

A large, bold, white number '2' is centered on a blurred purple background. The background shows a classroom with desks, chairs, and framed pictures on the wall. A white horizontal line is positioned below the number.

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A group of people in a meeting, with a man in the foreground gesturing while speaking. The background is a blurred image of a meeting room with several people seated around a table. The overall color scheme is a mix of purple and blue tones.

# Developing an engagement strategy to influence policy

This chapter sets out six steps to help you develop a strategy to engage with and influence policy effectively, depending on the nature of the policy problem, the context and the constellation of actors and networks.

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At a minimum, you will know what the policy problem is you are working on: you may have done a good deal of work already to understand it, even if you did not use ROMA to diagnose the problem. Either way, as you work through this chapter, you may find you need to refer back to Chapter 1 to ensure you understand the root causes, stakeholder interests and influences, complexity and uncertainty and systemic factors.

The steps described in this chapter are as follows:

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## Step 1

**Formulate a clear initial objective for your engagement strategy.** This is likely to change as you monitor, evaluate and learn from the implementation process. But in order to assess how you allocate resources and begin to develop a strategy, you need an objective. The previous chapter demonstrated focusing techniques to ensure your influencing objective will get to the root of an issue within a nuanced understanding of what the problem is and why it persists.

## Step 2

Develop a realistic **set of stakeholder-focused outcomes** to in turn help set the framing for the M&E strategy that is the focus of Chapter 3.

## Step 3

Extrapolate from the analysis of the political context and the level of complexity in order to develop one or more hypotheses about how such outcomes are likely to come about, that is, **a change theory**. On the basis of this change theory, a framework is then used for Step 4.

## Step 4

**Select specific activities to be undertaken** by you and your partners to ensure you are able to engage with your target stakeholders in the most appropriate way to help bring about your objective. This includes thinking about communication activities to reach your audience and writing a communications strategy.

## Step 5

Highlight **capacity and resources** and how you might carry out the process of developing your engagement strategy.

## Step 6

**Develop the actual engagement strategy.**

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Before you begin, it is important to consider how much weight to give planning. The OM-based aspects of ROMA suggest it is less important to develop a detailed plan at the outset than it is to spend effort on monitoring and learning, based on an adequate plan. The lessons from diagnosing complexity indicate that, where change pathways are uncertain, planning should be light, flexible and responsive.

# 1. IDENTIFY YOUR POLICY INFLUENCE OBJECTIVE

A good policy-influencing objective should be clear about *why* the changes you are proposing are important, *who* they affect, *what* needs to be done about it and *where* you stand in relation to others who are also trying to bring about change.<sup>5</sup> In the spirit of doing no harm, it is useful to insert a final check to identify types of action that would be unhelpful in resolving the problem, and to consider possible incoherence and conflicting aims across the whole range of work you might be involved in.

If the policy problem you are working on has distributed capacities, then working in coalition will be crucial throughout the engagement process. Coalitions tend to be held together better by a commitment to common values than by tightly defined, specific objectives. In fact, coalitions can fall apart if they do not allow for sufficient ambiguity to cater for different interests. This will probably mean your initial specification of the objective for the coalition should be quite broad, leaving room for each of the different coalition partners to formulate sub-objectives that better reflect their particular goals. Understanding this coalition (which may be made up of a mix of stakeholders with short- and longer-term aims) will be a core part of your theory of change and communications strategy.

## Box 9: Terminology – objectives and outcomes

ROMA tries to simplify what can be a very complex set of terms, referring to the **objective** of policy influence that will lead to **outcomes** for the people you are trying to help. Broadly, objectives are set out in terms of actions and described as ‘immediate’, ‘short term’ or ‘long term’, and outcomes are set out in terms of the results they generate and described as ‘intermediate’ and either ‘final’ or ‘longer term’.

