



DEVELOPMENT
CORRIDORS
PARTNERSHIP

DCP Policy Guidance Document

Influencing Policy: Policy Engagement and Policy Briefs

Jon Hobbs – May 2020

The Development Corridors Partnership is a research and capacity building collaboration among institutions from China, Kenya, Tanzania, and the UK. Its main purpose is to deliver effective research and build capacity so development corridor decision-making can be based on sound scientific evidence and effective use of available planning tools and procedures.

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INTRODUCTION

This Guidance is intended to help bridge the gap between the worlds of scientific research and public policy making. It provides some suggestions to help those more familiar with writing scientific papers to convey their recommendations and advice to decision takers.¹

This Guidance is specifically written for the **Development Corridors Partnership (DCP)** consortium, with the recognition that a Policy Brief is a useful tool for DCP researchers to communicate their findings and expert analysis to decision-takers. Whilst keeping this objective in mind, **it is hoped that this guidance may be of benefit to all initiatives that aim to bridge the science- policy divide.**

A. POLICY EXPLAINED

1. What is a Policy?

A policy is a key component of good governance. It is a framework containing a principle (or set of principles) to guide decision-making and operational practices in any organisation in pursuit of a mission or goal. It is a (usually public) commitment to a course of action(s). The primary focus of this Guidance is, however, the public sector context – national, regional and local governments and international institutions.

A policy may be a proactive measure indicating how an issue(s) will be addressed, but it may also be a reaction to a crisis, grievance or other change in circumstance that requires a response from an organisation or government. A policy may be driven by domestic requirements although, at times, this may be as a result of a country signing up to an international commitment that stipulates the need for a national policy.

Advocates of alternative policies (or principles within a policy) continuously compete for dominance. This leads to regular adjustments, or sometimes complete overhaul, of prevailing policies.

2. Policy Formulation

Policy formulation is traditionally a ‘top-down’ process led by a governing body and approved by an organisation’s accountable leader(s). This is necessary to give a policy the required authority.

However, initial drafts of policies may be formulated through consultations with experts and scientific advisors in the relevant policy field (e.g. Human Rights, Labour Relations, Climate change etc). These are debated in policy task teams, focus groups, ‘think tanks’ or similar advisory groups.

Increasingly, policy proposals are then opened up for broader multi-stakeholder consultations. This process has become the norm for many International Financial Institutions in revising or developing their environmental and social (etc) policies and subsequent operational

¹ For convenience a distinction is drawn in this paper between decision *maker* and decision *taker*. Decision maker is used to refer to those who all contribute to the making of a decision (recommended decision) but decision taker refers to those who have specific responsibility for actually deciding on the issue.

standards. The policy consultations can take several years, and involve many iterations and interest groups, before they eventually result in an agreed policy.²

Lobbying for new policies, or partial 'policy shifts' to existing policies (to adjust to changing circumstances, needs, information availability etc) is an on-going process at the heart of democratic politics.

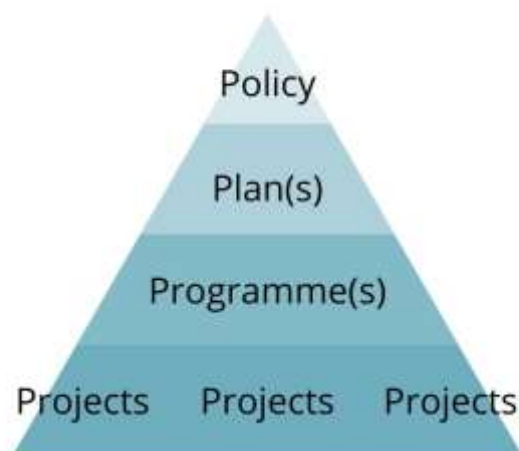
3. Policy Implementation.

A policy is implemented by *policy tools* (e.g. plans, programmes, procedures, codes, protocols, projects, standards etc³). A government policy may require legislation to enhance its efficacy.

Responsibility for implementation of a policy is delegated to relevant business units/ operational departments (or similar) and their leader(s) and provides a framework for them to work within. They usually periodically report back to the governing body on the progress in implementing a policy requirement - and may indicate the need for any adjustments to the policy.

