

## COMMUNICATING WITH POLICYMAKERS

3.1 Presenting information to policymakers

3.2 Lobbying for food security

3.1

## Learning objectives

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- identify key policymakers relevant to food security;
- understand typical policymakers' information needs; and
- identify objectives, messages and channels for communicating with policymakers.

## Introduction

If you work with a food security project, you probably realize that it needs the support of policymakers to be more effective.

How best to get their support?

This lesson will illustrate how to present information to policymakers, and how to influence policy decisions.

## Steps of a communication strategy

As with any other type of audience, when you communicate with policymakers you should apply the six steps of a communication strategy:

1. Identify and analyse your audiences
2. Define your communication objectives
3. Decide on the messages to convey to your audiences
4. Select the channels to use
5. Create a communication workplan
6. Evaluate your communication activities

Let's focus on the first four steps and see how they apply to this particular type of audience.

## Step 1: Identify and analyse your audiences

These are some examples of policymakers at various levels of government.

| International  | National  | Province, state, region   | District, local   |
|--|---|---|---|
| United Nations officials<br>Staff of international organizations (e.g., African Union)<br>National government ministers<br>Ministers and senior civil servants in other governments<br>Government representatives and civil servants in international negotiations | President, prime minister<br>Minister of Agriculture, other government ministers<br>National politicians<br>Members of parliament<br>Civil servants in the Ministry of Agriculture and other ministries<br>Planning commission, advisory bodies<br>Specialist national government organizations (e.g. food security agency) | Provincial commissioner, state governor<br>State representatives<br>Regional members of national parliament<br>State-level civil servants | Mayor, district council leader<br>Local politicians<br>District councillors<br>District agency heads<br>Traditional chiefs<br>Clan elders |

Who provides information to policymakers?

Policymakers do not make decisions in isolation. They rely on information and advice from many other specialists and organizations. You can also **target these intermediaries** with policy-related information.

Information sources that policymakers often use include:

- statistical and analytical organizations;
- specialist research institutes;
- mass media;
- individuals;
- lobbyists; and
- international organizations and NGOs.

The following table lists some sources that policymakers often use.

| Information source                       | Examples   | When useful   |
|--|--|---|
| Statistical and analytical organizations | Census authority<br>Statistics agency<br>Famine early warning system<br>Market price monitoring service<br>Parliamentary research organization   | Providing alerts about problems<br>Providing data on the scale and importance of problems<br>Providing data to support analysis   |
| Specialist research institutes           | Crops research institute<br>Universities<br>Government researchers and technical specialists<br>NGO–government coordination groups<br>Think tanks<br>Public opinion polls  | Analysing problems<br>Discovering possible solutions<br>Prioritizing solutions  |
| Mass media                               | Radio and TV stations (news, current affairs, documentary and farming programmes)<br>Newspapers, magazines<br>Bloggers   | Bringing problem to public attention<br>Digesting problem<br>Analysis of problem (may be superficial)<br>Maintaining interest and public pressure   |
| Individuals                              | Political advisers<br>Ministry specialist advisers and research team<br>Respected academics and professionals<br>Political pundits, newspaper columnists   | Providing digested information<br>Outlining policy options<br>Advising on policy options  |
| Lobbyists                                | Farmers' union, crop growers' association<br>Industry associations (food, transport, trade, construction, retail)<br>Individual firms (commercial farmers, supermarkets, transport, trade, etc.)   | Highlighting potential solutions to problem<br>Providing summary of interests of particular stakeholders<br>Highlighting shortcomings of alternative solutions                              |
| International organizations and NGOs     | International Food Policy Research Institute ( <a href="http://www.ifpri.org">www.ifpri.org</a> )<br>Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations ( <a href="http://www.fao.org">www.fao.org</a> )<br>International Fund for Agricultural Development ( <a href="http://www.ifad.org">www.ifad.org</a> )<br>World Food Programme ( <a href="http://www.wfp.org">www.wfp.org</a> )<br>Major donors<br>International and national NGOs (development, emergency relief, human rights)<br>Faith-based organizations (church and mosque leaders, faith-based development organizations) | Analysing problem and options<br>Providing potential solutions to problem<br>Highlighting shortcomings of alternative solutions<br>Providing point of view of poor and disadvantaged groups |

You probably have lots of information about your chosen issue.

All you have to do is to package this into a report and send it to the policymakers. Right?

Wrong. Remember that...

➤ **Policymakers are busy**

They have many subjects to deal with, many meetings to go to, many demands on their time. They do not have time to read long reports.

➤ **Most policymakers are not specialists in your area**

Politicians and other policymakers come from many different backgrounds – but food security is not likely to be one of them. Many policymakers do not have a university degree, so they are unlikely to understand jargon and complicated explanations. They may rely on technical specialists to summarize and explain complex subjects to them.

➤ **Policymakers have many conflicting sources of information**

Policymakers listen to many points of view before making a decision. They want information presented clearly and concisely, without longwinded explanations, and without lots of ifs and buts.