## Checking the forces for and against change

Having defined the initial specification of your policy-influencing objective, identifying the potential barriers and enablers of change helps you target that objective in more detail. A force field diagram (as devised by the sociologist Kurt Lewin in 1951) is a simple diagram that can be drawn up on a large piece of paper in four steps:

- 1 Write the policy-influencing objective in the middle of the page.
- 2 Identify the forces for or against change. Refer to any previous analysis you have done, such as your ‘five whys’ or fishbone diagram. You do not have to go through each individual stakeholder on the map: it is better to identify the broad forces first and then work out whether they need to be broken down any further. All the forces in support of change are listed on the left (driving the change forward); all those against change are listed on the right. Sticky notes are helpful.
- 3 Organise the forces around common themes and work out the strength of each one, on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being weak and 5 being strong). The chart may look quite unbalanced at this stage, and some of the forces may be linked to each other (see Figure 5 overleaf).
- 4 To further refine the diagram, use a similar 1-to-5 scale to work out the strength of your influence on each of the forces. Adding the numbers together will give you an indication of how easy or difficult it will be to bring about change (see the case study at the end of this chapter for a fully worked example).

5. The answer to the final question ‘how the changes will be addressed’ will be developed as you develop your strategy; Sections 2-6 in this chapter.



**Figure 5: A force field analysis**

Doing a force field analysis helps you reflect on whether your influencing objective is correctly specified and whether you should be focusing your efforts where you have a high degree of influence. Ensure you consider what others are doing, to avoid duplication of effort.

## 2. DEVELOP A SET OF REALISTIC, STAKEHOLDER-FOCUSED OUTCOMES

### Understand which outcomes you are seeking

Having set out an initial objective for policy influence, it is important to push your thinking further ahead and consider the final outcomes you are seeking. In the context of an intervention seeking to influence policy, the outcome – in the simplest sense – is policy change. It is important to remember, however, that policy change is also a *means* to achieving an ultimate goal – such as better education, better public health, lower poverty or fewer deaths from curable diseases.

The ultimate goal will take a long time to achieve. So, in the process of working towards that goal, it is sensible also to focus on more immediate objectives and intermediate outcomes that are produced by the strategies and interventions chosen.

There are many different types of outcome we can look for that will tell us whether our interventions are having the desired effect. This may appear to complicate the task, but in fact it simplifies things by narrowing down where you need to look for outcomes.

We suggest nine possible outcomes to align with each stakeholder or group of stakeholders. For each stakeholder, consider which of the nine outcomes in Table 2 need to be addressed. Focus only on the top three priorities for each stakeholder; any more than that will become confusing.

**Table 2: Measuring stakeholder-focused outcomes**

Outcome	Points to consider
<b>1</b> Interest of key stakeholders; getting issues on to the policy agenda	How interested and open are policy actors to your issues? What kind of evidence will convince them?
<b>2</b> Public opinion	How does the public engage in these issues?
<b>3</b> Capacity and engagement of other actors	Who else is engaging in this policy area? How influential are they? What can be done to involve others?
<b>4</b> Change in discourse among policy actors and commentators	What are the influential policy actors saying on this issue? What language are they using?
<b>5</b> Improvements in policy-making procedure/process	Who is consulted during policy-making? How is evidence taken into account?
<b>6</b> Change (or no change) in policy content	What new legislation, budgets, programmes or strategies are being developed?
<b>7</b> Behaviour change for effective implementation	Who is involved in implementing targeted policies? Do they have the skills, relationships and incentives to deliver?
<b>8</b> Networks and systems for supporting delivery	Are different actors working coherently together to implement policy? Are the necessary structures and incentives in place to facilitate this?
<b>9</b> Relationships between actors	Do bonds of trust exist between different actors?

*Adapted from Keck and Sikkink (1998) and Steven (2007).*

The results around these outcomes will help you build a holistic picture of how an intervention is affecting the system with which you are engaging. It will help you focus on the smaller, incremental changes that are fundamental steps for longer-term, sustainable change.

It also helps you identify informal changes (e.g. outcomes 1 and 4) and formal changes (e.g. 5, 6 and 7); indirect (e.g. 2, 3 and 8) as well as direct influence (4, 5 and 6); and change at the level of systems (e.g. 3 and 8) as well as individuals (1, 4 and 7).

Not all of these will be relevant for every intervention. For instance, public opinion will be important only for interventions that rely on mobilising the public to exert pressure through the mass media. Likewise, capacity and engagement of other actors will be important to measure only if your strategy relies on indirect influence, for example through developing the enabling environment for civil society to work more equitably with parliamentarians.

