy implementation and policy review. “While the policy cycle is far from linear and circular, it is important to understand the links between the various phases to improve the process.”<sup>3</sup>

This section will show how relationship building and partnership can be created at any of the four stages or phases of the policy cycle.





### 1. Agenda Setting

Policy dialogue can be initiated at the policy agenda setting phase. Agenda setting consists of three steps, including identification and issue framing, agenda setting and policy research:

- **Problem Identification and Issue Framing:** Identifying a clearly defined and specific problem is the first critical step to successfully implement a problem-solving process. The issue being addressed must be the priority need for that policy at that time for that community. Once a problem requiring a policy solution has been identified, it is important that it is presented/framed in a way that it will gain most support from various stakeholders.<sup>4</sup>
- **Policy Agenda Planning/Prioritization:** As a next step, the “problem” must be understood as a policy agenda. Stakeholders outside of a government can suggest issues to be addressed by policy makers/duty bearers, but government actors must become engaged in the process for a problem to be formally addressed through a policy.<sup>5</sup> This is the process that makes it possible to transform a social issue into a government policy issue.
- **Policy Research:** This is the process of building, finding and using evidence to provide backing to the policy problem and propose recommendations to address the identified problems.

<sup>4&5</sup>The Policy Project: The Process: Policy Development. <http://www.policyproject.com/policycircle/content.cfm?a0=4> [accessed: 7.7.2018]

### Agenda Setting Tip

A CSO or a coalition of CSOs should always involve the governmental officials at the national or sub-national level in the agenda setting stage. This can be done by requesting any data that the government may avail in order to inform a study the CSO is conducting around a known issue locally or nationally. Once the study has been conducted, it will be key to involve all stakeholders in launching and releasing the study findings, clearly outlining the recommendations of the research or fact-finding mission. Government officials sometimes can deny the facts, if they reflect badly on the government. The CSO is responsible for framing the study in a way that is supported by the government in order to assure that it plays a key role.

A church development agency working in Tanzania informed participants in a policy dialogue training that they had conducted a study showing that a water reticulation project by the government had failed miserably to alleviate the water problem in the area. The government officials in the area summoned the media and issued contrary but made up statistics showing that 93 % of the district area’s residents had access to clean water. The donor agency that was intending to fund the project based on the research conducted by the church agency withdrew the funding because of fear that this could potentially bring up conflict with the government officials. In the end, it took much consultation initiated by the donor for the government to revise its data and admit that the officials had relied on incomplete research, showing that there was need for the project in the area.

### 2. Policy Formation

The four key areas at this stage are development of policy options and strategies, policy negotiations, policy formulation and policy organization.

- **Policy Options and Strategies:** This involves defining the goals and objectives for the policy change and generating a list of policy options that you want policy makers to consider. Putting forward more than one option shows stakeholders that you are flexible and willing to negotiate. Assessing several options prepares you to explain why there are certain ones that you will not support and others that you consider an absolute minimum to address the issue at hand.

- **Policy Negotiation:** This involves mapping out allies and opponents and persuading them to support your proposed policy options and strategies. Start with more sympathetic and supportive individuals rather than pouring your energy into the “toughest nut.” This helps you to create a critical mass of support to handle the tougher ones. Choose a mixture of approaches to build support for your policy (e.g., quiet negotiation, sharing information, public briefs, letter-writing etc.)
- **Policy Formulation:** This includes drafting and/or revising the policy. The CSO should collaborate with policy makers in policy formation, while considering the specific country’s policy formulation context. Gather other policy examples to assist with organizing the draft policy document. Prepare to revise as many times as necessary. “Seeing it in writing” will often reignite opposing forces. Consult with a legal professional about the policy to ensure it is in line with other legislations, especially the country’s constitution and relevant laws.
- **Policy Organization:** Policy organization becomes a critical part of the formulation, because it is organization that ensures that a clear budgeting and costing including sources of funds is carried out. It also ensures that the right personnel are available or will be sources to aid in the implementation. An ideal policy could include: the purpose of the policy (goals and objectives), budgetary allocations, institutional frameworks to implement the policy, description of the regulations and sanctions, procedures for dealing with non-compliance, a plan for promoting and disseminating the policy and a plan for monitoring and evaluating the policy.

#### Policy Formation Tip

For a CSO to get involved in policy formation great skills of stakeholder engagement are required: lobbying, advocacy and negotiations especially with government officials. Governments can be slow in considering the research evidence available and the drafts of the policy document, especially if the government was not fully involved from the word go in the preparation of the document.

Policy organization is critical for the success of policy implementation. There is need for meticulous policy strategy preparation, which outlines what is required in terms of personnel, financial resources, community involvement, institutional preparations and rules for a policy, a law or a program to be implemented beforehand.

<sup>6</sup>WHO: Implementation and enforcement of legislation. <http://www.who.int/tobacco/control/legislation/implementation/en/> [7.7.2018]

### 3. Policy Implementation

There are three aspects to policy implementation. These are: policy adoption, policy implementation and policy enforcement.

- **Policy Adoption:** Before a policy can be implemented, it must be adopted and assented to by the government and the citizenry. This gives it a legal backing for application.
- **Policy Implementation:** This involves the actions that will be undertaken to put the adopted law into effect. Implementation should be complemented by public awareness campaigns.
- **Policy Enforcement:** Enforcement is crucial, as without it a policy will face implementation challenges. It is necessary to ensure there is enough capacity to support implementation by the enforcement agency. Penalties for breach of the policy also need to be tailored to avoid enforcement difficulties.<sup>6</sup>

#### Policy Implementation Tip

Policy dialogue is probably most crucial for the success and effectiveness in the implementation stage.

CSOs should focus on contributing resources to the implementation process. SOS Tanzania and CARE Uganda are the leading lights in this regard. They have shared their practice as regards policy implementation support, which was truly encouraging. SOS Tanzania does not only lead in providing services for children, but also in capacity building of government officers to enhance their ability in policy enforcement. CARE Uganda works with district administrators in Northern Uganda together with WORUDET. They provide trainings, where administrators obtain capacities in land surveying and titling in order to enable the government officials to secure the land rights of women, returning from camps after many years of displacement by the LRA war.

#### 4. Policy Review

It is important for any policy to undergo periodic reviews to ensure that it is dealing with the issues identified in stage one. Effective policy review consists of policy accountability and policy monitoring and evaluation.

- **Policy Accountability:** This refers to the obligation of a government institution or an organization to account for its policy activities, accept responsibility for policy failures and to disclose the results of a policy process, success or failures in a transparent manner.
- **Policy Monitoring and Evaluation:** Policy monitoring is the continuous process of collecting and recording information in order to track progress towards the policy objectives, while evaluation refers to the assessment of the implementation process to determine the achievement of results and the impact of a policy. During the M&E process an understanding of the merit, worth and utility of a policy is developed.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> CDC: Policy Evaluation <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/about/evaluation.html> [accessed 7.7.2018]

#### Policy Review Tip

At this stage the focus lies on getting cooperation from all stakeholders in order to gather evidence of the activities carried out and the change that has occurred because of the investment.

It is important that a CSO working with sensitive parts of data and information in areas such as security works closely in a trusted relationship with the authorities in order to ensure that the information they publish in their researches is not outrightly rejected, labeled as false or fabricated data. If not done carefully, policy review can be counter-productive on the CSO doing the policy review. Social audits, which are highly recommended to CSOs, can only be credible, if organizations relied on government documents, although many times it can be a challenge to access government records in order to base the evaluation on these documents and reports.





### 3. PREPARING FOR POLICY DIALOGUE

Effective policy dialogue requires preparedness in order to avoid lack of direction and participation, compromise and exposure of the work you want to do to improve the lives of the communities. In this section we have assessed the following considerations to achieve effective policy dialogue.

#### Understanding Policy Making Processes

Individuals within the community have different perspectives on issues. For example: A person providing a service may have more information about the service that is delivered than an informal worker seeking the service; a woman worker with children may have different health needs and greater difficulty in accessing health services than an administrator realizes; while a street vendor and a city official may not agree on how public space should be used. A policy dialogue process helps people to see problems from each other's perspectives. This leads to better understanding and brings about meaningful improvements to policies or programs. When done well, policy dialogue processes can be powerful advocacy platforms for CSOs and valuable sources of information and solutions for duty bearers too.

It is important to note that each community or country context comes with different practices and procedures of policy making, implementation and enforcement—all depending on their constitutions and legal frameworks. Therefore, CSOs should take time to carry out a proper review and equip themselves with knowledge of the policy space and processes in their country.

It is equally important to note that besides “regulative mechanisms”—the formal content of laws, policies and procedures—“normative and cultural mechanisms” are strongly influencing policy processes too. These include norms, values, ideologies, beliefs, language etc. Understanding a policy environment and designing engagement processes thus also involves these dimensions when aiming for sustainable and lasting change.

A good policy making process includes the following features:<sup>8</sup>

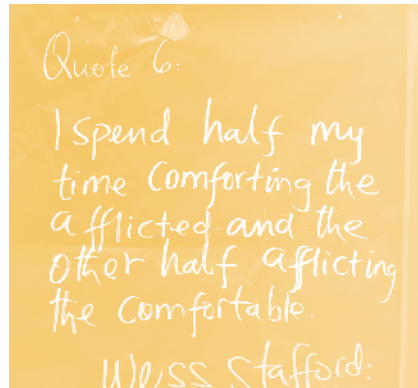
- Forward looking: clearly defines outcomes that the policy is designed to achieve; takes a long-term view based on statistical trends and informed predictions of the social, economic and political situation of at least five years.
- Outward looking: takes into account influencing factors in the national, regional and international situation.
- Creative, innovative and flexible: questions established ways of dealing with things while encouraging new and creative ideas; wherever possible, the process should be open to comments and suggestions.
- Evidence-based: promotes decisions of policy makers based on the best available evidence from a wide range of sources.
- Inclusive/consultative: takes into account the impact and meets the needs of all people directly or indirectly affected by the policy; involves key stakeholders and rights-holders directly and recognizes their roles and responsibilities in addressing the policy problem.
- Learns lessons: is informed by experience and considers what has worked and what has not worked elsewhere in the world.

#### Diagnosing a Policy Problem

Different actors will perceive different problems and will further link them to different systems and frameworks that condition the problem. It is therefore paramount to analyze and critically reflect on an identified problem, before initiating a policy dialogue process. Only if a problem is understood well and agreed upon by the driving actors of the initiative, solutions can be developed and strategies designed.

<sup>8</sup>Centre for Management and Policy Studies (2001): Better Policy-Making [https://www.civilservant.org.uk/library/policy/2001\\_cmps-better\\_policy\\_making.pdf](https://www.civilservant.org.uk/library/policy/2001_cmps-better_policy_making.pdf) [accessed: 9.2.2019]





Where a problem analysis starts significantly affects the outcome (e.g. focusing on the substance of an issue versus focusing on the actors and policies in the policy arena). Also the kind of questions that guide the problem analysis will substantially affect its outcome. There is a tendency to adopt a problem formulation that is too narrow, focusing all attention on one specific solution direction ('jumping to solutions'). It is therefore important to be critical about the initial framing of the problem: Is the initial formulation appropriate? Does it preclude the search for options that may, in the end, be more attractive than those pointed out by the initial formulation?<sup>9</sup>

A good problem diagnosis should further:

- provide adequate basis to decide on whether or not the situation is worth further (policy engagement) efforts: Is there a real problem? Do opportunities for improvement or amelioration exist or can they be created?
- provide the insights required to determine the nature and extent of the intervention activities to be undertaken: What purposes/values are important and for whom? What types of associated activities are called for?

The problem diagnosis may therefore include:

- a causal analysis or theory of change (Which factors influence the outcomes of interest?)
- an actor analysis (Who is affected by and/or shapes the problem situation?)
- and an institutional analysis (What formal and informal rules shape the policy field?)<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> and <sup>10</sup> Thyssen (2013): Diagnosing Policy Problem Situations. In: Public Policy Analysis, New Developments

## Gender Mainstreaming and Social Inclusion

All policies developed in any policy area affect all persons differently, because of their diversities (gender, age, disabilities, sexual orientation etc). Therefore, policies should be rooted in the realities of all targeted rights holders and the policy dialogue's aim should be to involve the variety of affected groups and individuals across the policy cycle.