This means that you have to:

- Present information in a **short, easily digestible form**.
- Use language that a **non-specialist** can understand.
- Summarize the information, and present **clear arguments** for a particular course of action.

## Step 2: Define your communication objectives

How do you select the most relevant information?

This is based on your **communication objectives**. There are many reasons for communicating with policymakers:

| Objective   | Example  |
|---|--|
| To achieve visibility for your organization                           | "We need a higher profile in the government."                                  |
| To gain policymakers' support for your activities                     | "We want the Minister to support our new project."                             |
| To alert policymakers to your organization's experience and expertise | "We have done a lot research on food security: others could learn from it."    |
| To persuade them to change a policy or law                            | "The policy should be modified to increase food availability in our province." |

The type of communication activity will depend on your objectives.

## Step 3: Decide on your message

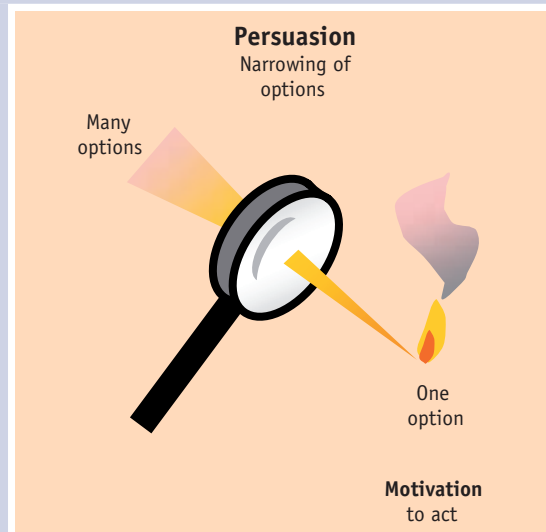
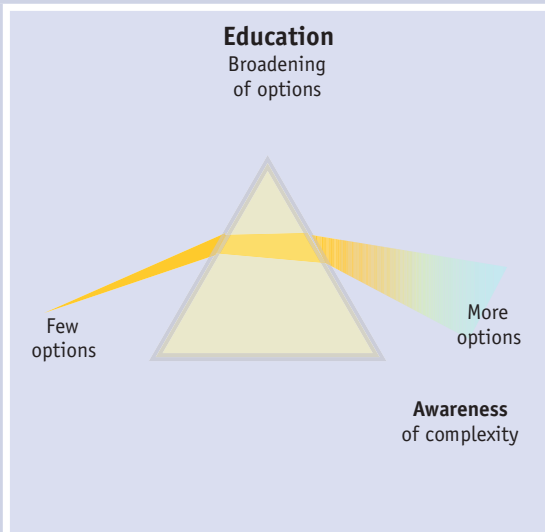
What kinds of messages do you need to develop to achieve your objectives?

This depends on policymakers' needs, which change over time. In the beginning, they will need information about the **existence and importance** of the problem. Towards the end, they will need more **detailed evidence** in favour of a particular policy option, as well as **specific language** needed for drafting a law.

### Difference between education and persuasion

Remember that **education** and **persuasion** are different.

- **Education** involves increasing someone's knowledge and broadening their horizons. It makes them realize that the world is complex, and that there are many options for action.
- **Persuasion**, on the other hand, is about narrowing options and motivating decision makers to choose one.



When communicating with policymakers, you may have to begin by **educating** them about your issue. But then you will need to **focus their attention** on a single option (or a small number of acceptable options), and motivate them to choose it.

The following are the different kinds of messages that you may have to convey:

- **Awareness.** If policymakers are not aware that a problem exists, they will not do anything about it.
- **Importance.** Information about the scale of the problem. How big is it? How many people are affected? Where are they?
- **Analysis.** A discussion of the background, causes and effects of the problem. Why does the problem exist? What are its effects?
- **Options.** Information about the policy options. What are the options for solving the problem? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each option? (Note: you may decide to leave the options out and focus instead on just one recommendation).

- **Recommendations.** Evidence in favour of a particular option. Why is this option better than the others? Give evidence to show that that it will be effective (and cost-effective).
- **Legal language.** Proposed language for a draft law or policy. It may be useful to suggest specific wording for a new law or agreement – or to comment on an existing proposal for wording. The devil may be in the detail!

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**Remember that...**

*You probably have a lot more information than you need. Keep it in reserve in case you need to back up your arguments with extra evidence.*

*You may also have to go out and find new information for specific needs. For example, you may realize you need some dramatic video footage showing the scale of the problem, or a human interest story showing how the problem is affecting a particular family.*

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## Step 4: Select the channels to use

The following are the different channels that you can use to reach policymakers.

### Printed and audiovisual materials

These are the most common ways of communicating with policymakers.

#### Examples:

- Briefing paper
- Policy briefs
- Brochures
- Letters to policymakers
- Books
- Evaluation reports
- Videos
- Websites, blogs

You produce and distribute the information materials yourself.