In some cases, policy and operational support is provided by detailed and comprehensive technical guidance to assist with policy implementation.

THE DECISION-MAKING HIERARCHY



4. Development Corridors and Policies

It is unlikely that an international body, a country government, or a company will have a specific policy on development corridors *per se*. It is more likely that there will be a corridor plan or programme (perhaps as part of a broader spatial or land use plan) intended to support the

² This is particularly the case when consensus on a specific issue is hard to achieve (e.g. the debate over Free Prior Informed *Consent* or Free Prior Informed *Consultation* before approval of mining projects).

³ The formulation and assessment of policies can be achieved by the application of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) . (See separate DCP Guidance on EIA/SEA)

implementation of a policy or policies. The plan or programme may not receive the same scrutiny as the overarching policy, but individual corridor projects should be subject to a rigorous Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) **within the frame of the overall plan**.

This practise of carrying out ESIA's for individual corridors could be a failing, because the potential cumulative impacts of several corridors in a corridor *programme* will likely be inadequately considered if corridor *project* assessment is carried out on individual corridors incrementally and independently.

Engagement in corridors should include an appreciation of what the priority *policy* drivers are. Corridors can be motivated for many different reasons and this has led to a wide range of corridor types. These may include policies on

- regional integration
- more inclusive and equitable distribution of development benefits/services
- poverty reduction
- improving transport and trade efficiencies
- regional connectivity
- ensuring supply chain due diligence
- encouraging inward investment
- shaping the way oil, gas and mineral or other resource extraction will take place

It is also wise to consider that some drivers may (by design) be kept hidden from public scrutiny. For example any that serve contentious territorial claims or the interests of a political elite.

Historically, most of the corridors in Africa have been driven by policies for natural resource extraction. These have given little consideration to the potential for exploiting wider development opportunities. Rail, road, transmission etc infrastructure have been planned to link 'anchor projects' with export markets. Any development benefits, beyond the main necessities of job creation and tax revenue generation, have usually been coincidental.

Policy guidance and principles will cascade to all forms of policy implementation, corridors included. **Any observed deviation from these principles in a specific corridor (assuming the principles themselves are in line with sustainability needs) should be a major area of investigation (e.g. during an EIA process)**. This could lead to changes in a policy impacting all other corridor developments, or could result in a recommendation in an EIA to reject the corridor development for reasons of policy inconsistency.

Possibly because of the lack of clear policy frameworks and principles, corridor developments tend to be planned in an *ad hoc*, incremental and spontaneous way. They are usually linked to the specific needs of anchor projects, and take the most direct and economic route between the project and point of export, beneficiation etc. Inter departmental collaboration is not always evident, with the more powerful interests over riding others. The lack of clear principles means they are rarely designed to maximise development opportunities, and often fail to avoid or minimise significant negative impacts.

Principles for development corridors

Principles are, however, emerging. For example, The China Society for Finance and Banking/ City of London Green Finance Initiative's (et al) *Green Investment Principles* for the 'Belt and

Road' (BRI)⁴ has developed a set of voluntary principles that signatories commit to apply in their investment and operational decisions in pursuit of BRI goals. Similarly, the PR China's Ministry of Ecology and Environment's "Guidance on Promoting Green Belt and Road (2017)"⁵ provides generic guidelines. **It is an important challenge for the DCP to establish how effective such measures are in their implementation.**

As an example, flagship corridor developments in Kenya are nested in the country's development Blueprint, Vision 2030 (launched in 2008). Plans and Programmes⁶ are agreed at Cabinet/ Presidential level. The projects that implement them are then intended to progress Kenya to-wards this Vision and are detailed in 5-year medium-term Plans.

Engagement in significant corridor initiatives in Kenya cuts across several sectors and government departments. So appropriately, the ultimate responsibility for oversight for them resides within the Office of the President, but with representation from key sector ministries. Sometimes a special coordinating authority is established to manage the day to day implementation of a corridor programme. One example is the LAPSSET Corridor Development Authority (LCDA). Another is the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) domiciled in the Kenya Railways Corporation, under the Ministry of Transport, Infrastructure, Housing, Urban Development and Public Works.

5. What is a Policy Brief?

A Policy Brief is a common method used to try and influence policy development and change. This may be during a policy's formative stages, or to encourage 'policy shifts' - thought necessary to existing policies when changing circumstances indicate a need.

