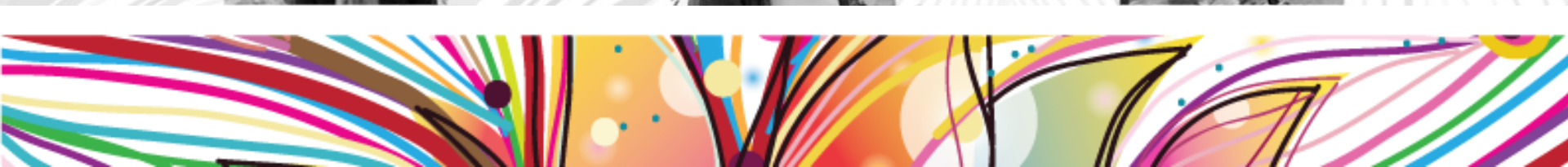




USAID Takamol | USAID تكامل



Policy & Gender

- How to best plan & draft policy briefs?
- How to evaluate Policy Briefs?



- Session One: Refresher



- What did we retain from yesterday?



Key Questions to Start

Use these questions to begin thinking about your policy brief's purpose, audience, and contribution:

1. What problem will your brief address?

2. Who is the audience?

Why is the problem important to them?

What do you know about the audience (e.g., technical knowledge, political or organizational culture or constraints, exposure to the issue, potential openness to the message)?

3. What other policy or issue briefs already exist? How will your brief differ (e.g., different information, perspective, aim, or audience)?



Key Questions to Start (2)

1. What is the **aim** of the policy brief?

Write one or two sentences from which the rest of the brief will follow.

2. What is the best **hook** for the audience?

3. What **background information** does the audience need?

4. What **data** are most important to include for your audience? How will you present the data so it best conveys its message (e.g., in text, bar graph, line graph)?

5. What are the **policy options** (if appropriate to your topic/aim)?

6. What **recommendations** will you make?



Content

- **Title**
 - **Summary**
 - **Recommendation**
 - **Introduction**
 - **The body (the main text)**
 - **Policy implications**
 - **Conclusions**
- ☐ *Boxes and sidebars*
 - ☐ *Cases*
 - ☐ *Tables*
 - ☐ *Graphics*
 - ☐ *Photographs*



- Session Two: The Title



The Title

Can you come up with a catchy title?

The title should be short, catchy, and to the point.

☐ *Short: Try to keep it to less than 12 words. If that is not possible, consider breaking it into a title and subtitle.*

☐ *Catchy: It should grab the reader's attention. Try to include relevant key words, or find an unusual turn of phrase that sticks in the mind. Also consider using a question as a title.*

☐ *To the point: It should be relevant to the topic.*



Look at These Titles & Consider

- ➤ the clarity of the subject of the paper indicated by the title;
- ➤ the different approaches adopted to writing titles.



- “Fiscal decentralization: From command to market”
- “Open Competition, Transparency, and Impartiality in Local Government Contracting Out of Public Services”
- “Between Active Appreciation, Passive Approval and Distrustful Withdrawal”
- “From the Unitary to the Pluralistic: Fine-tuning Minority Policy in Romania”



- Most titles do not consist of full sentences
- Key words are often foregrounded in the title
- Some writers indicate the major findings of the policy paper in the title.
- Some writers divide the title into two by using a colon.
- Capital letters are generally used for all words except conjunctions (e.g., but), prepositions (e.g., from), pronouns (e.g., our).



Example: Policy Brief Title

	Title	Comments
	Food security in protracted crises: What can be done?	Posing a question in the title is a good way to lure someone into reading the text.
	HIV, food security and nutrition	A simple title that brings together the three main subjects discussed in the policy brief.
	Farmer field schools on land and water management: An extension approach that works	The main title describes the content of the paper. The subtitle gives more explanations and invites the reader to find out why the approach works.
	Rising food prices – A global crisis: Action needed now to avoid poverty and hunger	The main title is only six words. The subtitle reinforces the urgency of the issue.
	Natural resources: The climate change challenge	“Climate change” is currently a hot topic, so is expected to attract attention. “Challenge” implies that the policy brief will show how to address this issue.

