

Policy Briefs

Continued!

PPT inspired by FAO Learners' Notes : Preparing Policy Briefs (2011)



Structure of a policy brief

Exercise 1

Policy Brief Template is cut to pieces... can you fix it?

-> what do you think is the right order / structure?

Stick it on a flip over

Discuss exercise 1

Each group presents their flip over

The others compare the order and ask questions

Structure of a policy brief

Exercise 2

A real policy brief has been cut up in pieces can you stick it back together?

-> Take the flip with the template (rearrange if necessary) and try to stick the right sections of the cut up policy brief next to the sections of the template.

The correct answer is.....

A logical way to structure a policy brief

- **MAIN TITLE:**
 - **SUBTITLE**
 - **SUMMARY**
 - **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**
 - **INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND**
 - What is the problem?
 - Why is it an important problem? (Why should the reader care about this)
 - What is causing the problem?
 - What are the effects?
 - How can the reader deal with it? (What are the prospects for action for the reader?)
 - **CURRENT POLICY / LEGAL FRAMEWORKS/ REGULATION**
 - What is the current policy, legal framework and regulations surrounding this problem?
 - What is the effect of the current or future policies/regulations?
 - What are the future options for these policies/regulations?
 - What are the advantages/disadvantages of each option?
- PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE / RECOMMENDATIONS**
- Quick summary of the situation
 - What is the solution proposed?
 - What are the benefits of your solution?
 - What are the negative impacts of not addressing the problem?
 - What challenges remain?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND PUBLICATION DETAILS

Photograph / case study

Writing a policy brief – where to start

- Start with your audience (so, we've already started!)

Then:

- Write the **recommendations**.
- Work out the **body structure** that will lead up to these recommendations (use the story board!).
- Write the **body**.
- Put the **supporting material** together: the cases, boxes, tables, graphics, photos and other information.
- Write the **introduction**.
- Reorder the text so the recommendations come at the **beginning**.

Policy implications

- **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?



Remember...(when writing and reviewing)



Policymakers (and other targeted stakeholders) are busy people, and are probably not specialists in your area.

They are likely to read only something that...

- Looks **attractive**
- Appears **interesting**
- Is **short** and **easy** to read.

A policy brief should:

- Be **short** and to the point.
- Be based on firm **evidence**.
- Focus on **meanings**, not methods.
- Relate to the **big picture**.

Structuring the body

Make sure you structure the text in a **logical manner**.

- **Keep the paragraphs short** and restricted to a **single idea**. Consider putting this idea into a single phrase or sentence and printing it in bold face at the beginning of the paragraph.
- **Use more headings** and subheadings than you would do normally.
- 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.

Make the policy brief more interesting....

- The right language
- Case(s)
- Boxes and side bars
- Graphics
- Photographs

But don't add interesting elements just to seem interesting

The right language....

Original Report:

“The project distinguished between agronomic, vegetative, structural and management measures.”

Policy brief:

There are four ways to conserve soil and water:

- **By changing cropping practices:** For example, by planting crops along the contour.
- **By planting trees and grass:** For example, by planting grass strips to slow down runoff.
- **By building earth or stone barriers** such as terraces or drains to divert water.
- **By improved management** – such as ploughing at different times of year.

Cases

- **Cases should be short** (one or two paragraphs only) and self-contained.
- **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. Used to illustrate a problem by showing the impact on a person, community, livelihoods, natural environment, etc.

Boxes and side bars

You can use **boxes or sidebars** to present various types of information that do not fit well in the flow of the text:

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

For more information see the box ‘More on Boxes’.

More on Boxes

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.

Graphics

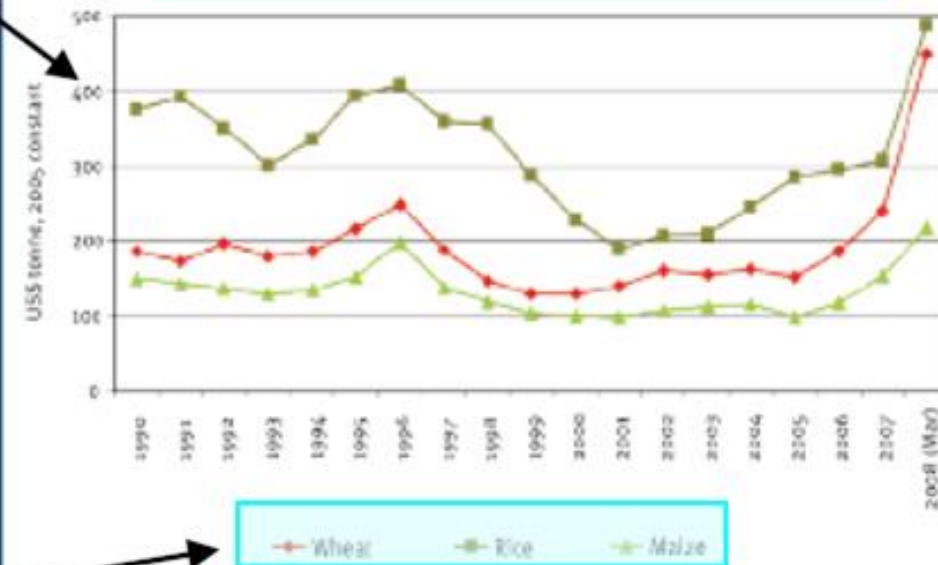
- Graphics include **diagrams** (such as flow charts or schematic diagrams), **graphs** (such as bar charts, line graphs and pie charts) and **maps**.
- Graphics are an important element in the design. Readers **often look at them before reading the text**. So make them clear and easy to understand.
- **Keep it simple!** Do not try to make a single graphic do too much work.



This graph uses colours to distinguish between the lines

The title could be made more communicative: "Prices of wheat, rice and maize almost doubled in 2007–8".

Figure 2: Cereals prices 2000 to 2007, constant 2005 value



The graph could be made even clearer by labelling the lines directly (instead of having a legend underneath)

Source: IMF Commodity Price data, downloaded 12 March 2008 from <http://www.imf.org/external/np/res/commod/index.asp>. FAO report for Mar 2008. Prices deflated by the US GDP deflator.

Photographs

Even more than graphics, photographs attract the reader's attention. So if you use photos, select them carefully to **carry a message** as well as to make the page attractive.

Remember to:

- 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), if the policy brief is to be printed. Try to keep a gender balance and avoid reinforcing stereotyped gender roles.
- Give a **descriptive caption** that helps carry your message. “Steep slopes and small land parcels limit agricultural production in Bagistan” is better than “Landscape in Bagistan”.
- Make sure that you have **permission** to use the photographs, and give the photographer's name if necessary.

It's a brief

"The most valuable of all talents is that of never using two words when one will do."

—Thomas Jefferson