Many terms are used (often inter-changeably) for papers intended to influence policy: policy papers, policy studies, research papers, fact sheets, advisory notes, etc. These all purport to be 'Policy Briefs' but many of them are no more than background information documents and have limited prospects in influencing a decision taker.

Policy Briefs should follow a formal, but flexible, format and procedure. This is necessary to enhance their effectiveness at influencing decision takers. This Guidance refers specifically to "Policy Briefs" according to the generally agreed format and a suggested Template is provided below.

As the name implies, a Policy Brief is a short, concise and succinct document. A Policy Brief need not provide details, it addresses 'headline' issue (s) and recommendations on how a decision taker may respond to it/them. A Policy Brief will highlight the anticipated outcomes and implications (based on evidence) of taking (or not taking) an action to address an issue (s).

However, in spite of the name, a 'Policy Brief' may not be limited to *policy* interventions per se. It can also provide advice on the better implementation of a policy(ies) and, therefore, can focus on the measures (programmes, plans and projects (including corridor developments and their infrastructure components) to implement a policy. Whatever the instrument being

⁴ <http://www.gflp.org.cn/public/ueditor/php/upload/file/20181201/1543598660333978.pdf>

⁵ http://english.mee.gov.cn/Resources/Policies/policies/Frameworkp1/201706/t20170628_416864.shtml

⁶ A variety of terms are used to describe corridors 'plans, programmes, projects – even initiatives'. To stay consistent with the decision making hierarchy we prefer to use the terms 'plans' or 'programmes' and use the term 'projects' to refer to the infrastructure developments within the corridors.

considered the broad style and approach remains the same - although we use the term 'policy' here for simplicity.

The process is not always a one-way transfer of knowledge and expertise. Instead it can be a two way dialogue aimed at transferring ownership of an issue to those who can bring about practical actions/ changes to it.

6. Relationship between Policy Brief and Standing Brief.

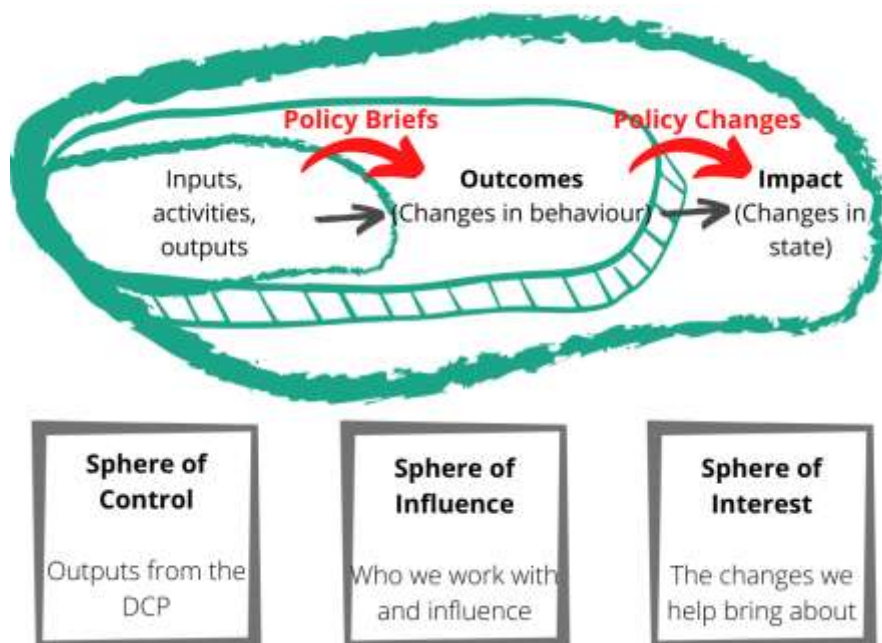
A Policy Brief is different from the more detailed Standing Brief. Yet many Policy Briefs are better termed Standing Briefs because they do not meet the appropriate criteria of a Policy Brief. A Standing Brief may act as a reference for the Policy Brief and may, at times, accompany the former for background information.