For instance the issue of women's reduced mobility is very common in certain contexts and can contribute directly to hindering women's participation in advocacy and information campaigns. These issues vary from one society to another, rural to urban contexts etc. Mainstreaming gender in policy dialogue is therefore a way of identifying how a certain policy issue affects men and women differently and of developing the measures that will ensure that all persons can meaningfully participate in policy development. It is equally important to consider persons with disabilities and other marginalized social groups and reflect on how they could be affected by policy processes, when developing new policies. At its best, policies should take an intersectional approach and take into consideration multiple social identities—gender, ability, race, geography as well as economical background—to be a truly participative and equitable process.

In order to achieve gender mainstreaming and social inclusion in policy development, conducting a gender and/or vulnerability analysis is key for developing contextualized and responsive advocacy goals and strategies as part of risk mitigation. This is the single most important way to tailor policy work to the particular needs of marginalized social groups and individuals. Furthermore, policy positions and questions should be developed with and for marginalized people and messaging should be tailored to their needs. This can also be achieved through working in coalition with organizations and movements representing them. Joining forces with these stakeholders will bring in some specific expertise that might be missing and will also broaden the support base.





Finally, monitoring and evaluations should also incorporate gender, age and disability status disaggregated data to make sure that progress reflects the realities of these different groups and individuals.

### Ensuring Conflict Sensitivity

Conflict sensitivity refers to an approach that entails careful analysis and monitoring of the possible positive or negative impacts of policy dialogue activities and its effects on existing tensions or conflicts in a given context. Its objective is to minimize unintended negative consequences (“Do No Harm” Principle) and to maximize the positive impacts on or opportunities to build bridges.<sup>11</sup> It also involves risk identification in conflict sensitive situations and formulating mitigation strategies to avoid being entangled in existing community conflicts, while undertaking policy dialogue.

A conflict sensitivity approach in policy dialogue involves virtues such as: meaningful participation of all stakeholders, inclusiveness, impartiality, transparency, respect, accountability, partnership, complementarity, coherence, flexibility and responsiveness. In use of this approach, the first crucial stage is to conduct a conflict analysis in order to understand the context of a conflict situation before attempting to solve or navigate around it through policy dialogue processes. Important parameters in a conflict analysis include: Understanding the background and history of the conflict, identifying all the relevant groups involved, understanding the perspectives of these groups and how they relate to each other and finally identifying the causes of conflict.

Policy development, formulation, implementation and review are all highly political processes and require trusted relationships with politicians to effectively engage them in policy negotiations. CSOs involved in policy dialogue should therefore show neutrality in contested political matters and focus on the development issues they are advocating for, without showing any strong political bias or affiliation.

<sup>11</sup> Sida (2019): Conflict sensitivity in programme management. In: Peace and Conflict Tool Box [https://www.sida.se/globalassets/sida/eng/partners/peace-and-conflict-tool-box/s209461\\_tool\\_conflict\\_sensitivity\\_in\\_programme\\_management\\_c3.pdf](https://www.sida.se/globalassets/sida/eng/partners/peace-and-conflict-tool-box/s209461_tool_conflict_sensitivity_in_programme_management_c3.pdf) [accessed: 1.12.2019]



### Evidence Gathering and Research

Effective policy dialogue requires solid evidence about the issue, causes and consequences of the barrier or disabling conditions being addressed and the viability of the proposed solution. Research, documentation, publications, seminars, events etc. are all important elements of CSO strategies of enhancing access to information, creating transparency and providing a base for decision-making by the government. Moreover, good research, especially participatory research, helps in consolidating CSO legitimacy both vis-à-vis the people they work with and the decision makers they are targeting.

The following constitute suggestions on how CSOs working on public policy dialogue should conduct the fact finding or research on the policy agenda:

- Search and read policy documents developed by other organizations/government.
- Conduct stakeholder meetings to gather ideas about the nature of the issue or problem and how it might be solved from diverse perspectives.
- Seek legal advice from experts on appropriate approaches to develop or review policies.
- Conduct preliminary baseline surveys on community groups to gauge community satisfaction and gather information for the development of a policy.
- Undertake a desk review of documents such as annual reports—annual reports are historical records of the organization or government departments that may provide information about problems and issues that require policy development.
- Search for policy templates from online sources to ease the work and standardize the policy document.

Additionally, both qualitative and quantitative data are useful in order to have quality evidence that will boost your position and enable success in the dialogue process.

- Qualitative data is obtained mostly through engagement with the community, speaking to various people, groups, stakeholders and key informants to get their views; recording best practices and life stories etc. Qualitative data can also be obtained through observation, especially during community dialogue sessions, site visits and other verification activities. Popular qualitative data collection methods used in policy dialogue include key informant interviews, focus groups discussions, observation and action research.
- Quantitative techniques usually make use of larger sample sizes, because its measurable nature makes that possible and easier. The use of statistics to generate and subsequently analyze this type of data adds credence and credibility to it. Some of the methods used in quantitative data collection include: quantitative surveys, face to face interviews guided by a questionnaire, telephone and web-based interviews e.g. survey monkeys, computer-assisted interviews etc.

#### Note:

For any research to be of any value the findings must be disseminated, widely discussed and understood and then used to inform decisions to create more impact in policy dialogue processes. Evidence comes seldom enough on its own, particularly when operating in an adverse political environment. What matters is the utility of the evidence generated, which in turn must be informed by the analysis of the power relations affecting policy issues as well as the potential risks identified.<sup>12</sup>

Most importantly, the following factors should be considered when embarking on evidence gathering:

- What evidence already exists on the issue? Is it rooted in the organizations' experience? What type of evidence is it (factual, anecdotal, quantitative or qualitative)?
- Is the evidence reliable? Will it help to raise awareness among target audiences?
- Is there a need to collect new or additional evidence? How was the target community involved in data collection?
- How should the evidence be depicted to maximize its impact? This includes the format of presentation to the target audiences (oral presentations by the groups/people affected, e.g. in a public consultation aimed at decision makers or in a documentary aimed at the public, a short written report or fact sheet backed by longer papers detailing the evidence, a policy statement or policy brief etc.).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12 and 13</sup> Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness: Advocacy Toolkit. [https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/120110-of-advocacy\\_toolkit-en-web-2-1.pdf](https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/120110-of-advocacy_toolkit-en-web-2-1.pdf) [accessed 9.2.2019]

## Stakeholder Analysis and Mapping

A stakeholder is any individual, community, group or organization with an interest in the outcome of a policy initiative as a result of being affected positively or negatively by its outcome. Stakeholders are typically diverse and numerous. In any policy dialogue process, it is important to undertake a stakeholder mapping process in order to:

- Identify the level of influence and interests of all stakeholders who may either affect or may be affected by the proposed program/initiative.
- Assess how each stakeholder relates with the community and the issue being advanced.
- Uncover potential conflicts or risks that could jeopardize the feasibility of the initiative.
- Disaggregate larger groupings to capture the concerns of the less powerful (e.g. women, youth, people with disability) or marginalized (ethnic minorities). This can also help to ensure that the policy doesn't overlook or sidestep negative consequences ("Do No Harm" Principle).
- Identify potential participants for a collaborative policy formulation, implementation and monitoring process.
- Analyze key existing relationships (or opportunities to build new ones) that will facilitate implementation of the proposed policy processes.<sup>14</sup>

Besides government actors, also NGOs, research institutions, professional associations, local funding partners and other civil society organizations particularly have pivotal roles to play for your initiative and should be included in the stakeholder mapping. First and foremost, because they can align their aims and activities with the overall policy initiative and planning cycle as well as assist with key studies and localized or decentralized information.

<sup>14</sup> Africa Lead II (2015): Champions for Change Participant Manual [https://www.africleaditf.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Kenya-C4C-Participant-Manual\\_July-2nd-2015.pdf](https://www.africleaditf.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Kenya-C4C-Participant-Manual_July-2nd-2015.pdf) [accessed 1.4.2019]



On the one hand, a stakeholder mapping is key to identify those who are most likely to be your allies and/or who can be persuaded to become allies. This encompasses entities with which the initiative can anticipate opportunities for interaction and cooperation. By affecting their behaviour and attitude they can become important intermediaries and influencers for the cause of your initiative.

On the other hand, stakeholder mapping is equally important to identify those who can stand in the way of achieving your advocacy goals. A stakeholder mapping can help to define strategies on how to deal with those threats by analyzing their interests, spaces and power. Note that in any push for a change there are those who are losing privilege, being held accountable, or being exposed for their actions.

After having identified all stakeholders and assessed their interests and influence on the issue at stake, they can be mapped into four categories within the Power-Interest-Matrix in order to decide on strategies of how to engage and work with each one of them:

Interest in the Policy Issue at Stake	<b>Supporters</b> (high interest in the issue and agreement with your goals, low influence and power): keep informed, em-power, utilize their interest and willingness to partici-pate in the process	<b>Drivers</b> (high interest in the issue at stake, high influence on the process): manage closely, encourage and involve, request and utilize, communicate frequently ( <b>top priority!</b> )
	<b>Bystanders</b> (low interest and low in-fluence): monitor, increase interest and support for the issue	<b>Blockers</b> (low interest in the issue, but high influence on the pro-cess): Keep satisfied, consult and involve, communicate regularly (can be a risk to the issue)
Power on the Policy Process		



Risk Analysis and Mitigation

A risk is a threat or probability that an action or event will affect an entity’s ability to achieve its objectives. In policy dialogue, a risk is anything that may expose the policy dialogue actions and initiatives to risk or that involves the possibility of any other undesirable outcome.

As policy dialogue engagement often happens in challenging political contexts, touches contested topics and involves a series of actors, a careful risk analysis and strategic risk management is essential and should include not only risks on the strategic and operational level (risks for the organization, the project and the team), but also the identification of potential risks to the various allies and beneficiaries (risks for strategic partners and allies, risks for concerned communities).<sup>15</sup>

Risk management is a strategic process and not an event. It should be driven by the management of an organization and streamlined in its operations. It is not about the elimination of risks but rather the management or mitigation of risks. It involves everyone within an entity and is applied at all levels. If done strategically, it reduces surprises, prevents shocks and enhances operational efficiency as resources can be diverted to manage the most potent risks.

Risks management in policy dialogue involves:

- Understanding the policy dialogue objective, which basically helps in situating the risks within the broad framework of the organization’s work as stipulated in its strategic documents.
- Identifying the risks, which involves a scanning of the external environment, evaluation of the internal environment and appraisal of the operational units within the organization.

<sup>15</sup> HELVETAS (2015): Advocacy Concept



- Assessing (categorizing) risks, which involves identifying the drivers of the risk (the causes) and determining the likelihood and impact of each risk. It then culminates in risk rating, indicating the overall relevance of the risk for the organization or initiative.
- Managing risks, which involves developing mitigation measures for the identified risks, either through avoiding the risk, transferring the risk, accepting the risk or controlling the risk. This highly depends on the risk appetite of the organization. This process then culminates in the development of a risk mitigation strategy.
- Implementing the risk mitigation strategy—for each risk there must be a risk owner assigned, who monitors the risk to either downgrade or escalate its categorization to give it more or less attention.