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## Mass media

### Examples:

- TV/radio interviews, chat shows
- Documentaries
- Current affairs programmes
- TV/radio spots
- News stories
- Opinion articles

You can reach a much larger audience this way, but lose control over the message: a newspaper may not print your version of the story at all, or it may print conflicting opinions. Remember that policy makers are part of the general public, and thus influenced by mass media.

## Face-to-face

### Examples:

#### Meetings

- Lobbying
- Conferences
- Study tours
- Presentations
- Briefings
- Debates

These methods reach relatively small numbers of people, but they can provide valuable feedback.

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## Social, professional

### Examples:

- Friendships
- Social events
- Trusted associates
- Former colleagues or students
- Staff hiring

These methods can be valuable in reaching very small numbers of influential people.

A friend who works in the Ministry can spread information for you, or can let you know who best to contact.

### Which channel should you choose?

That depends on the nature of the issue and the policymakers you want to reach. Probably a combination of printed and audiovisual materials, mass media and face-to-face communication is best. Social and professional links should be used sparingly.

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### **Remember...**

*Avoid anything unethical. If someone else who opposes your recommendations resorts to unethical means (e.g. expensive gifts or expenses- paid trips), you may need to find legal and ethical ways to counter their influence.*

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You will probably need some kind of information materials to back up any lobbying and advocacy work you do.

Typically, you will need at least...

- A **policy brief** or briefing paper with the key information policymakers need.
- An attractive **presentation** you can use in meetings and conferences.
- A **brochure** about your project or organization.

You may also want to prepare...

- A **video** about the topic.
- A **poster** or **exhibit** you can put up at exhibitions or meetings.
- Additional **handouts** and **photographs**.
- A **press release** to circulate to newspapers and radio and television stations.
- **Statements** with memorable soundbites to use in case you are interviewed by the media.
- Information on your **website**.
- A **report** or **book** with further details.

You can deliver your message to policymakers in various ways:

- you can **send them a hardcopy** of your printed information - find out their names and addresses, and mail it to them; or
- you can also distribute them at **conferences** and **workshops** that policymakers attend.

If at all possible, **meet them in person** to introduce the subject, then give them your information materials as a reminder.

If you have **softcopies** of printed materials and presentations, you may...

- **Send them an email.** If you know the policymaker, then consider sending them an attachment. Make sure you include the subject and a short cover note: most people hate getting spam.
- Put it on your **website**.
- Distribute it (or announce it) via **email groups** or professional **social networking** sites.

## Summary

As with any other type of audience, when you communicate with policymakers you should apply the six steps of a communication strategy:

- Identify and analyse your audiences.
- Define your communication objectives.
- Decide on the messages to convey to your audiences.
- Select the channels to use.
- Create a communication workplan.
- Evaluate your communication activities.

Remember that policymakers are busy and not specialists in your area. They have many conflicting sources of information and are given huge amounts of reading materials.

They are likely to read only something that looks attractive, appears interesting, and is short and easy to read.

Their information needs change over time: in the beginning, they will need information about the existence and importance of the problem. Towards the end, they will need more detailed evidence in favour of a particular policy option, as well as specific language needed for drafting a law.

## COMMUNICATING WITH POLICYMAKERS

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## Learning objectives

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- describe the difference between lobbying and advocacy;
- identify five windows for influencing and providing information to policymakers on food security;
- understand how to analyse the context to refine your messages and strategies; and
- identify different types of campaigns.

## Introduction

If you really want to make a difference on your issue, merely preparing information materials and getting them to policymakers is not enough!

You need a carefully thought-out communication campaign strategy on the issue.

This lesson looks at how to organize a communication campaign to get a policy changed.

## Lobbying and advocacy

What does “lobbying” mean?

Let’s first distinguish between advocacy and lobbying.

**Advocacy** has a broad meaning: it means pushing for some kind of **change in society**. It includes trying to persuade people to change their behaviour, pressing companies to change their activities or rules, or persuading the government to change its policies and laws.

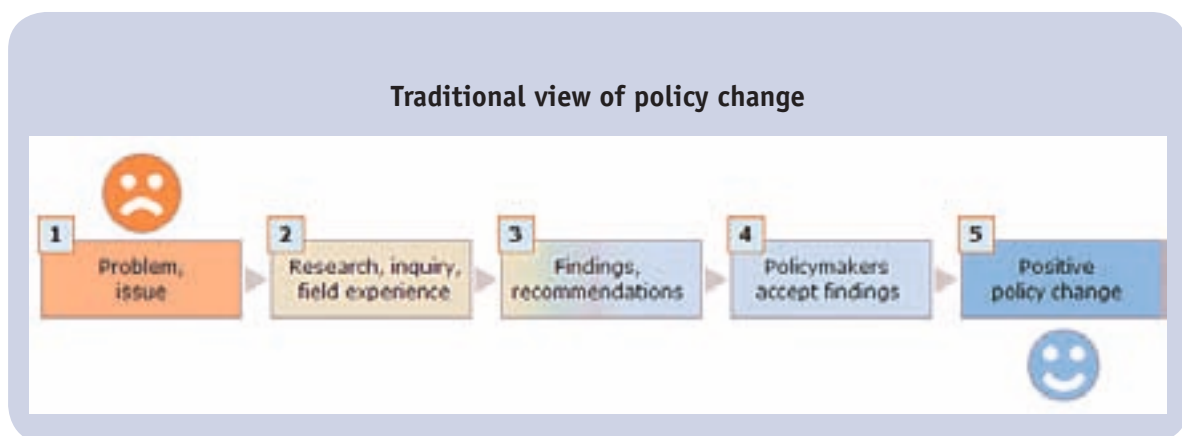
**Lobbying** has a narrower meaning. It is advocacy efforts that try to influence **legislators** such as ministers and members of parliament.

