

A guide to designing and using policy analysis for enhanced climate resilience



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The Zurich Climate Resilience Alliance is a multi-sectoral partnership, powered by the Z Zurich Foundation, focused on enhancing resilience to climate hazards in both rural and urban communities. By implementing solutions, promoting good practice, influencing policy and facilitating systemic change, we aim to ensure that all communities facing climate hazards are able to thrive. www.ZCRAlliance.org

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The authors thank Debbie Hillier and Huong Hoang (Mercy Corps) and Yousra Shawki (Concern) for co-developing this guide with us. Our thanks also go to Swenja Surminski (Grantham Research Institute) and Zurich Climate Resilience Alliance policy analysis webinar participants for providing feedback and insights to inform this guide. Georgina Kyriacou edited and produced the guide.

The views expressed in this guide represent those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the host institutions or funders. The authors declare no conflict of interest in the preparation of this guide.

This guide was first published in November 2024 by the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment.

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Suggested citation: Beswick A and Mehryar S (2024) *A guide to designing and using policy analysis for enhanced climate resilience*. London: Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, London School of Economics and Political Science.

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Introduction

Purpose and context

This guide is primarily for Zurich Climate Resilience Alliance (Alliance) country teams and aims to support them to design work that analyses global, national, regional or local policies and use insights to inform influencing work.

Many Alliance teams are carrying out policy analysis to inform influencing plans and wider work on systems change. Some teams commission consultants to complete detailed policy analysis reports; others lead their own policy analysis work.

This first edition of the guide draws on insights from early-stage programme planning for the current phase of the Alliance's work (2024 – 2027). The intention is to update the guide at relevant points in the future.

Structure

The guide has two sections:

- **Section 1: Policy analysis basics and use in programme planning** – introduces policy analysis and shares initial learning from teams' experience of using policy analysis as part of programme planning.
- **Section 2: Developing terms of reference for policy analysis** – covers detailed questions and points to consider when developing terms of reference for policy analysis.



A meeting to discuss budget preparation and implementation in Bangladesh.

Photo: Afsari Begum, Concern Worldwide

Section 1. Policy analysis basics and use in programme planning

Use this section to:

Find out what policy analysis is, how it can benefit your work and points to consider before starting analysis.

Learn about experiences of using policy analysis to support programme planning.

1.1. What is policy analysis?

Policy analysis involves investigating whether existing policies are being implemented, assessing the content of policies and whether they are making a difference.

Policy analysis should clearly outline the policy cycle (policy creation, implementation and review), roles and processes (who makes decisions, when and how) and potential entry points for action.

Policy analysis is not a one-off approach: it should be part of a wider process of identifying opportunities for influencing systems change. It can also provide evidence and insights to support monitoring, evaluation and learning.

1.2. Why carry out policy analysis?

Policy analysis can support you to influence different stages of the policy cycle, including:

- Creating policy where none exists (e.g. creating a new law to set aside a certain percentage of government budget for disaster risk reduction)
- Revising existing policy (e.g. reforming disaster response guidelines to better reflect the needs of vulnerable groups)
- Ensuring policy is fully implemented (e.g. earmarking budget to implement the policy).

Understanding the complexities can be discouraging, but it is always useful! We need to be strategic, we are timebound, and policy analysis can identify potential gamechangers.

Alliance country team member

Policy analysis can be beneficial for all teams, from those with vast experience of the existing policy context to those who do not have experience of working with policy or policymakers. This is illustrated by the following feedback provided by Mercy Corps, who carried out policy analysis in 2024 to inform planning for its next phase of work with the Alliance:

When you have a lot of experience it is easy to assume that you have all relevant and recent insights – policy analysis checks this and can help identify new developments or windows of opportunity that you may not be aware of. The analysis gave us a better understanding of the layers of the challenges, connections between them and bottlenecks. The analysis also identified several new [examples of] policy implementation and windows of opportunity that we were not aware of.

Policy analysis can strengthen team working and build expertise by enabling all team members to get up to speed with the policy context. This helps team members contribute fully to developing influencing strategies.

Policy analysis provides a baseline of the current policy context and can be used over time to harvest outcomes and understand our impact. We would hope to repeat policy analysis at regular intervals to track progress with influencing change.