A tool to monitor and manage risks in policy dialogue can therefore look as follows:

Risk Event	Risk Driver	Likelihood	Impact	Rating	Mitigating	Risk Owner
Risk #1						
Risk #2						
Risk #3						

- Common mitigation measures in policy dialogue are described in other chapters and include recommendations to:
- Engage in participatory planning and risk assessment, involve partners and communities.
  - Seek for alliances on different levels and departments of the government and administration.
  - Act through networks, build coalitions and identify and connect committed individuals of civil society, the public and private sector and promote informal coalitions between them.
  - Share information broadly and in an open manner, inform internally as well as externally on sensitive issues through active and regular information exchange with stakeholders.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> HELVETAS (2015): Advocacy Concept



## 4. ENGAGING IN POLICY DIALOGUE

Once a CSO is prepared for its engagement in policy dialogue, there are various fields of engagement involving different kinds of stakeholders, which are outlined and described below. These fields of engagement shall not be treated separately or exclusively. To the contrary, policy dialogue engagement needs a combination of various strategies and methods, differing levels of engagement and the involvement of all stakeholders in order to be effective. This means a combination of the various methods described below (networking, media engagement, community mobilization etc.) is especially favourable for a successful engagement.

Note that the preparation steps outlined in the previous chapter must be continuously followed-up on and adapted regularly in order to maintain them relevant for the engagement.

### Constituency Building & Community Engagement

Engaging the community is crucial in all stages of a policy dialogue process, as they are the primary beneficiary of a policy intervention. It involves consolidating community needs and priorities, sensitization of the community on policy issues as well as involving them in policy negotiation, formulation, policy review and accountability.

For effective community engagement to take place the CSO ought to ensure that the following is taken into consideration:

- **Situation Assessment:** There is need to assess the situation in the community to understand the issues that the majority is passionate about and hear their perspectives on what should be done by the responsible person(s).
- **Goal Setting:** Help the community members beginning with the leadership to define their goals in pursuing policy dialogue and engagement with other stakeholders, government officials/policy makers, investors, private sector actors etc.

Goal setting is key to avoid frustration or a feeling of failure in the community, which can lead to accusations of CSOs, if the engagement and advocacy fails. The goals must be realistic and well understood.

- **Planning for Needs:** A clear plan of how the goal(s) will be pursued is important. This is done through a good plan, which may include awareness raising, public participation forums, capacity development of communities to advocate for their needs and use of mass media.
- **Process Management:** As the plan is being pursued, the CSO should focus on the process management with clear identification of what needs to be done at what stage of the policy dialogue engagement. Processes are key to ensure that satisfactory results are achieved at the end.
- **Participatory Evaluation of Community Engagement:** At regular periods or at the end of the engagement with stakeholders in pursuing the outlined goal, it is crucial that a participatory evaluation of the community engagement or constituency building is carried out. A participatory evaluation helps communities to see the value of the engagement to their community clearly. It also helps the CSO to assess the achievement of the partnership and for the community members to see the contribution they have made by their participation and engagement in the policy dialogue. This helps communities to own the results, celebrate them and gain great confidence for future engagements.

### Establishment of Networks & Coalitions

In order to cushion organizations against a possible backlash from advocacy work, it is important to work in groups. That makes it hard to isolate any one of them for victimization by those negatively impacted by policy changes through loss of business or certain clout. This results in the formation of various types of partnerships and alliances.





NGOs use different names and forms for their advocacy groups—some can be characterized as networks, others as coalitions. In general, greater size and visibility makes it easier for them to mobilize resources and gain recognition from local governments:

- **Coalitions:** Coalitions often have a more formalized structure with the members making a long-term commitment to share responsibilities and resources. Their permanence can give clout and leverage. Whenever possible, organizations should seek to build or join a coalition to strengthen impact of their advocacy efforts. Most coalitions tend to be very focused on an advocacy theme. They pursue a single goal and the participants are civil society organizations and networks.
- **Networks:** Networks consist of individuals or organizations that share information, ideas and resources to accomplish individual or group goals. Networks acquire resources and build power by creating linkages between two or more individuals, groups or organizations. Networks are loose, flexible associations of people and groups who share a common interest. What matters is that the entire membership understands and agrees on the name, the structure, and the operating procedures.<sup>17</sup>

The purposes of a network include:

- To share updates on emerging issues and to furnish member organizations with new ideas
- To pull together resources
- To build capacity of members to engage in policy dialogue
- To protect smaller organizations in the group and create bigger recognition
- To build a strong front for advocacy and strengthen relations across levels (e.g. between community-based and nationally operating organizations)
- To learn from each other’s experiences<sup>18</sup>
- To mitigate risks that may be caused by taking leading roles on contested policy issues

<sup>17</sup> and <sup>18</sup> Pact Tanzania (2004): Building and Maintaining Networks and Coalitions [http://nsagm.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/0/3/12030125/advocacy\\_-\\_networks\\_and\\_coalitions\\_usaid\\_pact\\_tanzania.pdf](http://nsagm.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/0/3/12030125/advocacy_-_networks_and_coalitions_usaid_pact_tanzania.pdf) [accessed 1.4.2019]

Both, networks and coalitions can be effective in mobilizing political will, influencing policy and financing and strengthening programs. They leverage and channel collective voices towards common policy goals, create synergies among members, share information, ideas and resources, thereby creating more efficiency in the planning and implementation of joint advocacy campaigns.

Creating and sustaining networks and coalitions requires different, yet complementary skills. They must outline communication systems, decision making processes and membership roles and responsibilities. Structures and systems will ensure smooth functioning. They also build trust and maintain bonds among its members. They must also have strong leadership and the capacity to recruit and engage members and partners in their activities.

To ensure that the networks and coalitions function well and all parties involved feel engaged and appreciated, the following policy dialogue continuum should be considered:

	Information	Consultation	Involvement	Partnership
Description	Information sharing is crucial for networks and coalitions to hold together.	Create regular and consistent spaces for consultation on various issues before decisions can be made.	Ensure that officials from various networks or coalition members are involved in various and clearly defined roles including representation, engagement, fundraising, oversight, monitoring etc., based on their expertise.	Feedback and joint sessions on reporting impact and results of the work you are doing together should be set up.
Key Consideration	Information must be accurate and shared through channels that are accessible to the members.	Consultations should be well planned for. Necessary information for decision making should be made available.	Involvement should be substantive and not nominal. Those who are given tasks must be supported to perform those tasks effectively.	Sharing of results and celebrating impact should be well structured and the efforts of all should be captured and celebrated.



Lastly, creating prestigious partnerships can be of relevance for an organization’s and/or network’s PD engagement and for creating public exposure: either through linkages to selected influential individuals and pro-CSO representatives within government, or through international and/or foreign organizations that support the cause.<sup>19</sup> The political environment in most East African countries is dynamic. International partnerships can sometimes be a dimension of protection in ever changing contexts, but they are also a strategic approach to strengthen the credibility and confidence of the national CSO. Many CSOs see international partnerships as an important channel for access to information and policy influencing at regional and international levels.

### Media Engagement

Media engagement is the deliberate involvement of various types of media to create a multiplier effect of information dissemination in order to create awareness within the population and increase their participation in the development, implementation and review of public policies, which affect them and their way of life. Media engagement is of specific importance when raising awareness of issues that require public support and putting additional pressure on key decision-makers.

Media engagement can have different forms depending on the target audience, their level of education and accessibility to different types of media. These factors should inform the choice of media (e.g. radio, print etc.), language (especially the use of local languages), tools (e.g. policy briefs etc.) and technologies (e.g. websites). Using social media (Facebook, Twitter and blogs) to disseminate the messages may also be considered. Apart from this, the media should be invited to cover policy dialogue events such as stakeholder and public participation forums.

In all forms of engagement, organizations should have a media strategy and assign a contact person who manages information in and outside of the organization.



<sup>19</sup> SIDA (2013): Support to civil society engagement in policy dialogue. Joint evaluation Mozambique country report. [https://www.sida.se/contentassets/4b54daaf-b0ec47c4a3489409ee26cb7a/support-to-civil-society-engagement-in-policy-dialogue---mozambique-country-report\\_3445.pdf](https://www.sida.se/contentassets/4b54daaf-b0ec47c4a3489409ee26cb7a/support-to-civil-society-engagement-in-policy-dialogue---mozambique-country-report_3445.pdf) [accessed 23.10.2018]

This is crucial in order to avoid sending conflicting information and guarantee a consistent official position of the organization on sensitive policy matters.

Below are some key steps for engaging with the media in events:<sup>20</sup>

- **Compiling a media list:** Identify all relevant media outlets (newspapers, radio stations, TV), particularly those that may influence the advocacy targets and find out who should be talked to about the issues and ideally who has covered these issues in the past.
- **Drafting a press release** or a letter to the editor outlining the ‘story’: Press releases are generally issued to mark a launch. The press release should be sent to all contacts on the media list.
- **Contacting the media:** at least one week before a planned event or at key moments in the advocacy process.
- **Follow-up:** should be made with each contact by phone to confirm receipt. Lobby them to prioritize the story idea, seek their opinion on the chances of the story being published or aired and on what can be done to increase such a chance.
- **Giving interviews:** If the story runs in the media, expect requests for interviews and prepare beforehand. Decide who within the coalitions can articulate the policy issues convincingly and articulately.
- **Package the message:** Preparation for an interview is key to get the message delivered. Start with the central statement on the issue at stake, give evidence to support the statement, include an example in order to add a human face to the message and end with a call to action towards the audience.
- **Thanking reporters:** After the story runs, it is important to contact the reporters and thank them for their time and for sharing it and allude to future collaboration with the media house.

### Using Social Media

Social and new media has become increasingly preponderant in the work of CSOs all over the world. In the East Africa region, social media platforms have been used to encourage information sharing, communicating impact and results from investments, to mobilize resources for program and project work and to strengthen accountability. Effective use of social mobilization platforms is key, because the abuse of them can ruin relationships with government officials and other stakeholders of NGOs including communities.

<sup>20</sup> Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness: Advocacy Toolkit. [https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/120110-of-advocacy\\_toolkit-en-web-2-1.pdf](https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/120110-of-advocacy_toolkit-en-web-2-1.pdf) [accessed 9.2.2019]

Therefore, great care is required to avoid a costly backlash and uncontrolled interactions and feedback, which can be negative to the work of relations building and communicating the activities and engagements in policy dialogue and development initiatives.

**Examples of Social Media:<sup>21</sup>**

Blogging: [www.wordpress.org](http://www.wordpress.org)

Micro-blogging: [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)

Video-sharing: [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

Photo-sharing: [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)

Podcasting: [www.blogtalkradio.com](http://www.blogtalkradio.com)

Mapping: [www.maps.google.com](http://www.maps.google.com)

Social networking: [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)

Social voting: [www.digg.com](http://www.digg.com)

Social bookmarking: [www.delicious.com](http://www.delicious.com)

Lifestreaming: [www.friendfeed.com](http://www.friendfeed.com)

Wikis: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

Virtual worlds: [www.secondlife.com](http://www.secondlife.com)

### Policy Maker Engagement

Successful engagement with policy makers is achieved by lobbying and negotiating. Engaging with policy makers can be an effective pathway to impact. Policy makers often have the influence and opportunity to use evidence to alter or develop policies. Besides, they have a mandate to work with and listen to the community.

Bearing in mind the complexity of the policy making process and the number of different groups involved, it can seem like an impossible task to work with policy makers to have an impact. However, there are always windows of opportunity and strategies that can be employed to engage with them and improve chances of having an impact. Before engaging with policy makers, it is important to think through the key messages related to the policy: Why is this important for the policy, who has the power to make a difference, when to engage, where to engage and how to engage?<sup>22</sup>



### Lobbying

Lobbying is the deliberate and strategic effort to work with insiders (decision makers and other people within the system), influencers (people who are close to decision makers), and allies (collaborators and actors with the same interest) in order to influence policy decisions.

Lobbying requires access to and persuasion of those in power. It involves one-to-one communication with people in power or those who have influence over them. Lobbying can take many different forms ranging from informal conversations in social settings (e.g. over lunch or coffee) to formal meetings in official settings (e.g. in a politician's office). Engaging directly with decision-makers is an important part of successful advocacy, but it may not be possible in all contexts and needs to be timed well to assure impact. Most important is to judge whether and when lobbying is an appropriate method for conveying the messages in the specific context.<sup>23</sup> It must also be noted that informal spaces are becoming as important as formal spaces for lobbying purposes, thus it is pertinent that the eight points of strategic communication are considered (see chapter 6).