## The policymaking process

To influence policy making, you need to understand the **policymaking process**.

The **traditional view** is that policy change is a linear, logical process.

1. At the beginning a problem or issue is identified.
  2. An organization such as a research institute or NGO does some research into the problem and gathers field experience.
  3. It presents its findings to the policymakers...
  4. ...who accept their recommendations...
- ...and change the policy.



This view assumes that the policymakers are benign and are receptive to research findings and field evidence.

But reality is different...

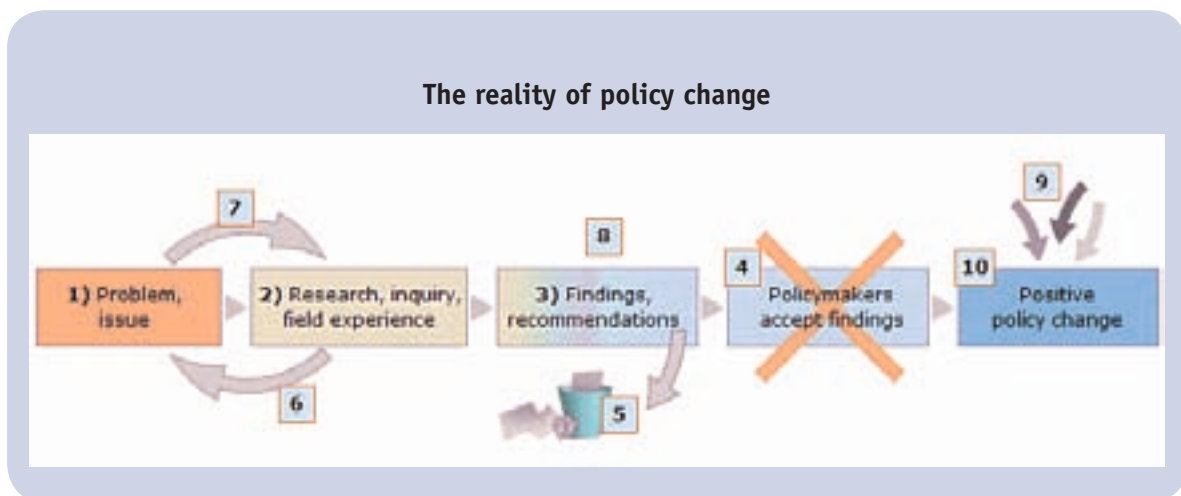
The **real policymaking process** is less logical and linear. It has many loops and iterations, and involves many other players – including some who oppose the organization's recommendations.

4. Instead of accepting the recommendations, policymakers may ignore them...
5. ...or reject them.
6. That forces the organization to revise how it views the initial problem...
7. ...and gather more information.
8. That may lead to more findings and recommendations, which by roundabout, unpredictable routes...

9. ...find their way into a revised policy draft...

10. ...along with many other influences.

The result is something like positive policy change, though it rarely goes as far as the organization originally hoped.



When trying to influence policy, **timing** can be very important.

Policymaking can be a very long, drawn-out process – one that follows its own logic. Once a decision has been made, it can be very difficult to get it changed. You may have to wait several years for another opportunity to influence the policy.

That means you must **anticipate the policy decisions** and understand the timetable and processes that lead up to key decisions being made.

Let's see what policy windows you might use...



### **Routine servicing**

Various government bodies prepare regular reports on the food security situation. For example, they may prepare monthly reports of food availability, seasonal yield forecasts, or Reserve Bank reports. Moreover, government bodies **meet regularly** to plan policy changes, such as in Food Security Council meetings.

#### **How can you use the window?**

You can...

- Release information just before regular meetings.
- Try to get your issue onto the meeting agenda.
- After the meeting, prepare information in response to decisions made.

### **Cyclical events**

Cyclical events occur at more-or-less predictable intervals. Some events (such as World Food Day) offer an opportunity to bring issues to policymakers' attention. Some emergencies (such as droughts leading to food security crisis) can be predicted in advance and tend to follow a cycle.

#### **How can you use the window?**

You can...

- Prepare an information campaign in the build-up to the event.
- Use the event to bring policymakers' attention to your topic.

### One-off events

One-off events do not occur in a predictable cycle, but usually have a long lead-time during which you can get policy-related information to those who need it. Examples of one-off events are:

- policy reviews;
- development of new party policies;
- an international speech by the Prime Minister;
- discussion of a new law in parliament; or
- negotiations over a new international agreement.