Policy analysis provides insights to help us consider how to influence and advocate at different stages in the policy development cycle. This widens our focus from informing policy at the development stage to feeding in evidence from our work with communities to support monitoring and evaluation of policies and also influence implementation and hold policymakers to account.

1.3. Points to consider before embarking on policy analysis

Timing and focus of policy analysis work

- Consider the following to inform the timing of policy analysis work:

Programme planning. Look for opportunities to time any policy analysis work so that it supports programme planning. Policy analysis can provide valuable evidence and insights to feed into team building, skills development and planning, including development of influencing plans.

Policy analysis is not a one-off task. The analysis should be reviewed and updated regularly to take account of ongoing learning and new opportunities to influence change.

Windows of opportunity. Policy analysis can help optimise windows of opportunity by providing evidence to inform planning and influencing: for example, during the development of new policies or legislation related to climate change adaptation or specific focus areas such as heat risk or coastal flooding. Policy analysis can also be useful after there is a change in government and can contribute to establishing relationships and influence with new leaders and policymakers.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL). When carried out at regular intervals, policy analysis can contribute towards harvesting outcomes by providing evidence of changes in policy over time. Consider how policy analysis could be carried at different stages of programme implementation and contribute to MEL.

Options for the focus of policy analysis work, including the range of policies and level of detail included, should be considered before terms of reference for the work are developed (see Section 2).

- Consider whether to use a broad or narrow approach to policy analysis:

Broad approach to policy analysis. Under a broad approach, analysis of policies across many different sectors and spatial scales would be undertaken. This process creates some detailed insights but does not drill into high levels of detail for all sectors or scales. It should provide a wide set of evidence to inform influencing. Teams that are carrying out policy analysis for the first time and/or wish to build the capacity of all team members might prefer to focus on this type of analysis. A broad approach was taken by the Mercy Corps and Practical Action Nepal teams and the Mercy Corps Jordan team to inform programme planning.

Narrow approach to policy analysis. An alternative approach is to focus analysis on a narrower set of policies or challenges. This will generate in-depth policy insights and detailed options for addressing bottlenecks, gaps and opportunities to strengthen implementation. Teams that have identified a major policy priority or have already completed existing broader policy analysis might prefer to take this approach. It may be particularly relevant for teams who begin work on a new hazard or sector, such as heat, and need to understand a new policy landscape. The Mercy Corps Indonesia team is taking this approach as they carry out in-depth policy analysis of coastal flood risk.

Over time, teams are likely to benefit from a combination of broad policy analysis and narrower, more focused analysis.

Building relationships and influence

- Consider carrying out stakeholder analysis before commencing a policy analysis project to help identify key organisations and individuals that should be involved in project workshops and/or interviews.

Relationship-building is a crucial aspect of policy analysis projects. The process of developing policy analysis should include creating opportunities for dialogue with relevant stakeholder groups. This can help strengthen relationships, build trust and provide deeper insights into factors affecting the policy cycle. It can also help identify who is most interested and engaged in the topic and provide insights to inform influencing work, helping to prioritise limited time and resources.

The following views illustrate some of the benefits:

Policy analysis can help with developing an influencing plan. It identifies not only who is relevant, but particularly who is positive and interested in the issue. This is important as it can avoid wasting time – we have limited time to achieve our objectives.

Alliance country team member

It can help to identify who is our ally, who are the blockers, and – using systems change thinking – who is benefitting from the status quo.

Alliance country team member

Skills, expertise and working with consultants

Skills and expertise

- Build experience in developing analytical frameworks that can be used to systematically analyse evidence and draw out insights and recommendations.

Policy analysis involves systematically reviewing existing evidence through desk reviews of published policies, legislation and plans.

It also involves collecting new evidence, typically through interviews, focus groups, workshops or policy roundtable events. These are key opportunities for involving stakeholders and capitalising on opportunities to build relationships.

This Guide to Policy Analysis from the European Training Foundation provides more detail on the process and skills required for policy analysis.

Working with consultants

Several country teams have opted to work with consultants to develop policy analysis, recognising that they do not have the capacity or expertise to complete this work themselves. Consultants can add value by bringing in specialist analytical skills and additional capacity.