## Identify the incremental changes towards those outcomes

As noted in the Introduction, ROMA is an OM-based approach. This is centred on two key ideas: 1) that change occurs mainly through a series of small, incremental steps; and 2) that sustainable change comes about as a result of changes in people's behaviours, not just what they produce.<sup>6</sup>

The RAPID team has found that OM helps keep ideas about how change happens realistic, even where pressure from donors can encourage organisations to overstate their likely results.

OM defines three types of sustainable behaviour change. These are behaviours we would:

- **expect to see** – key actors demonstrate early positive responses and initial engagement with the idea of change or the issue;
- **like to see** – key actors are showing signs that the messages are being taken on board and are proactively changing the way things are done;
- **love to see** – key actors display deep transformations in behaviour that demonstrate that the idea of change has been deeply internalised and will be sustainable in the long term.

<sup>6</sup> Detailed information on OM can be found on the OM Learning Community. See [www.outcomemapping.ca](http://www.outcomemapping.ca)

Having decided which outcomes you are seeking for each stakeholder or group of stakeholders, it may be helpful to record these sets of behaviours in a table form, setting out who the stakeholder groups are, what their priority outcomes are and – for each priority outcome – what specific behaviours you might expect, like and love to see. Table 5 in chapter 2, a case study from a project with a large non-government organisation, shows what such a table might look like.

There are two points to note. First, while this table encourages you to look for incremental changes, radical change is possible. It is important to be constantly on the look-out for opportunities to

push for significant change or to take advantage of opportunities when policy processes may suddenly become receptive to new evidence or ideas. These are more likely to happen after a shock or crisis, when a new party/regime/leader takes office and where levels of complexity and uncertainty are subsequently relatively high. However, the same circumstances can mean any change achieved may be short-lived and reversed.

Second, a backlash can be a positive sign that people or organisations are engaging with your message about the need for change, particularly where there are vested interests in keeping things as they are.

## 3. DEVELOP A THEORY OF HOW TO FACILITATE CHANGE

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Once you have defined the outcomes you are looking for, the next step is to think about how these are likely to come about. Having an idea of how change is likely to happen will help you identify entry points and opportunities for the kind of actions you ought to take to set change processes in motion.

There will be no general applicable models of how change happens – largely because there are many different viewpoints and ideas about it. Every context has its own history and its own particularities. While there are some broad patterns, these are far from being fixed laws. Even an analysis of the past will be unlikely to be a definitive guide to how change might occur in future.

Some of the broad patterns derive from approaches to change in different academic disciplines like history, politics and sociology. So, for instance, historical analysis emphasises change through actors and structures; class and other social groups; cycles and crises; and reforms and revolutions. Politics emphasises institutions and ideology; sociology focuses on social movements, worldviews, power and culture.

Other viewpoints argue that change arises because of seismic evolutionary shifts or coordinated action among individuals with the same core beliefs. Change may come about where advocates successfully connect the way

a problem is defined and the policy solution to the problem or political climate surrounding their issue, or to the way policy options are framed or presented. Change may also occur when individuals or groups work with those in power to make decisions or influence decision-making; or when there is collective action by members of a particular community who work to change the problems affecting their lives.

## A theory of ‘no-change’

There is currently a great deal of emphasis on theories of change and a proliferation of ways in which they are presented. In our experience, few of them give sufficient consideration to understanding the *status quo* and what a ‘theory of no change’ would look like. But, given the difficulty of change in many contexts, especially institutional change, it is worth asking why change is unlikely to come about. Mapping out where actor incentives, interests and embedded power structures prevent change from taking place will provide a useful baseline against which you can assess what changes have happened, to support your monitoring and learning processes.

A force field analysis complemented by a fishbone diagram (see Chapter 1) can be used to present an initial theory of no change. A more detailed analysis would build on this by analysing the complexity of the issue and the systemic political and institutional factors (Chapter 1, Section 2). The most detailed theory of no change would be done using a political economy analysis.<sup>7</sup>

## An initial theory of change

Having set out the **expect to see**, **like to see** and **love to see** outcomes in the previous exercise, you will be part way to developing a theory of how change happens. To help you approach an assessment of how specific changes may occur, we suggest you refer back to Chapter 1, to the analysis of why the problem persists and in particular the analysis of systemic factors. For each stakeholder group it may be useful to consider how they would respond to socio-economic trends and unforeseen events.