Writing Checklist

The following questions may guide you when writing and redrafting the title for your policy paper:

- Which approach to title writing best suits your purpose?
- Is your title effective (descriptive, clear, concise and interesting)?
- How well does your title match and represent the policy paper?
- Does your publisher require a separate title page?



Session Three: Write your Own Title

Using your planning template of yesterday
Please come up with 3 possible titles for
your brief

(20 minutes)



- Session Four: Summary & Introduction



Do I need a Summary?

- Some policy briefs include a brief **summary** or policy message at the beginning – sometimes printed in a box or in bigger type.
- This may contain three or four bullets giving the main points in the policy brief.

Ask yourself, “What are the main points you want policymakers to get – even if they read nothing else?”



Executive Summary has:

- Purpose of the paper
- Definition and description of the policy problem
- Evaluation of policy alternatives
- Conclusion and recommendations



Remember


- You do not have to put your recommendations at the end: a policy brief is not a detective story where the answer comes on the last page! There are various ways to present them:
- on the **first page** – as part of the Summary, or immediately after it, or in a separate box or sidebar.
- at **the end** as a separate section.
- distributed **throughout the policy brief** where they best relate to the text, but with each recommendation highlighted in some way (e.g. with boldface type).



- **State the recommendations clearly and in a way that is easy to understand.** You can do this by starting each recommendation with an action verb and boldfacing the key words.
- **Make them easy to find.** Print them in boldface, put them in a different colour, or put them in a box labelled “Recommendations”. Many readers will skip straight to the recommendations without reading the rest of the text.
- **Keep them short.** Do not overwhelm the reader with a long list of recommendations. Five or six are enough. If you have more recommendations than this, drop some of them, combine them, or consider writing separate policy briefs on different aspects of the problem.
- **Make them realistic.** Policymakers will be more interested in recommendations that they can implement: that are politically, economically, socially and technically feasible.



Example: Summaries

	Summary	Comments
	<p>Soaring food prices pose problems for three groups. First, the poor whose ability to buy food is undermined. Second, governments of low-income countries facing higher import bills, soaring costs for safety net programmes and political unrest. Third, aid agencies juggling increased demands for food, cash and technical advice. High food prices threaten the gains made since the 1960s and highlight the long-term need for investment in, and better management of, the global food supply.</p> <p>This Paper examines the causes of rising food prices, expected trends, the likely impact, and possible policy responses.</p>	<p>92 words.</p> <p>Neatly shows how rising prices affect three groups, then describes what is in the paper.</p>
	<p>The effects of a changing climate are felt most acutely in the countries least equipped to deal with them. Developing and transition countries are particularly vulnerable through their high dependence on natural resources: much of the population is occupied in the primary sector, as farmers or pastoralists. The view that the "North" should mitigate and the "South" must adapt has dominated discussions on climate change, with developing countries seen as bearing the brunt of the negative effects of global warming primarily caused by industrialisation. However, as this issue of evidence for policy will attempt to show, effective natural resource management in developing and transition countries can contribute to both mitigation of and adaptation to climate change and to a more sustainable development.</p>	<p>122 words.</p> <p>Describes the problem and outlines what is in the rest of the paper.</p>

Introduction

This is the first part of the main body of the text. Think of it as a statement of the issue or problem. The introduction does four things:

- *It grabs the reader's attention.*
- *It introduces the topic.*
- *It says why it is important.*
- *It tells the reader why he/she should do something about it.*

Here is one way to structure the introduction:

- **The problem** (What is the problem? Why is it important?)
- **Background, context** (What happens, where, who is involved?)
- **Causes of current situation** (Why? Give evidence or examples.)
- **Effects of current situation** (What effects does it have? Give evidence or examples.)



- Session Five: Write your own summary & intro



- Session Six: The Body



The Body

Problem Description

- identifies, defines and elaborates the nature of the problem focused on.
- needs to convince the reader that the issue in focus requires government/target audience action.
- should focus on outlining the problem within its environment and not on the general environment itself.
- needs to build a framework within which the policy options which follow can be comprehensively argued.



Background of the problem

- When and how did the problem arise?
- What were its causes?
- What has been the historical, legal, political, social and economic context of the problem?
- How did the problem come to public attention?
- Who has been affected by the problem?
- What past policies have been implemented to try to address the problem?
- What were the outcomes of these policies?