**Some ground rules for lobbying include:**

- Cultivating good long-term relations with the target decision makers, making sure not to confuse access with influence—and don't let good relationships stop you taking public action where necessary and appropriate.
- Seek to find common ground where change may be possible.
- Value trust and confidentiality, especially where an insider perspective has been obtained.
- Be propositional rather than oppositional wherever possible.
- Seek to be seen as a trusted source of evidence and policy advice regarding the issue.
- Give credit where credit is due—failure to do so is what many decision makers dislike most about NGOs.

<sup>23</sup> Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness: Advocacy Toolkit. [https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/120110-of-advocacy\\_toolkit-en-web-2-1.pdf](https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/120110-of-advocacy_toolkit-en-web-2-1.pdf) [accessed 9.2.2019]



- Avoid unnecessary misunderstandings, explain the organization/network/coalitions' approach to advocacy, particularly if it combines a twin track strategy of persuasion and pressure.
- Where appropriate, inform target decision makers of media and popular mobilization actions in advance and share briefing papers before publishing them.
- Don't expect to achieve change with one meeting or letter.<sup>24</sup>

### Negotiation

Negotiation can be defined as a process of coordinating a democratic debate among different stakeholder interest groups. Informal or formal negotiation may provide solutions for conflicts between such groups and prevent or resolve stalemate of important policy issues. Through negotiation different groups try to agree on a solution that both sides can live with. While compromise may be near impossible when facing a politically hostile environment or in situations of open conflict, in more favorable circumstances, however, negotiation can be a very useful avenue for advancing policy issues with those in power.

All negotiations are underpinned by social values, usually within a context of unequal power where various forms of bias are often invisible (invisible power may be shaped by class, age, ethnicity, political patronage, gender and other factors).<sup>25</sup>

### Before engaging in a negotiation process it may be useful to:

- Take stock: What do you bring to the table? What do you have that the other group may want or need? What do you know about the other group and situation that you can use to influence them (based on your stakeholder analysis)?
- Learn as much as you can: Avail yourself of the information collected thus far in the advocacy process both with regard to the interlocutors/targets and the evidence for the argument.
- Develop negotiating scenarios: Define the desired outcome from the negotiation. What is the range of options for a negotiating outcome? What is the minimum that you are prepared to accept? What is the worst that can happen? Are there any alternative solutions?<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24-26</sup> Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness: Advocacy Toolkit. [https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/120110-of-advocacy\\_toolkit-en-web-2-1.pdf](https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/120110-of-advocacy_toolkit-en-web-2-1.pdf) [accessed 9.2.2019]



## 5. STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE POLICY DIALOGUE ENGAGEMENT

This section explores how to do policy dialogue in practical terms. CSOs have been engaging in policy dialogue over time and are aware of the need to diversify their strategies to society in general. We have identified the following strategies of carrying out policy dialogue:

**a) Delivering-As-One (DAO) Strategy:** This is an organizational level PD strategy, which is most suitable in advancing up-stream and high level policy proposals. Delivering-as-one (DAO) is the ideal and recommended PD strategy at all times. Here all stakeholders and interested parties come together on a round table and develop a common understanding of what they want to achieve together. This could be after many years of working at cross purpose and in competition or in adversarial environments. Once all realize that cooperation is better, there is agreement to work as one and deliver sustainable results.

As a consequence of this strategy, the government officials and the other non-state actors generally develop spaces for engagement on broad development issues, involving rather line ministries and departments. Organizations come into this arrangement as organizations rather than program officers.

**b) Thematic Policy Dialogue or Partnership Strategy:** This is also an up-stream PD strategy—a thematic strategy for PD is where parties interested in an issue look out for the power holder/policy makers to call for the cooperation and collaboration. Here the actor initiating the PD is looking for key thematic stakeholders and creates a dialogue on how to synergize and network to achieve the biggest impact. A CSO or government official can initiate the partnership on the issue, e.g. education, healthcare, water, urban waste management etc. The initiators ought to focus on trust building among stakeholders in order to remove the suspicions between partners (usually CSOs). Thematic networks therefore become crucial in promoting collaboration for effectiveness and value of money.

**c) Community Driven Policy Dialogue Strategy:** This is evident in cases where the community becomes well organized, raises a strong leadership, outlines issues of social justice, development and service delivery.

Strongly connected is the **Policy Dialogue Champions-led strategy (demand-driven PD)** illustrated by an example: In Kenya's Kajiado County, which is predominantly a Maasai community area, the issue of FGM and GBV is prevalent. Early marriages and school dropouts were and are still rampant. Nailantei Lengete, a girl from that county, who was rescued from the female cut, came back and championed a dialogue between the Morans (young male warriors), circumcisers, the male elders and the governmental authorities. The dialogue has proved fruitful with the National Gender and Equality Commission of Kenya and AMREF Africa reaching out to her and supporting her work in the community. She raised many more champions mostly young male Maasai men, who were previously Morans (warriors), to speak against FGM and early (underage) marriages, which are mostly forced ones. In this example, Nailantei is the champion, who is trail-blazing the change through policy dialogue. Champion-centred PD is delicate and requires that the champion or champions are consistent and credible enough for government officials to have trust in them. In certain cases champions are identified and empowered to facilitate engagement and dialogue meetings with all the stakeholders. The main champion may move to a higher advocacy level of convening and mobilizing goodwill, support and resources required to advance the development agenda or change area as the community members own the issue and drive it in a sustainable manner.

**d) Expert or Communication Driven PD Strategy:** This strategy is CSO experts-driven—in instances where a CSO carries out a research in a certain thematic subject or concern. The experts may find it necessary to share the findings or expert knowledge with government officials or community members and this may lead to a PD entry point.



Through the entry point interested parties get to know about an issue of interest and start to reach out to each other. It can be confrontational and bad tempered at the beginning especially if government officials feel that a CSO approached media and embarrassed the government before fully consulting. However, this can become a key entry point, where conversations can lead to a relation of partnership.

#### Example GROOTS Kenya

GROOTS Kenya carried out an extensive research on food safety—particularly dairy products and shared their research widely. It provoked a series of engagement meetings with various stakeholders leading to the development of a policy document that was discussed by communities and the Nakuru County government of Kenya and considered for adoption to improve the milk and dairy products handling procedures throughout the value chain.

**e) Diplomatic Strategies of PD:** Diplomatic strategies are usually best applied in areas of peace building and conflict resolution. Respected public figures, religious leaders, foreign diplomatic officials and other experienced officials become very crucial in the laying of the table for talks, mediation and negotiations. Shuttle diplomacy and reaching out to parties in the dispute is done by a mediator. The mediator reaches out to the office bearers to introduce the need for a working relationship; trust building is key in diplomatic overtures. That's the reason why the mediator must be trained to listen to the fears, suspicions and aspirations/interests of the various parties to the intended policy dialogue.

CSOs can and do apply the diplomatic strategy of working behind the scenes to win over the ear of the policy makers or those who may not want to accept their viewpoint or proposal. It is very effective especially at the sub-national levels of government in most African countries. The mediators carrying out the diplomatic dialogue efforts must ensure that the individuals being consulted in order to be brought to the table are individuals who are credible and who have legitimate authority to represent the government position or community stakeholders.





## 6. SKILLS FOR SUCCESSFUL POLICY DIALOGUE ENGAGEMENT

Successful policy dialogue requires a good understanding of how to gain the attention of all stakeholders at each stage of the policy cycle. There are a number of skills that have to be acquired and practiced to achieve a successful policy dialogue engagement.

### Communication Skills

Strategic communication is at the heart of policy dialogue. This takes into account (1) the right person, (2) saying the right thing, (3) to the right person, (4) at the right time, (5) in the right place, (6) using the right tools, (7) in the right way and (8) with the right impact.

**The Right Person:** The messenger must be as good as the message. Only a credible messenger can deliver the advocacy message.

**Saying the Right Thing:** In order to be effective in provoking action and initiating change, the information must be relevant to the lives of the concerned people, conclusive, simple, with consistent and appropriate content.

**To the Right Person:** The message is aimed at the persons who have the power to make the changes you seek or to influence both primary (those who can make the choice for which you are advocating) and secondary (those who influence the primary audience or advance the cause) audiences.

**At the Right Time:** It is possible to say the right things but at the wrong time. Information must therefore be up-to-date and based on or linked to current issues or events.

**In the Right Place:** It is important to analyze the factors and actors, internal or external to the organization/network/coalition, that have had an impact (negative or positive) on previous efforts to policy advocacy. Environmental scanning will allow for mobilization of comparative advantage, while also understanding inherent/perceived weaknesses.

**Using the Right Tools:** Advocacy may be adversarial (expressing opposition, protest, and dissent) or negotiated (engaging with decision makers and building consensus and compromise) or both. Each requires a different form of tools such as a song, symbol, story, role play, position papers, letters, phone calls, formal/informal meetings, opinion and editorials, radio/TV interviews or talk shows etc. It is important to define the most suitable delivery platforms for your different audiences.

**The Right Way:** Effective communication is the ability to express opinions and ideas both verbally (words) and non-verbally (tone of voice, gestures, expression). What is heard, seen or felt conveys most part of the message compared to the words themselves.

**With the Right Impact:** Communication is both an end and a means to an end. The right attitude is imperative for effective impact i.e. listening with a goal in mind, looking counterparts in the eyes, fighting off distractions, being a keen listener, not interrupting when the other person speaks, being alert to nonverbal cues, taking notes and reacting to the message, not the person speaking.

### Writing and Documentation Skills

Writing skills are an important part of communication. Good writing skills ensure the message is communicated with clarity and ease to a far larger audience than through face-to-face or telephone conversations. All written communication (emails, press release, reports etc.) should be cleaned and reread before sending. Depending on the audience, it is equally important to choose the right medium, the right style and structure.

Documentation involves communicating the processes and changes generated throughout the implementation of the policy initiative. Good documentation is evidence-based, cost effective, quickly usable and shared among target audiences. To be effective, documentation must gain feedback from its intended audience early in the process and create a natural momentum that drives the policy dialogue and the understanding of stakeholders forward.







### Facilitation Skill

The basic duty of a facilitator is to ensure people have the atmosphere and support to realize the goals they have set for a meeting or engagement. A good facilitator must be good at timekeeping, following an agreed-upon agenda, guiding participants to keep relevant to the theme being discussed, ensuring that all suggestions are addressed and keeping a clear record, while taking into account individual preferences and group dynamics. In addition, a facilitator also needs a variety of listening skills, the ability to paraphrase, draw people out, ensure balanced participation and make space for more reticent group members. It is critical to the facilitator's role to have the knowledge and skill to be able to intervene in a way that adds to the group's creativity rather than taking away from it.

In the event of a consensus not being reached, the facilitator would assist the group in understanding the differences that divide it. In all circumstances, the facilitator will keep a positive attitude, including:

- Being open to learning about the lives, values and beliefs of others.
- Having confidence to share one's own life, values and beliefs with others.
- Suspending judgments in favor of listening with an open heart, mind, eyes and ears.
- Being committed to finding solutions regarding shared problems.
- Being able to make others in the dialogue feel safe enough to share their thoughts.
- Going beyond describing and explaining events/features by sharing meaning and significance.
- Appreciating the ideas, experiences and beliefs of others even when one does not agree with them.
- Responding empathetically and challenging others in the dialogue in a way that is respectful and open.

### Mediation and Negotiating Skills

Drivers of a PD process ought to be well equipped in mediation and negotiation, which aims at obtaining a win-win situation. Without effective mediation, government, private sector, CSOs and community interests can prove difficult to reconcile. Therefore, effective negotiators should be equipped with interpersonal skills to maintain a good working relationship with those involved. They should be patient, good listeners and be able to persuade others without using manipulation or losing their integrity. In addition, they should always be well prepared mastering the negotiated subject matter as well as capable to think clearly and rapidly under pressure and uncertainty.