All of this analysis can be drawn together into an initial theory of change. At this stage, the ‘theory’ you shape will be a hypothesis or set of hypotheses that needs to be revised and refined while you learn, interpret and adapt as your project or programme progresses. Eventually, this will enable you to build a more credible and robust ‘theory of change’.



Having looked at your outcomes and potential theories of change, you should now be able to specify your final policy-influencing objective.

**Figure 6: Feedback loops in the ROMA cycle**

7. There is a good deal of online guidance about how to do political economy analyses: see, for example, <http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/PEA.pdf>



# 4. DEVELOP YOUR COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

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With your final objective clear, now is the point at which you can identify specific actions to facilitate change. We believe communications-based activities are some of the most important types of actions you can take. In fact, your communications strategy will be integral to your overall policy engagement strategy. For this reason, this section focuses on different aspects of communications and on writing your communications strategy.

Communication is fundamental to almost all approaches you will take to engaging with your stakeholders: it is an ongoing process that forms the backbone of your day-to-day work throughout the life of your project or programme. Relationships with stakeholders take time to develop, and the sooner they can be involved in some action the better.

When we talk about ‘communication’ we use the word in its broadest sense. Communication can take many forms, including online engagement and social media, field visits, public events or private meetings.

In this part, we discuss two broad communication approaches to achieve your objectives: first, how to encourage specific stakeholders (e.g. government decision-makers) to adopt a certain policy position; second, a set of functions/actions for problems with a higher degree of complexity. There is a degree of overlap between these two approaches, and your policy-influencing objective will help you decide your primary focus.

## Communications approach 1: encouraging a particular policy position

You may want to encourage policy-makers to adopt a specific position. An essential first step is to assess the extent to which different stakeholders are predisposed to move towards that position. Some may already have commissioned research or begun activities relevant to it. But not all the stakeholders involved will agree with proposals or activities already under way.

There are several ways to engage with stakeholders in order for them to adopt a particular position. We distinguish these as:

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### Inside-track

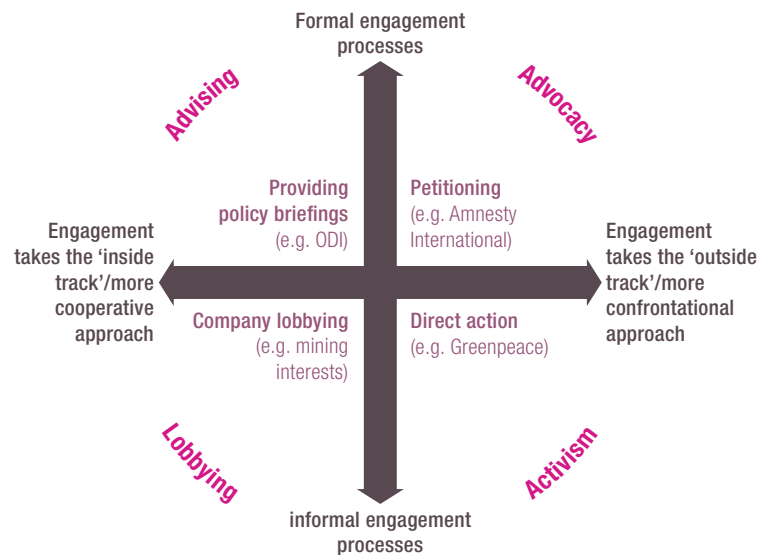
These methods are generally collaborative. They may feature direct interactions with decision-makers, allies and other key actors. They include participation in negotiations, meetings, direct communications with government ministers or informal, face-to-face discussions with close collaborators and other contacts.

### Outside-track

These methods are sometimes more confrontational. They may target large numbers of individuals, or the political debate on an issue, through public messaging and campaigning. They aim to build public support for a new policy, use public meetings and speeches to communicate the rationale for a proposed reform and/or use television and radio to raise public awareness of an issue.