A Standing Brief is usually an internal document giving key messages to be used by, for example, professional colleagues, officials and spokespeople in presentations, interviews, communications etc on a particular topic (in our terminology the decision makers). It often includes anticipated questions and suggested answers and is updated as new information becomes available. Developing a Standing Brief is a useful preparation for the Policy Brief. When sufficient consensus is achieved on the Standing Brief's content the Policy Brief can then be drafted.

The Standing Brief, on the other hand, is a document that research scientists are usually more comfortable with than a Policy Brief as it allows for more additional detailed evidence and substantiation of points made than Policy Briefs do. In a consortium or partnership such as the DCP, a Standing Brief has added value. The diversity of the members creates a need to establish shared approaches and messages based on the agreement of all those representing the consortium. A Standing Brief would be more analytical in nature and give substantiated arguments for all partners working on behalf of DCP to use as appropriate. However, to have a better chance of influence and impact on decision takers it will need to be converted into a Policy Brief.

7. Development Corridor Policy Briefs

For the DCP, a Policy Brief is a potential bridge between outputs and outcomes in an Impact Pathway.



Mindful that such advice to decision takers will likely be unsolicited, it is essential that communication of a Policy Brief is done in a coordinated and strategic way as part of a communications strategy. It is not adequate to simply deliver it by post, internet or social media in the hope that policy takers will read it and act upon it.

Relationships have to be cultivated with both those engaged in preparing the advice (decision makers) and those with ultimate decision taking responsibility (decision takers), This could potentially be over a long time period and often with influential allies (e.g. the media, local communities etc). There may only be one chance to capture the attention of a decision taker and subsequent meetings could be lost forever if mistakes are made.

On the other hand, increasingly, stakeholders are being invited to engage in multi stakeholder dialogues on policy developments or revisions. Potential opportunities to engage in this process should be monitored, and taken whenever possible, because they offer direct opportunities to network and engage in policy formulation and influencing.

Note to DCP authors: The finalisation of the Policy Brief (before public dissemination) should be done by the DCP Quality Assurance team at UNEP- WCMC to ensure consistency of style and messaging.

B. PACKAGING, STYLE AND CONTENT OF A POLICY BRIEF.

8. How long should a Policy Brief be?

A Policy Brief must be short and simple (but not simplistic). The shorter the better - preferably 2 or 3 pages (but 5 as a maximum). It should be a 'self-contained' document and usually address only one topic.

It is important not to attempt to put in everything that is known about the issue. It should provide enough information to excite the interest of the reader and encourage them to seek more details if required.

9. How should a Policy Brief be styled?

A Policy Brief is not a technical or academic document. It must present (often complex) concepts or research findings to a non-specialist readership who may have little familiarity with the topic. If they do have some knowledge about it, it will unlikely be to the extent of having read expert scientific texts. This often presents those with academic backgrounds with a need to write in a different style to that which they are most familiar with- such as expected in published scientific papers and academic submissions.

A Policy Brief is not just a summary of detailed research and rigorous evidence in a shorter format. It is a different way of communicating key findings/ 'killer facts' from the research in an engaging style. Converting 100s of pages of data and scientific analysis to 5 pages that will capture the interest of a decision taker is a skilful exercise.

It is important to 'pitch' the Brief at the correct level.

- It should have an action - oriented title to excite the reader.
- It should start and end with 'strong' messages. (The start and end may be all a decision-taker may skim read before deciding to read the rest or not.)
- It should offer facilitation, not be dictatorial.
- It should use plain English (and/or local language when more appropriate) and avoid jargon and scientific terms. (see below)
- It should be succinct. (Using short sentences for maximum impact)
- It should provide an easy to understand and logical argument.
- It should use Action-oriented headings (Perhaps even styled as Questions and Answers).
- Recommendations should also be active with clear intent and include an opportunity for the reader to concur, disagree or comment.
- Follow up actions should be indicated clearly (including the requested authorisation of the decision taker).

10. When to Submit a Policy Brief?

Don't jump into submitting Policy Briefs before sufficient preparation and consultation has been done. Timing can be critical, and you may only get one chance. Select an opportunity to

submit the Policy Brief and ensure that it is not competing for the attention with more pressing political considerations facing decision takers.

In a democracy, if the decision taker is a politician, and somewhat stating the obvious, make sure that they will still be in office to act on your recommendations!

