UCA UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ASIA

SIPA
Sustainable Infrastructure Programme in Asia

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BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

Policy Brief writing

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What is Policy Brief?

Policy Brief is a brief analytical review designed to inform decision-makers about the possibility and need for change in development and what needs to be done to support these desired changes.

Policy Brief is a popular tool in developed countries to promote change, which draws public attention to a particular problem and the need to resolve it.

What is Policy Brief?

Policy Briefs are most often developed based on research already done or based on previous experience with a specific problem.

Policy Briefs help explain the results of the study in a concise and understandable form and aim to attract the attention of a specific target audience, for example, policymakers and government representatives.

What is Policy Brief?

It is essential to consider to whom you address your analytical review accurately. Knowing the target audience will allow you to formulate your analysis and recommendations better.

For example, your audience may be a specific person - the president, prime minister, or organization - the ministry, agency, or other public body authorized to solve your chosen problem.

What is Policy Brief?

The following guiding questions can assist in developing a comprehensive understanding of the target audience for the Policy Brief:

- Who is the intended audience for your Policy Brief? Who will be reading it?

- What is the level of familiarity and comprehension that the audience possesses regarding the subject matter? What are their existing perspectives or positions on the chosen problem?

- How receptive are they likely to be to your analytical message? What are their interests, and how do they align with your message?

- Which facts or ideas have the potential to captivate and engage your readers?

- How can you influence the opinions of your readers? What questions are they likely expecting answers to?

Policy Brief's main elements

1. Title.

2. Annotation.

3. Introduction.

4. Methodology.

5. Main part: Problem statement and Policy Options.

6. Recommendations for implementing the selected solution.

7. Used and recommended sources.

Title and Abstract

Many decision-makers may only read the title and summary, and whether they continue reading a Policy Brief depends entirely on the title's appeal and the annotation content.

The name should be simple, memorable, and attractive, calling for specific changes and conveying the main message, the idea of a Policy Brief.

Short summary

The summary introduces the content of the Policy Brief and should captivate the target audience and arouse the reader's curiosity to read it in its entirety.

The summary encompasses the following key elements:

- The problem statement: Why is it crucial to acknowledge and address this issue?
- Existing policy gaps: What needs to be improved or properly executed in current policies?
- Principal conclusions: Recommendations for resolving the identified problem.

Introduction

This section serves as an introduction to the problem, highlighting the need for change by addressing the following points:

- What are the causes and consequences? An overview of the primary factors leading to the problem and its resulting impacts.

- Novelty and longevity of the problem. What aspects of the problem are new, and what elements have persisted over time?

- Previous attempts to address the problem. Analysis of past efforts made to solve the problem, if any.

Intoduction

This section focuses on the problem, aiming to convince the reader of its relevance and the necessity to change the approach for its resolution.

By familiarizing themselves with this section, the target audience should feel motivated to drive change and comprehend the imperative of altering the current situation.

The aim is to create a compelling case for change, motivating the reader to recognize the urgency of altering the current situation.

Introduction

The section may have the following structure:

- Local context: Begin by providing a detailed description of the problem within the local context. Explain what actions are being taken or not taken to address it.

- Support with facts and examples: Justify the failures in the current policy to solve the problem by presenting factual evidence and specific examples. Highlight the shortcomings and inadequacies of the existing approach.

- The limitations of the current policy: Clearly outline why the current policy is ineffective in addressing the problem. Identify the failures or gaps that hinder its success.

Methodology

This section provides a concise description of the methodologies employed to obtain the presented outcomes and suggested recommendations:

- In the case of a research-based policy brief, it outlines the data collection and analysis techniques utilized.

- For a policy brief grounded in practical experience, it highlights the approaches and processes responsible for the lessons learned and other conclusions discussed.

Main body

The arrangement of this section can vary depending on the chosen approach. Here are two possible structures:

- **Problem – Causes – Effects – Policy Options**

- **Problem – Intervention – Results – Policy Implications**

Problem – Causes – Effects – Policy Options

Here, you will first discuss the causes and effects of the problem, drawing upon your research or practical experience findings.

Next, you will propose potential solutions or policy options that address one or more of the identified causes.

Afterwards, you will provide a concise comparative analysis of the advantages and disadvantages associated with each option.

Finally, you will select the best option to be elaborated upon at the end of the brief as a policy recommendation.

Problem – Intervention – Results – Policy Implications

Here, you will evaluate a policy intervention, program, or infrastructure project and its implementation outcomes.

Based on this evaluation, you will propose critical lessons to inform future policy-making efforts.

Problem statement

In this part, you must select and place the most significant findings of your study or project that will clearly describe the problem. When writing this part of the review, the following guiding questions can help:

- What is the problem? Why is it important and relevant?

- What is the background, the context? What exactly is happening, where, and who are the main participants? What evidence or examples can you provide to support your statements?

- What are the reasons for the situation? Why did this problem arise? How? What evidence or examples can you provide to support your statements?

- What are the consequences of the problem? Who is negatively affected, and how? What evidence or examples can you provide to support your statements?

Problem statement

To make sure that you have added all the necessary information to the review, you can go through the following list of control questions:

- Does your situational analysis look at the key causes causing the problem?