Problem within its current policy environment

- What are the current legal, social, economic, political contexts and impacts of the problem?
- What is the current extent of the problem?
- What current policy is being implemented to try to address the problem?
- What are the differing opinions on the problem and the current approach?
- In what ways is the current policy succeeding/failing?
- What is wrong with the current approach?



Organizing your problem description

- What aspects of the problem do you need to include in your problem description section in order to present a comprehensive and convincing picture?
- How are you going to organize the section to make it as understandable and readable as possible?



Coherence	Have you effectively linked all elements of your problem description? Are the links also clear within each sub-section of your problem description?
Argumentation	Does each element of your argument include a claim, support and warrant?
Paragraphing	Is your problem description adequately divided into paragraphs to provide enough physical breaks in the text for the reader? Have you developed each logical unit of your argument in a separate paragraph? Are your paragraphs coherently developed?
Use of sources	Have you built your problem description on the use of a wide variety of sources? Have you included sources that are authoritative enough to support your argument? Have you used the sources as evidence to support your own arguments? Have you referenced/cited source data that you feel cannot be considered common knowledge? Have you followed the citation conventions that your publisher/ discipline requires?

Make sure you structure the text in a **logical manner**. Do not force the reader to work to understand the logical flow. Some ways to do this:

- **Keep the paragraphs short** and restricted to a **single idea**. Consider putting this idea into a single phrase or sentence and printing it in boldface at the beginning of the paragraph.
- **Use more headings** and subheadings than you would do normally. In a four-page policy brief, you should have at least six subheadings – one for every two to four paragraphs.
- Re-read each paragraph and ask yourself “**so what?**” If it is not obvious what the paragraph is trying to say, rewrite it or delete it.



- Draft your own



- Session Seven: Policy Alternatives & Recommendations



This is what you should focus on:

- **Suggested revisions in policy.** What are the various options?
- **Effects of the revised policy or policies.** How will the policy changes improve the situation? Give evidence or examples if possible.
- **Advantages and disadvantages of each policy option.** What are the potential benefits? What will it cost? What side-effects might there be?
- If you have not given the **recommendations** at the beginning of the policy brief, you can put them here.



Consider the following

- What policy options are you going to discuss in your paper?
- Which is your chosen policy option?
- What approach are you going to take to argue for your chosen alternative?
- What are the limitations of your chosen policy option?



For Each Policy Option Consider

- What is your overall evaluation of the option?
 - Why is this your preferred alternative?/ Why is this not your preferred alternative?
- Which criteria from your framework of analysis formed the basis of your decision?
- What are the positive and negative aspects of this option?
- How does this option compare to the others outlined?



Coherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are there clear links between your problem description and policy options elements? ➤ Have you effectively linked all sub-sections of your policy options element? ➤ Are the links also clear within each sub-section of your policy options element?
Arguments	Does each element of your argument include a claim, support and warrant?
Paragraphing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Is your policy options element adequately divided into paragraphs to provide enough physical breaks in the text for the reader? ➤ Have you developed each logical unit of your argument in a separate paragraph? ➤ Are your paragraphs coherently developed?
Writer's voice and use of sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are your positions and reasoning dominant throughout the policy options element? ➤ Have you included less sources in this element than in the problem description? ➤ Have you used the sources as evidence to support your own arguments? ➤ Have you followed the citation conventions that your publisher/ discipline requires?



- Session Eight: What else is missing?



Conclusion?

A conclusion is not normally necessary in a policy brief. The Summary (at the beginning) and the Recommendations section (also probably at the beginning) often take over the role of the conclusions section in a policy brief.

Keep it short – one paragraph is enough. Do not merely repeat what you have already stated. Instead, draw the text to a close by explaining how urgent the situation is, or how important it is to select the policy option you recommend.



Boxes and sidebars

cases; definitions or explanations; information that does not fit within the main flow of the text; lists; examples to illustrate points in the text.