Learning points from this approach include:

- Do not assume that consultants with expertise in policy analysis will have the skills and experience needed to develop influencing approaches.
- Work closely with the consultant to design the interviews, focus groups, workshops or roundtable events used to gather new evidence. This will help address gaps in consultant expertise on influencing. For example, the experience that teams have in stakeholder and power mapping is invaluable and should be fed in.
- Wherever possible, ensure that team members participate in the interviews, focus groups, workshops or roundtable events that consultants deliver. These are valuable learning opportunities for team members, enabling them to build relationships with participants and gain insights that do not always come through written reports. A variety of team members can get involved, helping to share learning across the team and limiting the demands placed on any one person.

Use in programme planning

Experience of using policy analysis to inform programme planning across the Alliance is still emerging. Mercy Corps and Practical Action have shared some of their experiences of using policy analysis at their joint programme planning session, which was held over three days in May 2024. This experience is summarised below and may be useful for other organisations and country programmes who are designing their own programme planning sessions and considering if and how to incorporate policy analysis.

- **Sharing policy analysis with the teams at the start of the planning workshop provided an excellent foundation for the rest of the workshop.** It supported team members to more fully explore problems and the root causes that they are addressing. It also supported work to scope out windows of opportunity and understand power dynamics.
- **Teams had access to the draft policy analysis report before the planning workshop and had time to review the analysis.** They also received a presentation from the consultant at the start of the planning workshop and had space to ask questions and discuss the detailed findings.
- **The analysis was credible;** feedback from the team is that it added value for everyone, from those who had a lot of existing knowledge to those who were less experienced. The team felt the resources invested in the policy analysis were justified.



A workshop in Belka Nobabganj, Bangladesh to discuss climate resilience interventions.
Photo: Emilie Etienne, Concern Worldwide

Section 2. Developing terms of reference (ToR) for policy analysis

Use this section to:

Find out how to define the purpose and scope of policy analysis work and develop terms of reference.

2.1. Developing the purpose and scope

Use the points below to help you consider the purpose of the policy analysis and the scope of work that you can commit to.

1. What is the purpose of the policy analysis?

To help answer this question consider:

- **What are the audiences for the policy analysis?** Who will use it and how?
- **Will you use the analysis to inform programme planning?** If so, do you want to focus specifically on the systems change outcomes set out in country proposals? How can the analysis work be timed so it produces the information needed at the most useful points?
- **Have you, or others, previously carried out policy analysis that is relevant to your country programme?** If yes, how will the new analysis add to this?
- **Are there urgent policy priorities or windows of opportunity** that you wish to influence and would benefit from evidence produced through policy analysis?

2. Do you need analysis that covers a broad range of policies and/or a narrower, in-depth focus, or both?

To help answer this question consider:

- **What boundaries should your analysis cover?** Do you need to analyse policies across all **scales** – local, provincial/regional, national – or should you focus in greater detail on one specific boundary?
- **What type of hazards or sectors will you include?** Examples could include flood, heat, storm, nature-based solutions, finance, early warning systems or general adaptation and disaster risk reduction (DRR). Will you focus on one or two hazards or sectors in detail or cover more hazards/sectors in less detail?
- **What type of policies will you include in the analysis?** Examples could include legislation, national, regional and/or local policies, international agreements, and policies linked to UNFCCC processes.
- **How much time and resource do you have available for the analysis?** How well does this align with your answers to the previous questions?

3. What sources of evidence will you use?

Desk-based research – Your research is likely to start with a literature review. Consider which websites, networks or organisations can provide access to the evidence that you need.

For national-level policies and laws consider using global online sources such as:

- Climate Change Laws of the World website/database – this includes policies and laws related to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Use this website to search for keywords in national policies. It provides online translation.

- IFRC Disaster Law database – this includes documents related to disaster laws: the full text of laws and policies, plus reports, treaties and other relevant literature.

Collecting new evidence – To deepen your understanding you will need to collect new evidence from key stakeholders such as local/provincial/national stakeholders (e.g. government officials, peer organisations, influencing organisations, think tanks). Interviews, focus group discussions, workshops and/or roundtable events can be used to engage with stakeholders and gather this information. Interviews are often used to collect more detailed feedback from individual stakeholders, whereas focus groups, workshops or policy roundtable events will help collect a wider range of views but often with less detail. There is no ‘one size fits all’ approach and you can choose the format that is best for your circumstances.