### Analytical Skills

PD engagement entails the understanding of different policies, legal frameworks, stakeholders and environments, in which all of this takes place. This demands for an understanding of the interplay between the different threads of a situation. The ability to collect and analyze information and situations to see the bigger picture or trends behind the facts is therefore a critical element of PD. Critical analytical skills enable one to take big pieces of information about a situation and deconstruct them in order to identify the details as well as the systematic trends or links which bring them together.

### Policy Drafting Skills

In the policy formation and organization stage of the policy cycle, policy drafting is a key skill for effective PD and advocacy. Well drafted policies can pave the way to shared aspirations and commitments to progress in policy making. Policy drafting may scare off many CSOs that do not have skilled drafters. There is need to train in-house drafters especially program officers and managers. The drafting seeks to use information that is available from research in the area the policy seeks to guide. Secondary data available from literature review can be used for informing and justifying why a policy needs to be enacted.



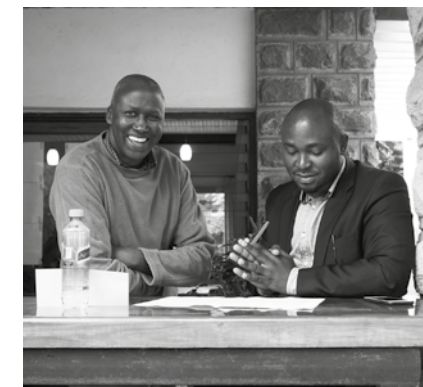


Generally, the following areas are key in a coherent and complete policy document:

- The introduction provides the rationale scope the policy covers and the process of making the policy
- Context and situation analysis
- Policy framework includes the purpose/goal, objectives, guiding principles, targeted population of the policy
- Specific policy priorities addressed in the document and strategies/actions
- Policy coordination and implementation
- Monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment
- Resource mobilization to implement the policy priorities and ensure effective coordination

### Policy Brief

The CSOs in policy dialogue may also need shorter versions of the policy documents for meetings, especially for policy formation and negotiation. This document is called the policy brief. The policy brief captures the key problems and the key interventions to be taken in a matrix which enables the CSO to show why the chosen interventions are the most efficacious ones. The policy brief must not be more than two pages and it helps any one around the negotiating table to get the gist and essence of the problem at hand and the effectiveness of the choice of interventions proposed.



## 7. MONITORING & EVALUATION OF POLICY DIALOGUE INITIATIVES

During the last decades, standards for Monitoring and Evaluation have evolved and the scope widened towards the inclusion of words and concepts such as participation, accountability and learning. One should note that the major purpose for undertaking M&E (Monitoring and Evaluation), PMER (Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting), MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning) is to realize our policy dialogue strategy goal in the most effective and efficient ways possible.

M&E plans should recognize that the environment of policy dialogue programs is many times unpredictable. Causes and effects may not always be clearly defined and may change depending on the context and circumstances. M&E within such interventions must have a very strong emphasis on learning, both about the context and the way it is changing and about the success and failure of the interventions for future designs.

Participatory M&E in policy dialogue is useful for the following reasons:

- As a management tool to drive the changes and measure the impact in a “re-sult-based management” scheme.
- As an accountability tool to hold the initiative accountable to the donor, but also to hold policy makers and other involved or affected interest groups accountable to commitments made.
- As a learning tool to inform the implementers about how programs can be run more effectively and achieve greater impact, either now or in the future.

For policy dialogue to be effectively monitored and the information and data generated to be used to inform a strategy for greater impact, the design of the initiative must take into consideration the envisioned objectives and results right from the beginning. Any reports informed by the M&E framework should bring out the aspects of key actions, outcome and impact.

Some key elements in that context are:

- **Goal/impact:** long term objective and widespread improvement in the society through the policy influenced, developed or implemented or change in a policy process
- **Outcomes:** results produced for the beneficiaries through the policy dialogue process, like behavior change, incorporation of suggestions in policies, public/ community discourses
- **Outputs:** products and services produced, immediate measurable changes accruing from policy dialogue activities
- **Policy dialogue strategies and activities:** methods applied and tasks undertaken to produce outputs from inputs
- **Inputs:** financial, human and material resources required for each activity
- **Indicators** of success to determine and measure the achievements. Indicators are accompanied by baselines, which are a current condition against which future change can be tracked.

### M&E Challenges and Approaches<sup>27</sup>

There are certain challenges when it comes to the M&E of policy dialogue initiatives, the most pertinent being:

- **The “attribution problem”:** Many times it is difficult to establish causality, determining the links between policy influencing activities and outputs on one side and change (or stasis) in policy (processes) on the other side. The difficulty originates from the nature of policy processes. They can be very complex and influenced by a variety of external factors. Also policy dialogue is most effective when done in alliances, coalitions and networks, involving a series of actors and their activities. This is why M&E of policy dialogue should emphasize the assessment of contribution rather than attribution.
- **The formulation of outcomes:** Strongly linked to the above is the definition of outcomes. Meaningful outcomes to be realistically achieved may be a challenge in the policy dialogue field due to external uncertainties. As policy dialogue deals with the interaction of various actors on a policy issue, including their attitudes, interests and influence on policy processes, behavior change can and should be seen as a key measure for outcomes. However, they are not easy to measure.
- **Time:** Long timeframes for change to happen, as common in policy fields, may not be suitable to measurement in the usual rhythms of projects and evaluations in aid agencies.

<sup>27</sup> ODI (2011): A guide to monitoring and evaluating policy influence. <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/6453.pdf> [accessed: 17.3.2020]



Some ideas on approaches to monitor progress successfully in policy dialogue are gathered below:

Intervention Area	Intervention Type	Progress Measuring
Evidence and advice	Research and dissemination activities leading to tangible outputs in terms of goods and services, e.g. briefs, events, aiming at the ‘uptake’ and direct responses to the research, such as using it or quoting it.  <b>Note:</b> Such uptakes lead to influence in terms of outcomes.	<b>Output:</b> tangible products, judged by quality, credibility, relevance, accessibility and other factors; uptake log, citation analysis, surveys  <b>Outcome:</b> partial or full incorporation in policy solutions
Public campaigns	Public messaging and campaigning for agenda setting, building public support and making voices of citizens heard via direct messaging or media.  <b>Note:</b> It is difficult to ascertain the influence and therefore outcomes and impacts such work has.	<b>Output:</b> exposure measurement through surveys (e.g. people recalling a message) and focus group discussions; monitoring media (extent to which an issue is covered, e.g. space, airtime, framing)  <b>Outcome:</b> perception surveys, discourse analysis
Lobbying and negotiating	Direct interaction with key players, formal and informal discussions and debates, persuasion, negotiation and lobbying.  <b>Note:</b> It is key to monitor key players and decision-makers, including their perspectives and interests.	<b>Outcome:</b> Behavior change as used in outcome mapping (expect to see; like to see; love to see) <sup>28</sup>  <b>Data sources:</b> observations from meetings and negotiations, tracking people and relationships, interviewing informants and updating power-interest matrix (stakeholder analysis)

<sup>28</sup>ODI (2014): ROMA Rapid Outcome Mapping Approach. A guide to policy engagement and influence. <https://i2s.anu.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/9011.pdf> [accessed: 1.4.2019]

### M&E System and Tools

After defining the process and purpose of M&E, including the above mentioned factors, a M&E system can be established and the tools to be used chosen. In doing so, it is crucial to consider that, regardless of the tools to be applied, monitoring and evaluation information is meant to be shared with various audiences (like donors, beneficiaries, organizational units, the public). Therefore, it is important to know who needs which information for what purposes. Adequate tools and information packaging are required.

Hereafter are some M&E tools applicable for PD initiatives (taken from ODI 2014)<sup>29</sup>:

**Measuring Strategy:** Tools to measure or determine the effectiveness of a policy dialogue strategy, how to achieve impact and to trace success or failure of impact of the policy dialogue interventions.

Method	What is it?	Why use it?	When use it?
Logical Framework	A matrix used to help plan the intervention, very popular with bilateral funders	To help achieve stakeholders consensus, organize the plan, summarize assumptions, and identify indicators of success	Throughout the project, to plan, monitor progress and evaluate the interventions
Theories of Change	A critical thinking exercise to map a program strategy	To help achieve stakeholders consensus, organize the plan, summarize assumptions and identify indicators	When creating a strategic plan
Social Network Analysis	An analytical tool for studying relationships between stakeholders	To monitor the changes in relationships and structures of networks	During baseline and post-evaluation
Value for Money	A framework to consider the cost-effectiveness of a program	To provide accountability to funders and internal stakeholders that resources are being used effectively	May be used during planning but also in the evaluation

<sup>29</sup>ODI (2014): Monitoring and evaluation of policy influence and advocacy. Working Paper 395. <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8928.pdf> [accessed: 1.4.2019]

**Measuring Outcomes and Impact:** Methods that determine how much and what type of change occurred. They focus on the impact of activities rather than the activities or outputs themselves.

Method	What is it?	Why use it?	When use it?
Stories of Change	A case study method to determine the pathways of success	Useful to investigate impact through first-hand accounts and analyze how activities caused impact	Used in evaluation or review
Most Significant Change	A participatory method to determine impact through the perspective of different stakeholders	Useful to determine most significant impact	Used in evaluation or review
Bellwether Method	An interview method to determine an issue's position on the policy agenda	Useful to gauge influence of the intervention on key policy-makers	Used during baseline and evaluation to gauge success
Stakeholders Analysis	Method to determine which stakeholders are favourable to invest in during the intervention	Best used to determine, if an organization has increased their connections to influential stakeholders or to determine which stakeholders are best to interview during an evaluation	May be used on project planning but can also be used in evaluation
Progress Markers and Journals	A logging method to monitor outcomes and impacts and gauge success	Helpful to identify the standards of success	Used to design the intervention and later to assess impact

**Understanding Causes:** Tools that help to know how and why change happens and to understand how the observed changes were brought about.

Method	What is it?	Why use it?	When use it?
Experimental Design	An evaluation design that requires randomization and a control group	To generate precise information about the intervention cost and benefits, generally to gain information about scaling up the intervention	When there is a comparison group available
Process Tracing	An analytical tool to draw out causal claims	To draw out the causal link of an intervention and its impact. Useful with small sample size	When there is no comparison group but strong information on sequence of events available
Contribution Analysis	An analytical tool using the intervention's strategic plan/project design and assessing the contribution story	To assess the contribution of activities to an outcome	When there is no comparison group but a strong theory of change available
RAPID Outcome Assessment	A mapping tool that draws links between boundary partners and key behaviors on timeline to link influence and behavior change	Useful tool to map out causal links between intervention and impact	When there is no comparison group and a particular wish to understand the role of context and partners
Qualitative Comparative Analysis	An analytical tool comparing multiple situations and determining different combinations of causal conditions	The method is best used when there are multiple case studies with multiple factors to consider and when all factors are known	When several scenarios or aspects of an intervention need to be compared or understood

8. CHALLENGES FACED BY CSOs IN POLICY DIALOGUE

There are many challenges and hazards faced by CSOs, when engaging in policy dialogue as public policy making involves multiple interests, complex analysis, conflicting information and human personalities. Listed below are some factors that make public policy a fascinating, sometimes frustrating, but absolutely essential exercise. These are listed to alert the CSOs and other readers about circumstances where extra caution is necessary.

a) Internal Changes

Challenge	Recommendation
<b>Staff Turn-Over:</b> Many CSOs in East Africa implementing PD initiatives have high staff turn-over. Some staff members operate on yearly contracts because of short term donor funding. CSOs poach staff members from each other and have a big disparity in their salary scale especially between local NGOs and international NGOs, which causes human resource movement between them and sometimes to government. This results in loss of institutional memory on PD and a fresh start that requires repetition in capacity building needs and longer learning time.	<b>Organizational Approach:</b> It is recommended that policy dialogue as an approach be driven by the leadership and senior management of the organization so that changes of staff at the program level do not cripple the continuation of the relationship already built with governmental, CSO, private sector or community representatives. When the time comes and the Chief Executive leaves the organization, the handing over to the next Chief Executive should include policy dialogue investments and contacts as a key part of the handover.