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There is also a distinction between approaches that work through formal and informal channels. Working on the formal side might involve inputting to structured consultation processes, giving formal submissions to a committee or providing advisory services to feed into specific decisions. Working through informal channels might involve trying to persuade key individuals through face-to-face discussions that occur outside work events, or claiming new spaces for expressing opinions through protest or activism. In total, this creates four possible communications methods to influence policy (see Figure 7).



**Figure 7: Four communications methods for influencing policy**

## Communications approach 2: knowledge-brokering

Getting others to adopt a specific position may not always be appropriate. There may also be several other voices and stakeholder groups asking the government to take different policy positions. Who prevails will depend on many factors.

Instead of achieving measurable impacts on policy, in these situations your intervention or action may be more about developing capacities, improving and broadening the quality of debate through furthering dialogue and sharing ideas. This is often referred to as a ‘brokering’ approach.

Brokering knowledge and relationships among and between specific stakeholder groups offers an approach to achieving this. At different stages, projects or programmes may need to undertake activities that are more interactive and multi-directional. Here is a set of knowledge-brokering activities, functions or strategies you may want to pursue.

- **Informing and translating:** this means disseminating or sharing content in a form that is appropriate to a specific audience. Key requirements in this are: understanding the targeted stakeholder and their needs; translating where necessary, particularly for non-specialist audiences; and packaging and communicating what has been produced in appropriate ways without compromising its objectivity. Rather than expecting key audiences to come to you, you push information to them, through the existing channels that they already use. Shaping your proposals to fit how the issue is framed may help make your ideas, or at least the way they are perceived by policy-makers, more relevant. ‘Informing’ and ‘translating’ might be appropriate when there is an existing demand for the information, where information can easily be understood and acted on and/or when it is important to reach as many people as possible.

### Box 10: complexity and knowledge brokering

The more complex the context in which you are working, the more likely you are to need to pursue a brokering rather than an influencing approach.

- With **distributed capacities**, it may be more effective to strengthen communication within networks rather than aiming for a particular policy position.
- With **divergent goals**, a collaborative problem-solving approach may work better than attempting to drive change towards a single, pre-specified goal.
- With **uncertain change pathways**, use single rather than multiple entry points for communication.

- **Linking:** this means seeking out known experts to advise on a particular problem, which the policy-maker has outlined through briefings and roundtables, for instance. The person or organisation gives tailored advice in response to a clear remit, rather than simply providing information. Linking is appropriate when there is a clear policy question (and a formal written consultation is under way); where technical advice is required in response to specific questions; or where it is important to consult with specific groups of people local to a problem or issue. It can be informal, through interaction and discussions created through social networking and online forums.
- **Matchmaking:** this means introducing people to others they usually would not meet. This enriches the perspectives a policy-maker can draw on, possibly changing the framing of the policy question. This may be appropriate when there is a need to broaden policy-makers' horizons or to spot potential synergies with other issues to create a more strategic overview. Where issues are complex, involving multiple perspectives, it will be important to help decision-makers recognise that credible voices are not limited to technocrats or elites. Matchmaking is particularly appropriate in the case of strategic or complex policy issues that cannot be dealt with by a single organisation or where it is important to learn from experiences in other systems or countries.

Examples of these actions are summarised in Table 3.

**Table 3: Measuring stakeholder-focused outcomes**

Key functions	Activities this might entail	Typical communications role	What others can do
Informing and translating	Examples include factsheets, research synopses, web portals, databases, end-of-project seminars.	Preparing project reports, articles, briefing papers, web pages, presentations, animations. Preparing briefs for policy-makers, web pages for the general public, guides for technical staff, reports or videos to local stakeholders (e.g. village committees) and project participants.	Preparing project reports, articles, briefing papers, web pages, presentations, animations. Preparing briefs for policy-makers, web pages for the general public, guides for technical staff, reports or videos to local stakeholders (e.g. village committees) and project participants.
Linking	Examples include project or programme advisory committees, focus groups, social networking communities such as LinkedIn.	Convening meetings and seminars with like-minded people.	Seeking out appropriate people to attend for particular issues.
Matchmaking	Boost credibility of other voices, such as supporting grassroots networks, by strengthening their arguments through more robust research and linking different levels of governance. Examples include departmental expert advisory committees, general conferences, university internships in government, mapping the evidence base for an issue.	Seeking out a range of audiences, and following up with those who are interested to broaden the range of voices operating effectively in the space. Offering communications support to weaker voices, to help boost the collective message.	Seeking out appropriate people, focusing on those who are outside the immediate sphere within which the project or programme operates.