Evidence can also be gathered through analysing different case studies to evaluate how policies are implemented in practice and how effective they are. Case studies can be identified through desk-based research and stakeholder feedback. Consider including two or three case studies focused on different policy areas.

4. How can you make the write-up of the policy analysis as useful as possible?

- Who is your audience?
- How does your work build on existing/similar studies?
- How can you balance the need to describe your findings (*keep this description brief*) with a focus on interpreting the results and sharing ideas and recommendations?
- How can you make sure that you have specific and actionable recommendations that are tailored for specific audiences and/or windows of opportunity?

5. What outputs would be most useful?

- What outputs would help you use the policy analysis?
- Is the analysis purely for internal work – to support your theory of change, systems change thinking, and influencing plans – or will there be external outputs too, for example a policy brief, a presentation with key facts, guidance for policymakers?
- How much budget should you set aside for producing high quality outputs to make the most of the time and effort invested in developing the policy analysis?

2.2. Developing the ToR document

The questions below are examples and can be customised depending on the focus of your analysis. They are not intended to be prescriptive and should be adapted to suit the needs of different country teams. If you are commissioning policy analysis from a consultant, you can include these types of questions in the ToR under the ‘scope of work’ section.

The first set of questions can be used to identify and gather information about the plans, policies and legislative frameworks that are relevant to your work.

Example questions:

1. **Identify the key plans, policies, legislative frameworks:** What are the existing plans, policies and legislative frameworks that are directly related to [your hazard/sector] in [your country]? These could be identified by including hazard/sector in the title or objectives of policies. What are other sectoral policies like water management, agriculture, urban development, and health policies that address [your hazard/sector]?
2. **Identify the key stakeholders:** Who is responsible for developing these policies?
3. **Identify the key processes:** How are they formulated, reviewed and implemented at federal/national, provincial/regional, and municipal/local levels in [your country]?

- a) How participatory is the process? Who is involved beyond government officials – communities, academia, private sector...?
- b) How bottom-up/top-down is the process?

4. **What are the key contents?** How are the hazard(s)/sector(s) addressed in the plans, policies, legislative frameworks that you have identified?

- a) What type of measures or interventions are introduced to address [your hazard/sector]?
- b) Who/what organisation is responsible for addressing the issues, and what are their roles and responsibilities?
- c) What strategies, funding and processes are introduced/mandated to enable implementation of plans, policies, legislative frameworks?
- d) How do these plans, policies, legislative frameworks address gender, equality and social inclusion, including the role of locally led adaptation?

The second set of questions can be used to help you analyse how the plans, policies and legislative frameworks that you have identified are contributing to addressing the hazard(s)/sector(s) that your analysis focuses on.

Example questions:

- 5. **How comprehensive and effective** are the plans, policies, legislative frameworks in addressing [your hazard/sector] and improving the resilience of communities? Pay particular attention to how future climate risk is addressed.
This is quite a tough question to answer! But it is important to start building up a picture. To evaluate this, the Alliance frameworks on resilience such as the five capitals (human, social, physical, natural and financial) and the four properties of a resilient system (robustness, redundancy, resourcefulness and rapidity),¹ the Disaster Risk Management cycle and relevant resilience indicators, can be used to assess the extent to which various aspects of resilience are being addressed in policies. You can also use other frameworks to guide your assessment.
- 6. **What are the gaps, overlaps and potential conflicts** within and between the plans, policies, legislative frameworks?
- 7. **If you are working on two hazards, are there any overlaps and potential conflicts between the measures included in policies to address these hazards?** For example, are there measures that are being repeated for both hazards and what are those that may have benefits for one and negative effects for the other?
- 8. **What are the key barriers to the effective implementation** of the plans, policies, legislative frameworks at different levels of government in [your country]?

¹ More information about the five capitals and four properties of a resilient system is available in *The Climate Resilience Measurement for Communities (CRMC)* guide: <https://zcralliance.org/resources/item/the-climate-resilience-measurement-for-communities-crmc>