#### How can you use the window?

You can...

- Prepare an information campaign in the build-up to the event.
- Prepare detailed briefs on the issue in time to influence the decision.

### Emergencies

Emergencies are unpredictable events that call for an immediate response. Examples of emergencies are:

- a livestock epidemic leading to a ban on livestock movement;
- a food safety scare; or
- major flooding.

#### How can you use the window?

You can...

- Respond quickly with policy proposals to solve the problem (or avert future problems)

### Stimulated policy discussions

Finally, rather than waiting for the issue to appear on the agenda, you can try to put it there!

You can stimulate discussions, for example, on an issue which is not yet on the policy agenda.

#### How can you use the window?

You can...

- Run a campaign to raise awareness about the issue.
- Prepare policy suggestions about the issue.

## The policy context

Policy change does not happen in a vacuum.

There are always an existing set of policies (some of which may conflict with one another), a history of decisions, vested interests, opposing viewpoints, and individual personalities of decision makers to take into account.

How to make sense of all this?

### Issues map or problem tree

One way is to create an **issues map** or **problem tree**.

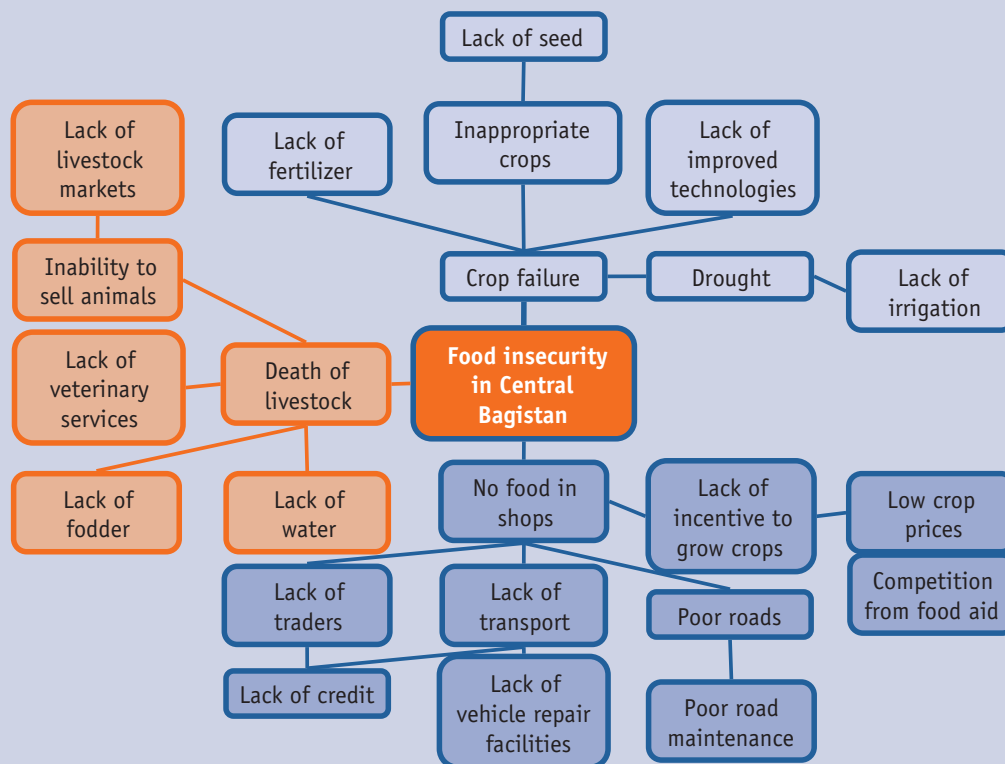
This is a diagram that shows the main issue you are dealing with, along with the factors or problems that relate to it.

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Your organization may already have developed an issues map or problem tree during its planning stage. You can expand on this, or create a new one.

### Example of an issues map

This example shows an issues map for food security. It is based on the problem analysis undertaken during the project planning, with additional insights gained during the project implementation.



The map allows you to check for areas that can be influenced by policy.

For example, irrigation is not the only factor that influences crops, and drought is not the only problem.

Perhaps the government should promote the use of other farming technologies, and provide appropriate seeds and fertilizer.

The government should also address other factors that affect food insecurity: the death of livestock and the lack of food in shops.

### Organizational analysis

You can also draw up an issues map showing **which organizations** have what interests, responsibilities or opinions about your issue. That is called ‘**organizational analysis**’.

You will determine two things:

1. What organization has **responsibility** for what aspect of the issue? This will help you decide whom you need to convince.
2. Who has what **attitude** towards the issue? Are they positive, negative, or neutral towards your proposals? Note that the government is not a single body. Different government agencies may have different interests and opinions about an issue. There may be a range of opinions even within a single agency.