Source: Jones et al. (2012).

## Develop and refine your communications strategy

A communications strategy will underpin your overall policy engagement strategy. It does not have to be complicated, but should be something that has support from the team, programme or organisation, and ideally should be as practical as possible. It should not be too rigid and will need regular review to ensure it aligns with overall policy engagement activities. Most of all, it needs to be relevant to your context.

As you consider each stage, you can document key issues/notes in the template in Table 4.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 4: Communications strategy template**

Stage	Action
Policy objective and intended outcomes	Set out your policy-influencing objective, as in the main strategy, and the outcomes you are seeking.
Stakeholders	Identify and prioritise key audiences. Having already completed stakeholder mapping, this can be straightforward. If you have too many stakeholders this may need further prioritising. Produce a stakeholder map specifically for the communications strategy.
Key actions	Undertake linear research communications (e.g. packaging materials and presenting to media houses). Facilitate debate through events and roundtables. Develop capacity among audiences to use knowledge more effectively.
Messaging (not always clear in complex settings)	Develop your overall messages and sub-messages for each audience group. It may be difficult to do this initially; it can be refined over time.
Channels, tools and activities	If the first four sections are clearly identified then the rest of the strategy will fall easily into place. Decide on main channels for each audience group and, subsequently, relevant tools and activities. Be general initially if necessary, but more specific and realistic over time.
Resources	Good communications does not necessarily need a large budget, but it is essential not to underestimate the time and effort required. You may need to think about this sooner in the strategy. Use free online tools to share your communications rather than developing a website from scratch. But a dedicated person will still need to work on this.
Timescales	Always deliver what you promise and never over-promise. Create a calendar to share with your team. Assign a team member to ensure activities are delivered on time.
Evaluation and amendment	Setting aside time to assess the impact of your strategy is critical, though not necessarily complicated. Use online tools such as Google Analytics, coordinate short review meetings or create an impact log. This should align with what you decide more widely for your policy engagement strategy. Discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

8. Hovland (2005) and Economic and Social Research Council Impact Toolkit 2012: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/impact-toolkit/index.aspx>

# 5. IDENTIFY RESOURCES AND CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT YOUR ACTIVITIES

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Particularly for complex problems, policy engagement must be a collaborative approach. You may need to draw on people with a long list of different competencies throughout the engagement process, such as good political enablers (understanding the politics and identifying key players); good storytellers (able to synthesise simple compelling stories from the results of the research); good networkers (working effectively with all the other stakeholders); and good engineers (building a programme that pulls all of this together). Language skills, local knowledge, the ability to cultivate relationships and technical expertise are all key, as is skilful, structured, sensitive and independent facilitation of engagement processes.

The stronger the standing, presence and legitimacy of your organisation or coalition in the eyes of your target stakeholder group(s), the more likely you are to be taken seriously. An established track record, visibility and a solid reputation will help you be taken more seriously and open doors to policy processes and spaces.

There are three different things to consider as you identify the resources and capacity you will need for policy engagement: the management structures you put in place, how you collaborate and how you go about building capacity.

## Management structures

Management does not simply happen: it is worth spending time considering which management structures within your project or organisation are likely to be most appropriate for the problem you face (for more on this see ‘A Guide to Management in the Face of Complexity’, Hummelbrunner and Jones, 2013).

Where there are **distributed capacities**, loosely structured governance arrangements tend to be more effective, though they rely on emergent and voluntary coordination, collaboration and partnerships. Decision-making should be decentralised where possible. Planning tasks and key management

responsibilities should be decentralised, particularly where knowledge is localised. In these situations, it is difficult to ensure full compliance of actors through formal means such as contracting, or performance management systems. Instead, your influencing intervention should try to work with existing networks or institutions, seeing them as resources for change for helping understand and solve problems. It will be important to ensure power relationships are not overly skewed between partners, and management systems allow sufficient space for different members of the network to exercise any necessary discretion in how they work.