Challenge	Recommendation
<b>Dissemination &amp; Information Sharing:</b> There is low dissemination of research findings, which could shed light on policy gaps both for new policy initiatives and policies which need review. Limited sharing of information with like-minded organizations and professional attachment lead to duplication of efforts and repetition of advocacy errors. This can lead to loss of goodwill from decision makers who find organizations' advocacy efforts disjointed and a waste of resources. A case in Kenya clarifies this point: A police officer in charge of a district reported that more than six CSOs had trained his police officers on GBV case management and referral systems.	<b>Sharing as Leadership Responsibility:</b> It is recommend that the leadership and senior management positions of each organization takes it upon themselves to ensure that there is full dissemination of policy research findings and other relevant policy related information to all workers in the organization and even members of the public that they serve or work with. Also, it is key that CSOs working in the same thematic program-matic area share as much information as possible on work they are doing with government officials in order to synergize and avoid loss of clout in the face of these government officials.

Challenge	Recommendation
<b>Lack of Resources &amp; Staff:</b> Lack of policy engagement requires a lot of resources that range from holding stakeholder forums, engagement of consultancy services as well as media engagement. Similarly, it requires dedicated, capacitated and resilient staff to follow through the protracted policy negotiation process for months or even years. Coupled with this is the difficulty to measure success or failure of PD process, since it involves determining the effectiveness of the PD initiatives and measuring results, which requires technical persons.	<b>Policy Dialogue Strategy:</b> Lack of resources often comes with a lack of organizational PD strategy to determine desired outcomes and guide interventions to reach them. Building upon an effective PD strategy can also cover the concerns of lacking technical and financial capacity to drive and measure results of the PD endeavour. Having a strategy in place, each CSO should endeavour to negotiate with donor partners to provide a budget for PD components in program work in order to be able to implement the strategy and have the ability to create forums and consultative meetings with various stakeholders targeted for partnership on a project or program.



Challenge	Recommendation
<b>Documentation of Best Practices:</b> There is little documentation of best practices even though many initiatives go into the policy dialogue process. Efficient documentation and dissemination of information, as well as experience sharing of challenges and successes among CSOs rarely take place and this hampers learning and knowledge sharing.	<b>Knowledge Management:</b> Even though PD as an approach is relatively new in most developing country CSOs, it is worth noting that PD has been practiced before in one way or another. For effectiveness knowledge management of experiences, lessons learned from engagement and the identification of good practices and potential for improvement is important. It should be treated as part of the M&E process for each organization. The Chief Executive of each organization must support knowledge management, experience documenting and sharing in order to be effective. Capitalizing experiences and producing material for dissemination can also be crucial for increasing positive visibility of the work of CSOs and their contribution to the political realities in East African countries.

Finally, capacity development through training and exchange is an important strategic choice of many CSOs in order to overcome common challenges. Strengthened capacities are important for all of the above mentioned sections—from preparation for and engaging in policy dialogue engagement to skills for developing strategies to apply. Organizations greatly benefit from peer learning and experience sharing to gain from lessons learnt along the way in different policy dialogue initiatives and also from tapping into networking capacities.



b) External Challenges

- **Stakeholder Diversity:** With multiple interest groups and centers of power, there is a tendency to „take a step in the right direction“ rather than commit to significant change. Some participants are frustrated, because they believe that the policy making process should produce more dramatic changes than it usually does.
- **Change in Relevant Policy Makers:** The policy making process usually takes a long time, sometimes up to five years. For an effective PD process, cooperation with government is an integral aspect in order to build an effective coalition for policy development. As any policy process takes a long time, changes in government both at local and national levels are inevitable. New office bearers take a long time to appreciate the PD process that took place before them, thereby slowing down the entire process or failing to appreciate it completely.
- **Weak Community Institutions/Unwritten Laws:** In situations where there is no/weak documentation of policies and regulations and lack of effective community institutions, the policy making process is always a challenge.
- **Fear of Change and Community Suspicion:** New systems of policies bring about changes in the way things are done. Similarly, communities fear changes unless these are well understood by all. It is therefore very important that suspicion is removed from policy negotiation and the community and other stakeholders appreciate the policy dialogue process.
- **Little Media Interest:** Limited media coverage to create awareness and facilitate effective lobbying is a bottleneck in policy dialogue in East Africa. Most media houses rarely pick policy discussion issues, since they may not consider them very newsworthy/sensational.

- **Competing Government Interests:** There are many players in both the local and central government circles with varying interests and diverse opinions on how to conduct business. They can make policy negotiation very long. More so, if the policy issue is outside the current interest of government.
- **Risk of Being Deregistered:** This risk applies, if an organization is pursuing an agenda that is conflicting with government interests. In some countries CSOs have to renew their operating mandate with the government and their licences can be withdrawn in case of conflict with government.
- **Insecurity of Persons and Property:** When organizations are not being targeted, individual staff or their family members can be targeted for abduction and property vandalized or confiscated. The recent increase in this practice has made advocacy a very risky area for practitioners in some contexts.

The external challenges of policy dialogue can't be fully controlled or directed. However, given these challenges, PD guidelines have been developed that can guide the policy dialogue process (see chapter 9).



## 9. CSO GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Guidelines on Policy Dialogue for Civil Society Organizations

Policy dialogue intends an inclusive engagement of all stakeholders at all levels of policy to ensure that good policies are made and implemented effectively for the good of the intended communities or persons. If CSOs strengthen their policy dialogue skills and engagement, previously unimaginable results and transformations in the lives of those who CSOs work for and collaborate with will be witnessed. Seven guidelines aimed at enhancing CSO engagement and performance in policy dialogue from agenda setting, policy formation (organization), policy implementation and policy monitoring and evaluation have been identified. Each CSO can improve, adjust and adopt these guidelines with variations dictated by the context of the engagement.

The following guidelines have been developed by members of the consortia partners as a resource for CSOs to improve their engagement and performance in policy dialogue.

#### 1. Know the Public Officers to Engage & Develop a Relationship

Policy dialogue intends for a more durable course of action to provide solutions or bring about improvements in the delivery of programs. It is more than advocacy and it seeks the inclusive participation of stakeholders at all policy stages.

It is therefore important that the CSO officials know the public officers they intend to work with or engage in the policy dialogue. This requires a shift in the language used, so that the general usage of *government* changes to *government officer(s)*. Instead of *parliament* or *county assembly* it is important to know the committee of parliament/assembly to be engaged and more specifically the member of parliament to be approached.

It is important that CSO officials know the background, the inclinations and even the interest the official has in the subject matter.



Knowing their current assignments in order to understand their schedules and workload for effective policy dialogue planning is important. With this background in mind, identify the areas where the official may need education. If the official has support staff, they can be contacted for scheduling, since public officials are generally busy and may not pay attention to all details in a single meeting. One needs to identify the three or four main points that need to be raised with the official(s) when engaging them.

#### 2. Define the Purpose of your Policy Dialogue Endeavour

The purpose of engaging in policy dialogue is to improve the quality of policies that are formulated and programs that are adopted and implemented in the interest of the beneficiaries.

Therefore, it is the responsibility of the CSO official to clarify the objective(s) of the policy dialogue at the particular stage your organization is in. Be clear what you want to achieve at every stage: agenda setting, policy formulation/organization, policy implementation or policy monitoring and evaluation.

How do you measure success? This has to be defined beforehand to avoid a sense of frustration and unstructured engagement in policy dialogue. The measure of success can be: placing the issue for discussion at the cabinet or a parliamentary committee or in a ministerial policy meeting. The success indicators have to be clearly defined before commencing the engagement.

#### 3. Become an Expert on the Issue

It is a requirement that the CSO develops expertise on the area they wish to engage in. Most governments now have highly exposed and well-schooled officers in the policy making and program designs and implementation departments. This therefore demands that CSOs must invest time and resources in evidence based engagement in PD.



Government officials have to be convinced that there is need to change the prevailing policy framework and this requires evidence to offer the basis for the variation of a policy or the adoption of a new policy.

This can only be achieved, if appropriate and credible research is conducted to show the evidence that support the policy options being presented.

**Note:** There is need to publish and share the reports of such research, evaluations, social audits etc., so that all stakeholders become seized with the significance of the proposal the CSO is making. Utilize the media effectively for purposes of visibility and dissemination.

#### 4. Be Engaged with the Community, Actors and the Process of Policy Dialogue

Most of the time CSOs act not to advance their organizational but community/public interest. This therefore requires that the CSO becomes engaged with the community they are working with or for. In short, a CSO needs a constituency that gives them legitimacy as they engage in policy dialogue. Ensure that you build a constituency that offers you the power to engage.

Similarly, it is important to carry out the mapping of the actors and interested groups in the issue and how each relates with the community and the issue you are advancing. How are actors likely to react or respond to the policy proposal, program evaluation, social audit or policy option that you are providing?

Lastly, master the policy dialogue process from start to end and understand the key dates, required documentation, information or obligations you are required to satisfy in order to participate in the policy dialogue with authority and respectability. Mastery of the process and language of the process is important.

#### 5. Be Credible and Reliable

If the messenger is not credible, the message will not be received, no matter how good it is. The credibility of the CSO engaged in the policy dialogue is a big resource that you can't do without. This requires that the CSOs clarify the principles of engagement, which will guide the officials as they engage in the policy dialogue. Credibility also comes from being known to be accurate, relevant and objective in the subjects you hold dear. Similarly, there is need to be professional by avoiding personalizing issues, taking sides and being partisan. It pays off not to favor a political side or objective.

Be guided by the principles of honesty and integrity. Never be untruthful and don't exaggerate the facts of the matter. Be grounded on facts and evidence as discussed herein.

**Note:** CSOs have come under scrutiny over scandals including corruption, nepotism in the recruitment procedures, failure to comply with statutory obligation etc. If organizations have to remain relevant, credible and reliable in influencing policy processes, they must never be involved in such actions that subjects them to investigations.



#### 6. Use the Appropriate Policy Dialogue Strategy or Methodology and Tools

Successful policy dialogue requires a good understanding of how to gain the ear of all stakeholders at each stage of the policy cycle. Not every issue is processed equally. The choice of methodology or tools of engagement is always influenced by various factors, including the consideration of objective/purpose and the kind of stakeholders involved.

If you intend to operate in closed spaces, then you may need to appropriate approaches and tools such as presenting policy briefs, which offers the basis of meetings. Similarly, if the intention is to show that programs have been implemented corruptly and you intend remedy to the community, conducting social audits and other forensic audits and using this to convening meetings with the local or national government officials, before you seek public interest, litigation may be recommended (MIONET in Kenya chose to document the grievances of the community and then engage the Mar-sabit and national government officials in Kenya on realizing that millions of Shilling allocated for water dams and drilling projects had been stolen).

**Note:** Plan in advance the role you want the media to play in the policy dialogue process. Build a strong understanding among the journalists involved, educate them and give them tools for advancing your campaign or endeavour.

#### 7. Collaborate, Network and Build Coalitions

CSOs should always try to find individuals and groups that could be or are already interested in your policy dialogue issue. Innovatively, bring on board interested actors to make a strong coalition on the issue. There is always a strong temptation to shun coalition and network approaches to policy dialogue, though coalition building is the surest and most stable strategy to conducting effective policy dialogue.

**Note:** Coordinating coalitions, networks and collaborations need special skills to avoid a messy engagement that can deflate and divert the focus of the initiative.