#### Example of Organizational Analysis

This example shows the governmental organizations interested in a grazing scheme.

| Category   | Organization             | Responsibility                             | Attitude towards issue | Reason for attitude                                  |
|------------|--------------------------|--|------------------------|--|
| Government | Ministry of Livestock    | Increasing livestock production            | Strongly positive      | Promotes livestock production and welfare of herders |
|            | Ministry of Tourism      | Promoting tourism                          | Negative               | Fears grazing will deter tourists                    |
|            | National Parks authority | Maintain nature reserve                    | Strongly negative      | Fears grazing will damage ecosystem                  |
|            | Food security agency     | Ensuring that people have enough to eat    | Positive               | Wants to reduce risk of animals dying in drought     |
|            | Office of the President  | Coordinating policy                        | Neutral                | ...  |
|            | Supreme Court            | Ensuring laws comply with the Constitution | Neutral                |  |

Other stakeholders could be added to the list – e.g. pastoralists, local farmers, non-government development organizations, conservation and wildlife groups, tour operators, and so on.

### Another example of Organizational Analysis

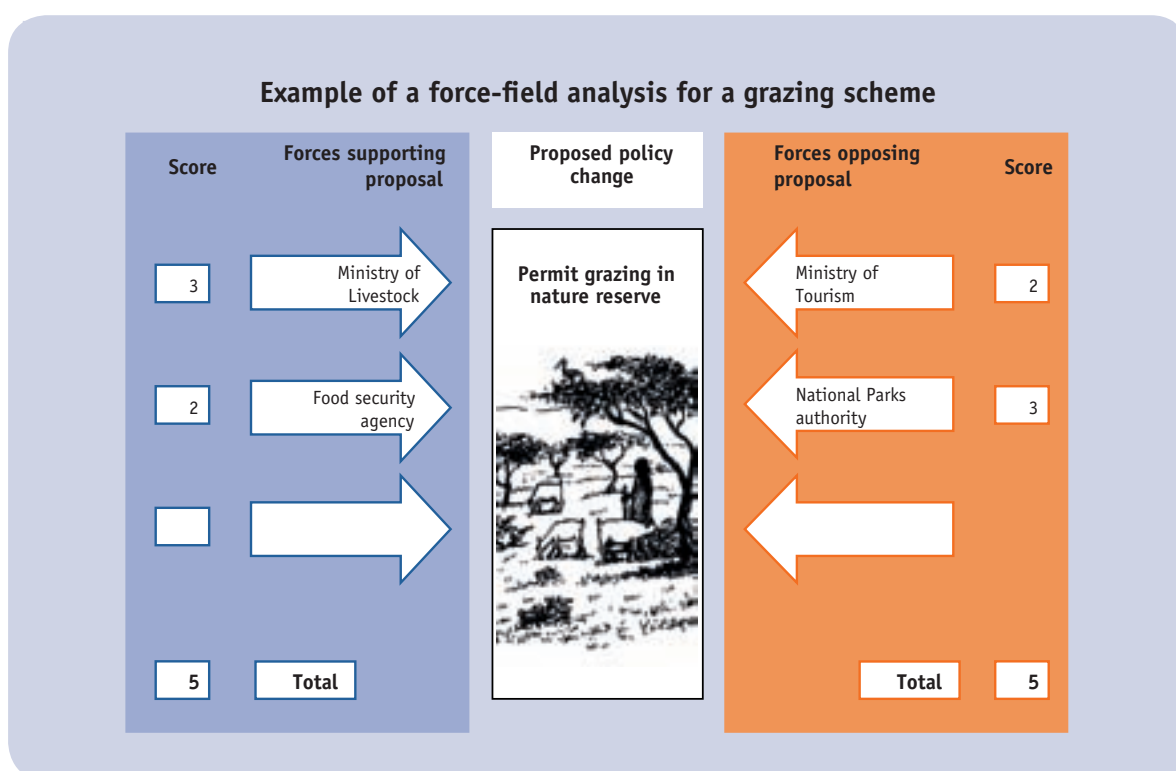
This example shows organizations interested in an irrigation scheme proposed by a project.

| Category              | Organization                     | Responsibility                                    | Attitude towards issue | Reason for attitude                               |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|---|------------------------|---|
| <b>Government</b>     | Ministry of Agriculture          | Increasing crop production                        | Positive               | Promotes food production                          |
|                       | Food logistics agency            | Maintaining strategic reserve of staple foods     | Positive               | Needs food to fill reserve                        |
|                       | Ministry of Infrastructure       | Irrigation schemes                                | Negative               | Lack of funds; other priorities                   |
|                       | Northeastern Province government | Provincial food distribution centres              | Positive               | Desire to reduce province's food dependency       |
|                       | District authorities             | Local food distribution centres                   | Positive               | Wish for investment in district                   |
| <b>Civil society</b>  | International donors             | Support for development and relief efforts        | Neutral                | Major donors developing new strategy              |
|                       | International NGOs               | Implementation of development and relief efforts  | Positive               | Favour increased food production                  |
|                       | National development NGOs        | Field-level development and relief work           | Positive/negative      | Support farmers                                   |
|                       | Conservation organizations       | Wildlife protection                               | Negative               | Predict ecological damage                         |
| <b>Private sector</b> | Small-scale farmers              | Growing food for subsistence and surplus for sale | Positive               | Wish to increase production and income            |
|                       | Large-scale commercial farmers   | Growing crops for sale                            | Negative               | Fear of competition                               |
|                       | Pastoralists                     | Raising livestock for subsistence and sale        | Negative               | Fear that irrigation will lead to loss of pasture |
|                       | Large food retailers             | Retailing food in main towns                      | Negative               | Fear restrictions on food imports                 |