- Is the evidence collected relevant and supportive of your findings?

- Are the implications of existing policies or legislation identified in the analysis?

- Do you analyze the problem and its attempts to solve it from different points of view? Are all stakeholders considered?

Policy options

After introducing and analysing the problem and identifying shortcomings in existing solutions, the next step is to explore potential remedies and provide answers to the question of "what to do" or "what not to do."

This strategic section of the document presents alternative courses of action to resolve the problem.

These proposed solutions are thoroughly justified and carefully selected through systematically evaluating predetermined criteria. Each solution is rigorously reasoned, ensuring a comprehensive and well-founded approach to addressing the problem.

Policy options

This section of a Policy Brief focuses on proposing solutions and includes the following components:

- Proposed alternative solutions: Present different options or approaches as potential remedies to the problem under consideration.

- Principles and criteria for evaluation: Establish clear principles and criteria to assess each solution. These criteria serve as a basis for comparison and help select the most suitable option.

- Selection and justification: Decide by choosing one of the options and provide the rationale for this choice by comparing it with the other alternatives. Ensure providing justification based on a comprehensive evaluation of the proposed solutions against the predetermined criteria.

Policy options

Some tools can be applied to solve the problem include:

- regulatory instruments (laws and other regulations);

- analytical and expert materials (analyses, reports, policy reviews, and other analytical information);

- financial instruments (subsidies, taxes, tax breaks, deductions, contributions, fees, budget expenses, etc.);

- information tools - (publication of information in open sources, advertising, public campaigns, direct propaganda, and other types of materials and the use of the media and the Internet).

Choice of the best option

Several evaluation criteria can be used when comparing and selecting the best option among different solution variants. The most popular criteria include:

- Impact: Analysing the positive and negative, short-term and long-term outcomes resulting from a development action, whether direct or indirect, intentional or unintentional.

- Cost: Assessing the financial, human, and other resources required to implement the proposed solution.

- Feasibility: Evaluating whether the necessary technologies, skilled professionals, and other essential resources are available or accessible for the proposed alternative.

- Equity: How the proposed policy option can impact equity? Whether it will alter the distribution of burdens and benefits in society. Principles such as justice, non-discrimination, and equal treatment of those in similar situations play a crucial role. For instance, intergenerational fairness raises the question of whether burdens or benefits are passed on from generation to generation.

Recommendations

The final section of the analytical review establishes a connection between the findings and the policy recommendations.

It outlines a step-by-step action plan that will facilitate the implementation of the proposed solution option.

This section emphasizes the practical actions required to execute the solution and includes a detailed action plan.

Recommendations

In this section, explaining the anticipated outcomes and how they will contribute to problem-solving is crucial.

Additionally, it is vital to highlight the necessary resources required for successful implementation.

It is essential to evaluate the feasibility and applicability of the proposed public policy recommendations specifically within the context of Central Asia.

By providing a clear action plan and addressing the expected results, resource requirements, and feasibility of the recommendations, this section ensures a comprehensive understanding of the implementation process and its potential to address the identified problem effectively.

Recommendation

Here are some tips for making this part short but meaningful:

- For a more precise presentation, start each implementation recommendation with an action verb and highlight keywords in bold.

- Write briefly; list five or six items; drop some recommendations or combine them.

- Leave only realistic steps that can be implemented now and do not require many resources.

List of references

Including the list of references at the end of the Policy Brief is crucial to gain readers' trust. It is vital to cite all the sources of information used in the document. If a Policy Brief is based on previously published studies or your own published materials that can provide additional insights on the issue or proposed solutions, a list of recommended sources can be included after the list of references. These recommended references may include more comprehensive research notes or export-oriented articles. By including a list of recommended references, you demonstrate past expertise in the subject area and enhance the trustworthiness of the information presented in the Policy Brief.

Ethical issues

It is crucial to use your own words when writing and adequately attribute the works of others by clearly indicating the original author. Please do so to avoid flagging your work for plagiarism, which can harm your reputation.

Plagiarism occurs when someone claims authorship of another person's work or uses parts without crediting the original sources. It includes copying and inserting entire publications or fragments from them into your work without acknowledging the sources of borrowing. Even direct copies from your previous works, such as reports, articles, or presentations, can be considered plagiarism without proper referencing.

Ethical issues

There are some tips to avoid plagiarism:

- Keep a record of all the literature you use during the writing process. Create a reference list and add all the sources you use. Remember to include footnotes in the text to identify the used source. If you refer to the same source multiple times, indicate the specific pages of the reference.

- Always reference the source when using ideas or information from another author's work or your own previously published work. Instead of using direct quotes or copying and pasting text, focus on conveying the information in your own words while maintaining the intended message.

- If you must use a direct quote, clearly indicate it by breaking it into sections and including the source and page from which the quote was taken.

- When using tables, graphics, or other data without making changes or partially transforming them, specify the source of the information. In some cases, you may need to obtain written permission from the copyright holder if the graphic material is protected by copyright.

- Familiarize yourself with the preferred writing style for your review and follow the style guidelines when adding references in the text and creating a reference list.

Thank you for your attention!