## Recommendations on CSO Engagement in Policy Dialogue

From 25th to 27th of October 2016 a final sharing event was held in Kampala (Uganda) to close the pilot consortia phase of the Policy Dialogue Consortium Project and to give partner organizations as well as guest learners from other NGOs a platform to share experiences, to foster network and coalition building and to elaborate recommendations on CSO engagement in PD. Based on their experiences and learnings participants developed the following recommendations addressing involved parties in order to realize an effective PD:

### 1. Recommendations to CSOs

- Context analysis, research and evidence gathering as well as its dissemination are crucial aspects for effectively engaging in PD.
- In order to avoid doubling and rather speak with one voice, CSOs need to map what other organizations do. This also implies a review of the roles as partners (mandated of i.e. a network organization) in order to not compete with each other, but to effectively work together.
- Venues for PD should be created at various levels, using all available spaces.
- Including relevant CSOs and other stakeholders in policy discussions, as well as linking district forums, national organizations, INGOs and grassroots' CSOs is of crucial importance.
- Government representatives and law makers have to be engaged in order to create ownership and partnerships. This can be fostered by building good relationships, by acknowledging their work and celebrate successful implementations.
- CSOs should consider government policies and strategies and try to build upon them.
- Capacity building of CSOs for PD is crucial (negotiation skills, technical and legal capacities etc.). CSOs should also engage in preparing and building capacities of policy makers.

- Learnings from trainings and exchange should always be shared within one's own organization and NGO forums.
- CSOs should always conduct risk assessments and review their assumptions.
- CSOs must be credible and accountable to be considered good partners in PD. This goes beyond working policies for internal controls and includes performance and reputation.
- CSOs should be strategic with timing. This implies knowing the processes and making use of them.
- CSOs need to be clear about WHO they represent before engaging in PD.
- In order to foster a more participatory (grassroots) development of policies and to build upon real community needs, the input and ownership of the community must be ensured. Communities should be sensitized about the outcome and implementation of policy processes and considered in the monitoring of accountability.
- CSOs should be innovative in their strategies to engage in PD. They can use social media, games, videos and visual presentations, use their beneficiaries' voices and think in cost alternatives.
- CSOs should adhere to all policy cycle steps. This includes budgeting for the monitoring of implementation and policy reviews.

### 2. Recommendations to Political and Government Representatives

- Governments should engage with CSOs as collaborators and not see them as competitors or enemies in development. Moreover, CSOs should be accepted and appreciated as partners in policy implementation and accounting.
- There is a need for applying a more participatory approach and for providing a more democratic and inclusive space for PD.
- Coordination, collaboration and streamlining should be fostered also within the government and between its bodies in order to implement existing policies.
- They should engage in public-private partnerships for policy implementation.
- A single structure would be helpful for the implementation of similar policies, as well as succession plans to assure consistency in policy implementation.
- Community needs should be prioritized by the government—as opposed to donor needs and political interests. To avoid interference of opposing interests, politics should be separated from policy implementation.
- The government should contribute to the production and sharing of relevant data for policies, but should also utilize and appreciate CSO and academic information and data.
- It is of crucial importance to allocate proper budgets for policy implementation and to build internal capacities for implementation by investing in the capacity building of staff.
- Governments should assume their responsibility of sensitizing the citizens on existing policies and translate them into local languages.

- Principles of good governance must be respected and mechanisms for transparency and accountability enforced.
- Actual commitment to policy review, which often tends to be neglected, is required.

### 3. Recommendations to Donors, International Organizations (IOs) and INGOs

- They should share their technical experiences and support CSOs to build capacities for PD. Besides, there should be increased space for local and national experts.
- They should assist CSOs in data research/generation and support independent research institutions.
- They should not take over the actual implementation. The ownership has to be with the local, regional or national organization. Donors must reflect on their own interest and rather support local interests.
- More flexibility to and better understanding of the timelines and work plans of the CSOs is needed. This implies a flexible programing, demand-driven and issue-based funding, as well as synchronising financial periods with the supported organization.
- They should consider supporting the sustainability of the organization and granting institutional funding vs. merely project funding.
- More resources should be given for PD, focusing on local organizations and local demands.
- Donors should understand processes and therefore allow for enough time. Especially in the field of PD, a long-term project cycle is needed in order to account for the whole policy cycle.
- International organizations should try to influence relevant bilateral agreements.
- They should also try to influence governments in order to work together with CSOs and vice versa by conditioning funding to it.
- There is a need for a better coordination among donors and IOs/INGOs in order to avoid overlapping.
- Donor forums should be used to take stock, coordinate, exchange, harmonize and map.
- They should conduct needs assessments with local NGOs and give support according to the demands.
- They should know and understand local contexts, respect guidelines of grassroots' people and governments.
- They should invest in continuous documentation of the whole policy process, not only the end and outcome. Information in terms of policy issues should be shared widely.
- Donors and IOs/INGOs should facilitate opportunities for experience sharing among CSOs and there should be more regional sharing events.
- Donors and IOs/INGOs should open up to new methodologies and tools.
- There is a need to appreciate bottom-up initiatives and harmonize them with interests of other stakeholders and expectations.
- Donors and IOs/NGOs should link CSOs to higher national and international levels.





10. CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1: Advocating for Potato-Packaging Regulation by GROOTS (Nyandarua & Nakuru, Kenya)

Engaging CSO	GROOTS Kenya is a network association of organized community-based and self-help groups that are women led. Currently, GROOTS Kenya is a force of over 2,500 community-based organizations and self-help groups with the shared mandate of ensuring that grassroots women are at the forefront of bringing about community transformation.
Core Problem	Since 2012, GROOTS Kenya has supported women potato farmers to increase production and access markets. In 2014, the farmers began complaining about losses due to low prices negotiated by brokers. Hence GROOTS Kenya, together with the potato farmers piloted a dialogue initiative on a policy to minimize losses through low prices. The women organized themselves and lobbied the county government of Nakuru to regulate the potato pricing, but Kenya’s first potato-packaging bill failed to pass as key players including the brokers were not involved. Furthermore, the brokers threatened to stop buying potatoes from Nakuru and move to other potato producing counties like Nyandarua. Against this background, GROOTS Kenya pushed the dialogue to the national level and brought in potato farmers from other counties like Nyandarua.
Main Strategies	The strategies applied include: 1. Networking with other key stakeholders like the National potato council that was at the center of formulating the regulation; 2. Building a movement of women farmers (advocacy champions) from Nakuru and Nyandarua with the ability to articulate their challenges and demands towards the regulating authority; and 3. Supporting and preparing grassroots women for public participation on the contents of the regulation.

“Prior to the project, we usually learned about the county budget after it had been approved. These days, we engage in the process from the start to the end.”  
—FGD Participant, GROOTS Beneficiary

Successes	The lobby effort saw the regulation being passed including many of the farmers’ suggestions. They specifically demanded the potatoes to be packaged in 50kg and be sold per kilogram, which went through. The initiative was successful, because it collaborated with relevant government entities and because it brought together women from Nyandarua and Nakuru counties, who had previously pursued the bill separately. For the involved women, participation in the process meant an increased awareness of state responsibilities, higher self-esteem and empowerment. Women farmers established an M&E technical working group for monitoring the implementation of the bill. Additionally, they became engaged in the development of county budgets.
Challenges	The project faced two major challenges. First, financial constraints limited the activities to few potato growing areas. Second, the new county government officials were less supportive to potato farmers than the previous ones.
Contact	www.grootskenya.org; grootsk@grootskenya.org

Case Study 2: Advocating for Child Protection (Tanzania)

Engaging CSO	SOS Children’s Villages Tanzania’s child-centered program responses are including kindergartens, schools, alternative family-based care, and family strengthening programs. SOS CV Tanzania interacts with children, families and communities and cooperates with likeminded organizations on issues affecting protection, right and welfare of children.
Core Problem	The Tanzanian government had allocated only few resources to child protection efforts. Relevant policies and regulations were in place, but were not implemented due to limited resources. Child protection committees expected to lead policies, plans and systems, that respond to child protection, but did not engage effectively in the enforcement of existing policies and guidelines. While the communities were aware of the existence of these policies and regulations, they were not aware of the budgeting process and did not know how to raise implementation issues with the government.
Main Strategies	<p>SOS CV Tanzania’s interventions targeted mainly local government authorities, while also leading an advocacy for more budget allocation at the national level. Following a risk assessment, SOS realized that it was better to engage directly with the relevant ministry, as the national government was not transparent on resource allocation. Furthermore, a task force was formed to spearhead policy implementation and to sensitize communities on issues of social accountability.</p> <p>Furthermore, a change in the tax collection system led SOS to change its approach of advocating for budget reallocation. The local government authorities no longer collect and retain percentage of taxes since the process was centralized. In this reflection, SOS, among other intervention approaches, invested in building capacities of local government authorities, community-based organizations and other partners in the program areas on resources mobilization.</p> <p>In all its interventions, SOS adopted a dialogue approach instead of combative advocacy and used media presence at stakeholders’ meetings to compel duty bearers to act. SOS also engaged target audiences through social media as a powerful, cheap and user-friendly tool for social mobilization.</p>

Successes	The work of SOS led to an increase in budgetary allocation for vulnerable children. The government recruited new social protection officers for children departments. SOS strengthened community-based organizations in different locations in order to cooperate with them and thereby minimize the costs of implementing PD.
Challenges	<p>Media staff felt intimidated by political leaders to report on critical issues. As a result, SOS advocacy teams engaged directly with the target groups (e.g. through social media) instead of using mainstream media.</p> <p>Additionally, change, transfer or termination of government leaders in program areas interfered with the efforts of SOS to advocate for resource allocation for child protection, as it forced them to start from scratch in building and orienting newly appointed leaders on the issues. To respond to this challenge, SOS is adopting a human rights-based approach in its advocacy engagement in order to increase sustainability and reduce risks in eras of high political risk. By empowering the communities, especially the affected groups, to claim their rights, a smooth continuation of efforts shall be enabled, even if there are changes in political leadership. Additionally, SOS shifted to invest in building relationships with the offices rather than with individual political leaders.</p>
Contact	<a href="mailto:national.office@sos-tanzania.org">national.office@sos-tanzania.org</a>

Case Study 3: Public Particiaption in Disaster Management (Marsabit, Kenya)

Engaging CSO	MIONET is a collaborative entity network of local non-governmental development and humanitarian actors working in Marsabit County. Their vision is to effectively represent all local non-State development and humanitarian actors in a well-articulated and respected voice to shape the local development and humanitarian discourses with a view to ensuring equitable and sustainable development.
Core Problem	Marsabit County faced perennial disasters in form of alternating droughts and floods but lacked relevant policies and legislative frameworks for disaster management. Public participation in policy formulation was limited due to resource constraints and inefficiencies in government processes. Issues affecting the community were discussed on local level but did not reach policy makers. Community members were not aware of their constitutional rights, hence unable to hold the government accountable. Pastoralist lifestyle was seen as contributing factor to this unawareness as, being nomads, pastoralists often lack a sense of rootedness in local political discourses, participation and decision making processes.
Main Strategies	MIONET supported the processes of developing a Disaster Risk Management Policy and Disaster Risk Management Bill for the county. Public participation in these policies was achieved through dialogues at village, semi-nomadic and nomadic settlement levels. The community was involved up to the time the final draft of the policy was submitted for approval by the local government.