11. Know your Target Audience.

A Policy Brief is an advocacy tool. It should not be written in isolation but be at the core of a wider communications programme.

Do not just pitch the Policy Brief “into the ether” or on to social media and hope someone will read it. Don’t produce a Policy Brief without a clear idea of who it is aimed at and how to reach them.

The Policy Brief should have a clear target audience or individual who has potential influence and impact in the relevant policy area and is the person(s) with the authority to act on any recommendations. A preliminary analysis and a subsequent strategy on how to access the most influential and effective is needed.

The topic should have (policy) relevance to the decision taker. The Policy Brief should be relevant, appealing, understandable and advantageous to the decision-taker or opinion leader. It is, therefore, essential to consider the target audience’s interests in the topic, the challenges they face, the questions they may need answers to and, importantly, the benefits/ opportunities to them that your recommendations may bring. Ask yourself how this information can help them to do their job better, reach their objectives, or otherwise be in their interest to do. Ideally it should provide them with political capital.

Decision takers may have different interpretations of an issue - depending upon ideological, cultural, professional, personal etc and many other interests and engaging with them will require an appreciation of these and their associated power relations and spheres of influence.

Success will be dependent upon whether openness and an appetite for change exists in the policy formulation process. This may need cultivation and will require advocacy, diplomacy, “schmoozing”, establishing and building relationships, and taking advantage of available fora (conferences, workshops etc) before any attempt at Policy Brief submission. It may be necessary to ensure some momentum for change already exists and need for change is recognised - or at least discussion about the problems to be addressed have been/ are taking place. Encouraging a receptiveness to the topic in places of influence will help, as will seeking out allies who may have better access to decision takers (e.g. the media).

Identifying the relevant recipient of *Development Corridor* Policy Briefs may sometimes be complicated by the interdisciplinary nature of corridors. In some cases the Policy Brief may be focussed on a specific sector and issue within a corridor and sector specific recommendations should go where the relevant mandate exists. However, there will always be a need to consider cross sector implications. If potential policy inconsistencies arise the appropriate audience should include a non - sector specific/ cross-cutting authority (e.g. Office of President/ Vice President, the Planning Ministry, Ministry of Commerce etc) if necessary in an arbitration role.

Following mapping of the target audience, relevant government departments and their leaders, the most effective ways to engage with each should be identified by those involved with developing the Policy Briefing. One vehicle that is intended to be such an opportunity is the national oversight body/steering committee. Engaging them or their representatives in

these DCP bodies would give them some degree of 'ownership' in the DCP and pave the way for support for a submission of a Policy Brief.

In the DCP, the authority of the Consortium will be more influential than any component part on its own. It is diplomatic to ensure a citizen of the country leads on approaches to their governments about national policies – but with the support that the DCP can bring.

DCP examples

Good examples of targeted Policy Briefs include those prepared by DCP partner African Conservation Centre (ACC) on Natural Capital Evaluation in Kenya. Separate briefs were prepared for national political, business community, county planning and 'tertiary' (I.E. academic) institutions - all with subtle changes in emphasis to suit the readership.

Some corridors have corridor development authorities or institutions set up to lead specific corridor work (e.g. LAPSET Authority in Kenya and SAGCOT Center Ltd in Tanzania). Other key agencies also exist – such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank – that supports Belt and Road investments and has its own performance standards. Each agency will be very variable in terms of their institutional setup, influence on decision making, what they are mandated to do, the power they exercise etc.

All DCP partners need to understand the actions/decisions these organizations take and should reach out if it is apparent that DCP research has the potential to inform and influence corridor development and management. It is hoped that this guide will prove a valuable resource in this regard.

For further clarifications or comments on this brief, please contact Jon Hobbs on jonhobbs100@gmail.com

For further information on the development corridors partnership, please visit our website <https://developmentcorridors.org> and follow us on Twitter - @devcorridors. You may also email info@developmentcorridors.org or Amayaa.Wijesinghe@unep-wcmc.org for further queries

N.B. for DCP researchers: To access the DCP Policy Brief Template, please use the following pathway on the DCP partner SharePoint: [Development Corridors Partnership – Documents/ ProjectDocuments/ Templates/ Policy Briefs](#)