### Force-field analysis

Next, you can weigh up the factors for and against your proposal as it follows (**force-field analysis**):

1. Write your proposal in the middle of a sheet of paper.
2. List all the organizations (or forces) that support the proposal on the left, and all the organizations (or forces) that oppose the proposal on the right.
3. Give each force a score from 1 to 5 reflecting its strength (1 means low ability to influence policy, or weak commitment to its position; 5 means high ability to influence policy, and a strong commitment to its position).
4. Sum the forces for and against the proposal: this will help you to decide who to form an alliance with.

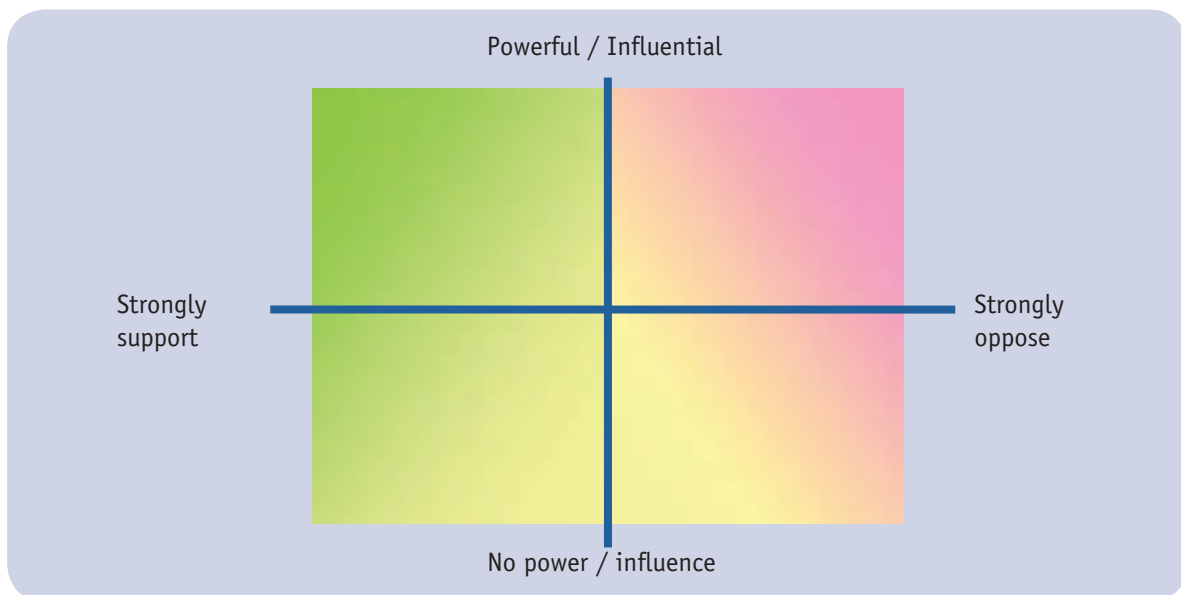


Once you have worked out who has what position on the issue, you can decide who to form an alliance with.

## Stakeholder analysis

You can also use **stakeholder analysis** to determine who your main audiences should be.

1. For each stakeholder, think about their current position. Would they support or oppose your proposal?
2. Then work out how much power and influence they have. Do they have a big say in the decision, or is their influence limited?
3. Plot the stakeholders on the following diagram:



You will find that your stakeholders fall into five groups:

➤ **Powerful supporters**

You should **work together** with this group.

➤ **Less powerful supporters**

You should try to find ways to increase their influence and give them a **voice**.

➤ **Powerful opponents**

You should try to **neutralize** them, either by finding ways to soften their opposition or by making them have less of a say in the decision.