“The draft policy document incorporated our inputs. We are happy for example that the document emphasized the use of traditional methods of climate prediction. Although we have not seen the final product that was approved by the county assembly and signed off by the county government, we were satisfied by the draft and are looking forward to seeing the final policy with our inputs confirmed.”  
—FGD Participant, MIONET

Successes	<p>The dialogues raised awareness of issues regarding governance, resource management and constitutional rights and provided an opportunity for community members to give their views on issues that directly affect their livelihoods. A Disaster Management Policy was passed and community members were satisfied that their inputs, such as traditional climate prediction methods, had been integrated into the policy.</p> <p>Furthermore, communities started implementing measures of disaster risk management mentioned in the bill, such as reduction of livestock population or rainwater harvesting, even before it was passed. Coordination of disaster response improved leading to less duplication of efforts. The county government established a disaster response fund and began to provide disaster management trainings for fire fighters in line with the policy provisions.</p>
Challenges	Local elections, such as in 2017, brought new political leaders on the county level and led to political staff turn-over that influenced the PD dynamics. Staff turnover resulted in a loss of institutional memory in relation to former discussion processes with the communities. Due to MIONET’s efforts communication links between local government and communities could be reestablished.
Contact	Mamo Abudo: abudo72@yahoo.com



Case Study 4: Advocating for Child Protection (Uganda)

Engaging CSO	SOS Children’s Villages Uganda is an independent, locally registered non-governmental organization that exists to provide quality care for children, who have lost parental care and those at risk of losing parental care.
Core Problem	Child marriage was a norm in Western Uganda and communities attached greater value to the boy child and paid little attention to the plight of the girl child. Reasons for child marriages were seen in socio-cultural norms and low levels of education. Child marriages can lead to severe birth complications and economic hardships. Local communities observed these challenges but did not have the capacity to intervene.
Main Strategies	SOS worked with change agents, who were trained to identify cases of child marriage and report to SOS, local authorities and the police. Change agents targeted households with awareness creation and counseling on issues of early marriage. SOS also disseminated information on the effects of child marriage and on relevant laws in the local language through e.g. posters and local radio stations. Sensitization activities on child protection were held at community level and in schools. Additionally, schoolgirls were trained on life skills. At national level, SOS engaged in the national summit on the elimination of child marriage and assisted in the development of local bylaws to the national laws against child marriages.
Successes	Child marriage has been successfully made more difficult and perpetrators were arrested and prosecuted through legal channels. Bribery of local administration and the police has reduced. There was an increased awareness of child protection and an increase in enrollments and retention of girls in schools. Communities established mechanisms for tracing and reintegrating young girls, who were already married off. With support of SOS, these girls successfully went through vocational trainings. The declaration “No to child marriage” was passed nationally.

Challenges	<p>High expectation for allowances was a major impediment to SOS’s activities. Furthermore, uncooperative local leaders were a challenge, especially on the formulation of the bylaw against early marriages. Whereas a good section of local leaders were in support of the bylaw (sub-county council unanimously passed the resolution), some of the sub-county technical staff hindered a fast completion of the process of having it signed into a working document.</p> <p>Additionally, highly entrenched cultural norms, beliefs and gender stereotyping that disadvantage girl education as well as connivance of local leaders, parents and law enforcement officers with the practice remained. While several incidences were reported, some of the offenders went off the hook. In some cases, the police released the suspects after receiving the bribes and thus denying justice to the victims/survivors.</p>
Contact	<p><a href="mailto:nationaloffice@sosuganda.org">nationaloffice@sosuganda.org</a> <a href="http://www.sos-childrevillagesuganda.org">www.sos-childrevillagesuganda.org</a></p>

Case Study 5: Improving Public Participation in County Politics (Bungoma, Kenya)

Engaging CSO	DESECE works in Western Kenya in the areas of peace building, human rights, civic education, gender, health, organic agriculture and environment and ecology. It aims at motivating and empowering women, youth and peasant farmers to take active responsibilities of transforming their own life situations and facilitate their own development processes.
Core Problem	Public participation forums for policy, legislative and other planning processes in Bungoma County in Kenya failed to reach a wide audience. Notifications were not adequately disseminated and due to limited resources they were held only at the sub-county level. Moreover, inefficiencies in the use of available resources further exacerbated non-participation of communities, and the forums did not include stakeholders from diverse political backgrounds but favored the government. On the one hand, this led to a lack of inclusion of views from other stakeholders and the beneficiaries of county government programs. On the other hand, citizens expressed their dissatisfaction with the provision of goods and services by the county government mainly through demonstrations, which only called for emergency responses and did not lead to meaningful county programming.
Main Strategies	DESECE sought to address these gaps in community participation by emphasizing a bottom up approach to policy dialogue. DESECE worked together with local administration, politicians, media and the general community to strengthen good governance. DESECE implemented civic education alongside policy dialogue to empower communities with knowledge on their civic rights, enabling them to hold the government accountable. Local leaders and community members were trained on social audit to enable them to track development issues in their respective areas and to petition the government. DESECE also sought to empower the young generation through sessions on constitutional rights with school children.

Successes	Through the project, communities became more knowledgeable on the services specific government institutions are mandated to provide. Community members also learned to use dialogue instead of combative approaches, when engaging with leaders. This approach improved community cohesion as the members joined forces in addressing issues. It also improved intergenerational relations, since the youth and the older people shared the same platforms and contributed their views on an issue. Lastly, speaking as a community and inviting for dialogue as a community gained the recognition of government officials, who felt more comfortable attending social and religious gatherings to address issues of interest to the community.
Challenges	Despite improvements in community-government relations, challenges remain as some leaders expect allowances when engaging with the communities and other leaders are not easy to reach. Access to information was identified as another challenge to effective community engagement as political leaders keep critical information from citizens. In order to address these challenges, DESECE is investing in continuously building good working relationships with the policy makers and implementers, especially county executive committee members in the respective ministries, e.g. by organizing breakfast meetings. Furthermore, DESECE is working with other stakeholders in order to build synergies in the county through CSO platforms and networks.
Contact	desece2006@africaonline.co.ke, www.desece.org/

Case Study 6: Empowering Women for Participation in Politics (Uganda)

Engaging CSO	CARE International in Uganda is implementing a varied portfolio of programs responding to emergency crisis, natural resource governance, effects of armed conflicts and economic and social marginalization of vulnerable population. The impact group are vulnerable women, girls and youth. CARE works in partnership with a number of key implementing partners in Northern Uganda and strategic partners at national level to implement program activities. CARE Uganda was implementing a policy dialogue project together with the Women and Rural Development Network (WORUDET), a registered nongovernmental organization founded in 2003. The organization works towards the elimination of Gender-Based Violence by advocating for women rights, civic obligation and other issues of concern to women, children and marginalized persons in rural communities in Northern Uganda.
Core Problem	<p>In Northern Uganda few women participated actively in higher levels of local and national politics. Issues affecting women have not attracted much attention by government or civil society. Even elected women at the lower levels were often too timid to engage effectively in raising and discussing such issues. Reasons for limited participation of women as contestants in elections included harassments of female opponents, resistance by husbands and common perceptions about women in leadership.</p> <p>In 1998, the government of Uganda revolutionized land rights in the country. For the first time, “traditional” or “customary” ownership of land (i.e. without any official papers) was legally recognized. Uganda further enacted laws which grant men and women equal rights to land and other property rights, regardless of their marital status. However, application of these laws have been hindered by a number of factors, including legal pluralism that stems from the recognition of both customary and national laws, which are often not mediated by statutory provisions as prescribed in the constitution; lack of knowledge of the laws, poor access to justice, weak institutional and incapacitated legal system; as well as social norms and practices particularly in rural areas. Such dynamics prevent effective enforcement and administration of laws. Despite the strong normative framework on Gender Equality, including regulations, guidelines, protocols and even district level laws and ordinances, actual implementation of the policies has remained challenging for Uganda.</p>

<sup>30</sup>Government of Uganda (2016): Uganda Demographic and Health Survey. [https://www.ubos.org/onlinefiles/uploads/ubos/pdf%20documents/Uganda\\_DHS\\_2016\\_KIR.pdf](https://www.ubos.org/onlinefiles/uploads/ubos/pdf%20documents/Uganda_DHS_2016_KIR.pdf) [accessed: 21.10.2019]

“This project enabled us to know that women can be leaders, just like men. We now have many women in elective positions. The project involved mentorship for women both at the household and at the community levels.”  
—Key informant women leader, WORUDET

	Women are more than twice as likely to have experienced sexual violence at some point in their lives as men (one in five or 22 % of women; one in 10 or 8 % of men). <sup>30</sup>
Main Strategies	At the community level the project focused on improving women rights especially in regard to land rights, Gender-Based Violence and participation of women in governance. The project supported community dialogues (popularly called community barazas), involving local leaders in order to create a space for members of the community to give their views on issues concerning women participation in politics. The project also gave trainings and mentorship for women and convened regional roundtable meetings to discuss issues of women. The project also developed a framework for women participation and engaged with citizens through policy briefs disseminated via (social) media. Furthermore, it worked with the Ministry of Gender on the review of a national gender action plan.
Successes	The government began to implement national plans that integrated women issues such as gender focused budgeting. Another success was an upsurge in the number of women elected into political offices such as the Local Council I and II. Women were also elected as chairpersons for local council committees.
Challenges	<p>Many times CSOs in Uganda act individually competing for resources rather than joining in pursuit of a common agenda. This hampers progress on advocacy actions especially when targeting the government. CSOs must learn to rally together and further enhance joint efforts through working groups and consortiums to mobilize resources.</p> <p>A main challenge the project faced were low levels of education and low self-esteem among women, combined with intimidation by some cultural leaders. The project strategically worked with cultural leaders capacitating them on existing laws through dialogues and one-on-one meetings. Additionally synergies with other projects were sought in order to work on issues of self-esteem and confidence of women leaders. Women were coached and mentored not only on leadership and community mobilization, but also on confidence building, public speaking and self-esteem. This has enabled them to take part in decision making processes within their households and in the different leadership positions they hold.</p>
Contact	<a href="http://www.careuganda.org">www.careuganda.org</a>



11. RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING

CARE International (2014): The CARE International Advocacy Handbook. <https://www.care-international.org/files/files/Care%20International%20Advocacy%20Handbook.pdf> [accessed 9.2.2019]

ODI (2014): Monitoring and evaluation of policy influence and advocacy. Working Paper 395. <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8928.pdf> [accessed: 1.4.2019]

ODI (2014): ROMA Rapid Outcome Mapping Approach. A guide to policy engagement and influence. <https://i2s.anu.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/9011.pdf> [accessed: 1.4.2019]

Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness: Advocacy Toolkit. [https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/120110-of-advocacy\\_toolkit-en-web-2-1.pdf](https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/120110-of-advocacy_toolkit-en-web-2-1.pdf) [accessed 9.2.2019]

SIDA (2013): Support to civil society engagement in policy dialogue. Joint evaluation Synthesis Report. <https://www.sida.se/contentassets/7c3c28e3bec7467681f9ab092e0fd0e9/15271.pdf> [accessed 23.10.2018]

SURE (2011): Guides for preparing and using evidence- based policy briefs <https://www.who.int/evidence/sure/guides/en/> [accessed 9.2.2019]

TRIALOG (2012): Advocacy Guide. 12 years of Trialog – Advocacy Successes from EU-12. [http://www.horizont3000.at/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/trialog\\_advocacy\\_guide.pdf](http://www.horizont3000.at/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/trialog_advocacy_guide.pdf) [accessed 1.4.2019]

WHO (2015): Policy dialogue: What it is and how it can contribute to evidence-informed decision-making. <http://www.uhcpartnership.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/2015-Briefing-Note.pdf> [accessed 9.2.2019]

WHO (2016): Policy dialogue preparation and facilitation checklist. [http://www.euro.who.int/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0017/323153/EVIPNET-PD-preparation-facilitation-checklist.pdf?ua=1](http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/323153/EVIPNET-PD-preparation-facilitation-checklist.pdf?ua=1) [accessed 9.2. 2019]

Recommended Videos:

- Policy Dialogue in East Africa—A Learning Guide for Civil Society Organizations and Policy Makers: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MKbwzKRYas&t=263s>
- Kiswahili Voice-over: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJOPSbeeyYg>
- Short Version: Policy Dialogue in East Africa—A Learning Guide for CSOs and Policy Makers: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hn93aklkHas>
- Kiswahili Voice-over: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MdetsjetWaw>

This manual is supposed to support CSOs, which aim at initiating or improving their engagement in policy dialogue. It gives an overview on aspects to consider, steps to take, ways to engage, capacities to build and challenges to expect.

The manual was established within the Consortium Project “CSOs and Policy Dialogue: Further Strengthening Capacities of CSOs Engaging in Policy Dialogue”, implemented under the lead of HORIZONT3000 and funded by the Austrian Development Agency with funds from the Austrian Development Cooperation and by the Austrian consortium partners CARE Austria, Caritas Austria, SOS Children’s Villages Austria, Austrian Red Cross as well as DKA-Austria.

With funding from