- *Boxes should be self-contained: the reader should be able to understand them without having to read the main text.*
- *Give each box a title, and refer to it in the text.*
- *Do not have too many boxes: one on each page is enough.*



Example: Boxes and sidebars

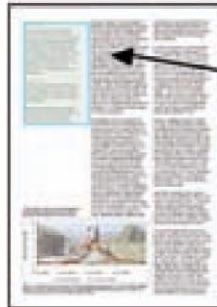


This box presents a bulleted list that would interrupt the flow if it were included in the main text.

Characteristics of Protracted Crisis

In recent years, the term 'protracted crises' has been used to emphasize the persistent nature of certain emergencies (Schafer, 2002). Elements that characterize protracted crises include:³

- non-existent or weak public institutions;
- weak informal institutions;
- state control is challenged by the lack of resources and institutional failure;
- external legitimacy of the state is contested;
- a strong parallel or extra-legal economy;
- existence of or a high susceptibility to violence;
- forced displacement;
- the deliberate exclusion of sectors of the population from enjoying basic rights;
- livelihoods are highly vulnerable to external shocks; and
- widespread poverty and food insecurity.



Mitigation

"In the context of climate change, a human intervention to reduce the sources or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases. Examples include using fossil fuels more efficiently for industrial processes or electricity generation, switching to solar energy or wind power, improving the insulation of buildings, and expanding forests and other 'sinks' to remove greater amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere."

Adaptation

"Adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities."

Source: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) http://unfccc.int/essential_background/glossary/items/3666.php

An example of a box that contains definitions.

Cases?

- Cases should be short (one or two paragraphs only) and self-contained (readers should be able to understand them even if they do not read the rest of the text).
- Focus on the subject, and avoid giving unnecessary details. Ask yourself: so what? What is the point of including this case in the policy brief?
- Make sure that the case is relevant to the rest of the text. It may depict a particular point you are making, or provide the basis for the rest of the text, or show how reality is more complex than theory.



Tables?

- Keep the **number of rows and columns** to a minimum – no more than four columns and six rows. Cut out those that you do not need.
- Put columns you want readers to compare **next to each other**.
- Put the rows in a **logical order**: by size or alphabetical order.
- **Highlight table cells** (using shading, labelling or boldface type) that you want to draw the readers' attention to. Make it easy for them to see the information you want to present.
- Consider **converting a table into a graph**. Would it make the information easier to read?
- **Give round numbers**: 25,000, not 24,567.23.
- Do not include **statistical significance levels** (such as $p < 0.05$): they are appropriate for a scientific paper, not a policy brief.
- **Make the title talk**: "Irrigation boosts yields" is better than "Comparison of yields on irrigated and non-irrigated land".
- Say where **the information comes from**: the date, place, project, etc. Put the details in a footnote if needed.



Graphics?

- Choose the type of graphic that **best suits** the information you want to present. †
- Use **bar charts** or **pie charts** to compare figures
- Use **line graphs** for time series.
- Keep it simple! Do not try to make a single graphic do too much work. For example, do not clutter a graph with too many lines: show only the most important variables.
- Make the labels legible.
- Give an explanatory title or caption.
- Finally, choose colours, shading patterns and symbols that are easy to distinguish from one other.



Photographs?

- Use only good-quality photos: if you do not have one that is suitable, do not use one that is substandard.
- Make sure the photos have at least a 150 dpi (dots per inch) resolution (preferably 300 dpi).
- Keep a gender balance and avoid reinforcing stereotyped gender roles.
- Give a descriptive caption that helps carry your message.
- Make sure that you have permission to use the photographs, and give the photographer's name if necessary.



Anything Else?

- The **masthead** goes at the top of the first page. It shows the title of the policy brief series, the issue number and date, and perhaps the organization's logo.
- Some organizations print the names of the **authors prominently** – just under the title. Others put them in a footnote, or at the end of the text. Still others do not name individuals as authors at all – since the policy brief is deemed to have come from the organization as a whole.
- An **acknowledgement** of funding sponsors and organizations and individuals who made significant contributions to the content of the policy brief.
- An **address** where readers can find more information.
- The **publisher** and date.
- Information on the **copyright** – can others reproduce the material without permission?
- If necessary, a **disclaimer** stating that the views expressed in the policy brief do not necessarily reflect those of the publishing organization.
- References and footnotes