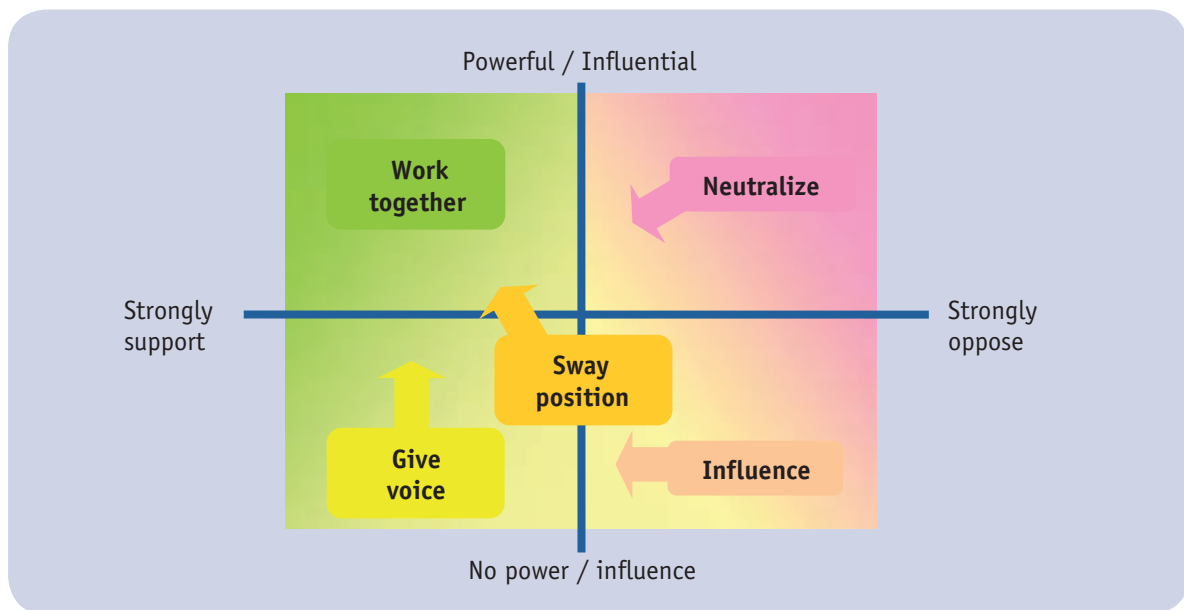
➤ **Less powerful opponents**

You can try to **influence** them to reduce their opposition, and prevent them from getting a more powerful voice.

➤ **Fence-sitters**



You should try to **sway their opinion** in favour of your proposal, and then make sure their voice is heard.



### Focusing your efforts

The force-field and stakeholder analysis will help you decide where best to focus your energy, and what your message should be.

For example...

- You may realize that the forces opposing the proposal are too strong, and you would be wasting your time trying to change that aspect of policy. You might instead **look for another aspect** to change that has more chance of success.
- You may seek ways to **neutralize the opposing forces**.
- You may decide to throw your weight against the point where you expect **resistance to change** to be **weakest**.
- You may try to find other ways to **increase the forces** in favour of policy change.

## Four types of campaigns

Campaigns may pass through several different stages.

- Start off by trying to **negotiate**. Bring the issue to policymakers' attention during meetings. Provide them with **policy briefs** and other information. A friendly approach is much more likely to be successful than one where you are confrontational.
- At the same time, bring the issue to public attention to build **public pressure** on the policy process. You can do this by using the **mass media**.
- If that does not work, consider **public action**: organizing stunts, demonstrations and protests. Make sure you get maximum media attention for these activities.
- You may be forced to seek **legal remedies** – for example, by appealing to the courts to stop a particular project from going forward. Be warned: legal action can be very expensive, so make sure you have the funds and expertise to see it through.

| Negotiation                                      | Public pressure   | Public action  | Legal remedy     |
|--|---|----------------|------------------|
| Policy briefs                                    | Public pressure on policymakers                         | Demonstrations | Judicial reviews |
| Expert opinion                                   | Media campaign – e.g., press releases, interviews, etc. | Boycotts       | Court cases      |
| Coordination meetings                            |   | Stunts         | Class actions    |
| Non-public pressure – e.g., letters to Ministers |   | Occupations    |                  |
|  |   | Vigils         |                  |

## Finding “champions”

Some policy change occurs through routine processes. But much happens through special initiatives.

Find out who takes these initiatives. How can you identify them? How can you get their attention?

The “**champion**” is often someone outside the government, but who:

- has experience in government;
- is known and trusted in government;
- has access to decision makers;
- is charismatic; and
- has access to the media.

Try to get such people interested in your cause. Give them the information they need, and involve them in your planning and coordination activities.

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**Remember that...**

*Information alone does not necessarily lead to action. Giving them a personal stake in the success of your initiative by involving them as early as possible in the process will increase the likelihood that they will take action.*

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## Building coalitions

Your issues map and force-field analysis will have shown you who is engaged in the issue and what their interests are.

Try to build **coalitions with other organizations** that have the same or similar aims.

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**Remember that...**

*Each member of the coalition will have its own interests and goals. Make your own position clear, and understand others' positions. That will show you whether there is sufficient overlap to build a collaborative lobbying effort.*

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Seek **other types of organizations** that share your goals.

For example, if you are part of an NGO coalition, your position will gain credibility if you can convince private companies to join you.

## Summary

Advocacy means pushing for some kind of change in society. Lobbying has the narrower meaning of trying to influence legislators such as ministers and members of parliament.

Policymaking can be a very long, drawn-out process: you must anticipate the policy decisions and be aware of the timetable and processes that lead up to key decisions being made.

It is also important to understand the policy context. Developing an issues map and carrying out an organizational analysis can help you to decide where to focus your efforts and to who to form an alliance with.

Campaigns may pass through several different stages: negotiation, public pressure, public action and legal remedy.

Getting champions involved in your project and seeking coalitions with other organizations will help you to achieve your objectives. Please also remember to respect your organization's and country's laws.