Where there are **uncertain change pathways**, management arrangements should prioritise flexibility. Any policy-influencing interventions must adapt to the findings from M&E – whether that means altering your influencing goals, scaling up or down or changing the way you allocate budgets. Building in flexibility helps avoid a culture of risk aversion and promotes an authorising environment that encourages learning and builds trust between your partners.

## Collaboration

Following on from teamwork, collaboration between stakeholders is also worth exploring. This may be around a specific **predetermined issue**. In these situations, the decision-maker tends to frame the process, giving collaboration a contractual nature. Relationships are time-limited and will end when the project or pilot ends. This may be appropriate when there is a need to build a variety of relationships around a predetermined and longer-term issue such as a large-scale project or a policy pilot.

Alternatively, you may want to collaborate through a longer process of interaction between actors to respond more effectively to **emergent issues**. This allows all sides to frame the questions jointly, and more formalised relationships help ensure continuity. Collaboration is the key to amplifying different voices around an issue and to building and maintaining a broader base from which to discuss and define lessons that could inform a particular decision.

Where interests among key actors are entrenched, **building coalitions** may be particularly useful. Determining how to do this means developing a clear understanding of how the values held by decision-makers affect their calculations of political costs, and of how to construct broad, durable coalitions (as indicated in Chapter 1, diagnosing complexity). Engaging with informal networks of leaders and researchers in policy networks will also be key.

Understanding the **credibility** of different actors can create space for other less dominant actors to join policy deliberations. How are different actors perceived by those in positions of influence? Who should they ally themselves with to boost credibility? How might this be achieved?

Finally, it is important not to neglect internal teamwork. Policy engagement has to be a team effort, given all the different competencies that are needed.

Box 11 offers advice on conducting collaborative processes with multiple stakeholders.

### Box 11: Facilitating collaborative processes

**Intentions of collaborative work:** normative motivations suggest collaboration is ‘the right thing to do’; instrumental motivations imply it is a better way to achieve particular ends; and substantive motivations argue it leads to better ends. These are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

**Approach used to collaborate with stakeholders:** this varies according to the intention, the issue, the context and the stage of the policy process. It can shape what is considered evidence and whose voice is heard. Those being engaged with must feel comfortable with the methods employed. Imported strategies developed elsewhere can have different and unintended outcomes. A mixed methodological approach can help capture a range of perspectives from different stakeholders.

**Representation and consultation:** some argue that stakeholder engagement needs to go beyond convening small groups of people and engage with thousands. However, smaller, more interactive processes give a depth of discussion often lost in large-scale engagement. Processes to promote broad-based ownership need to reach stakeholder groups that face a number of barriers to participating.

**Supporting stakeholder collaboration:** stakeholders often need support to improve the effectiveness of their engagement. This might include giving participants more control over the process, providing information and training, logistical support, financial incentives and effective communication.

**Working with public institutions:** developing links with more formal arenas, such as bureaucratic processes of policy-making, is crucial if engagement is to be effective. This raises the question of how you engage with public institutions as well as how public institutions engage with the wider environment.

**Promoting wider engagement:** more emphasis on distributing the learning from often small-scale deliberative processes would contribute to wider dialogue among a wider range of stakeholders. This could be done through the direct involvement of more people in stakeholder engagement activities and/or communicating the outcomes and findings of such processes to more people.

## Building capacity

Building capacity can take place at the level of the individual, the organisation or the systems or enabling environment.

- For the **individual**, capacity-building activities can focus on enhancing people's skills and competencies through activities such as the provision of formal training initiatives or 'learn-by-doing' approaches, through grant support from donors, non-government organisations or think-tanks. Examples include training in recognised disciplines; in the business of government; in information and communication technology (ICT), information storage and management; or in communicating and relationship-building.
- At the **institutional level**, enhancing capacities could focus on particular strategic planning functions, such as the ability to create a communications or influencing programme.
- At the **systems or enabling environment level**, building capacity for knowledge translation, supply and demand means focusing on the core processes of policy-making. This is to ensure goal-setting, programming, budgeting, business planning, forecasting, consultation and other 'boundary processes' are structured and used in ways that create and maintain effective demand for all types of knowledge.

# 6. WRITE YOUR ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

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You should now be able to begin to write your full engagement strategy. This will set out:

- Your policy-influencing objective(s) (Step 1);
- The forces for and against change (Step 1) and your theory of how change will happen (Step 3);
- The outcomes you would expect, like and love to see (Step 2);
- The communications activities you will undertake to achieve them (Step 4);
- Your communications strategy (Step 4);
- The resources available to you to implement your engagement strategy.

## Wider issues to consider when formulating a strategy

ROMA helps develop the broad outlines of your engagement strategy. But there are a few wider issues to consider.

**Be careful with political players.** Those pursuing change are often urged to identify champions, brokers or policy entrepreneurs. These types of people are said to be influential within policy circles, highly supportive of a particular proposal, willing to take ideas forward to decision-makers and able to translate and spread them through networking. These people may well exist, but we offer a few words of warning. In some very fluid political contexts, it may be difficult for political actors to remain wedded to specific policy issues: what they say formally may well differ from what they think informally. Individual actors may have very little real power when leadership is distributed widely among a large group of people.

**There are many other players.** Given the politicisation of the civil service in many contexts, commentators and practitioners advise that, in order to work with public agencies in the long term, it is better to target and build relationships with second- or third-tier officials. These will be the ones to survive any cuts and are also the ones who possess the institutional memory that always strongly influences decisions and implementation. However, this is highly context-specific: in some countries, these officials simply do not have the political power to make decisions so your efforts can often yield few results.

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9. Note that the balance of emphasis between the final objective and the rest of the engagement strategy is up to you: as mentioned earlier, your objective may well change as your engagement improves.



**Identify how to influence actors indirectly.** In situations where you cannot directly influence an actor, you need to determine who you can influence who will in turn influence that actor. Identifying existing coalitions or networks, building them and finding common areas of interests with such actors will be crucial. Being a member of certain existing networks may boost practitioners' credibility.

**Interactions between different actors affect behaviour.** As OM shows, one person's behaviour (or an organisation's behaviour) may be influenced by the calculation about the likely strategy of others. Personal and professional decisions are generally related to decisions taken by those around them and interactions between actors play an important role in the determination of policy outcomes. Those pursuing change need to recognise they may be influenced by others, even those who are not directly part of the change process.

**Organisation type will shape your approach.** Factors that will shape the approach taken will include the type of organisation you work for. For instance, a research centre is unlikely to want to organise a public demonstration (but this does not mean it cannot go into coalition with an activist organisation willing to do so). The approach taken will likely evolve depending on the target stakeholders' response to successive efforts. For instance, at first you may engage in closed-door meetings where research findings are shared (an inside-track approach). If you feel there is little response, you may decide that going through the media may pressure policy-makers into considering your proposal more seriously. This will differ from context to context. In some contexts, you may be censured for appearing confrontational; in others, your issue will not be taken seriously unless it is the focus of media attention.

## 7. SUMMARY

In this chapter, we have provided a set of tools and activities to help you define your policy-influencing objective and write your engagement strategy to achieve this objective. Here summarised are the various tools and activities, along with their relevant step number:

### Step 1

**Objectives.** How to use a force field diagram and analysis to show what are the forces for and against change.

### Step 2

**Outcomes.** Table listing nine stakeholder-focused outcomes and what to consider in each case. OM tool to select and categorise these as 'expect to see, like to see, love to see' outcomes.

### Step 3

**Theory of change.** How to tackle drafting a theory of change in various contexts.

### Step 4

**Communications activities.** Two approaches to communications activities: 1) specific policy position, diagram showing four communications methods including inside-track and outside-track; 2) knowledge-brokering for complex problems including informing, linking and matchmaking; how to write a communications strategy.

### Step 5

**Resources.** Tips on identifying resources, especially teamwork and management capacity; table of activities for collaborating and building capacity at individual, organisation and systems level.

### Step 6

**Strategy.** Bullet-list of headings to help you write your engagement strategy; wider factors beyond ROMA to consider.



# 8. CASE STUDY: PUTTING ROMA INTO PRACTICE IN ZAMBIA

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The World Vision team in Zambia wanted to make better use of their work at community level to inform policy. They analysed the context and stakeholders, then used aspects of the ROMA process, including identifying an objective, identifying outcomes including developing progress markers, generating entry points to intervene (strategy development) and assessing internal capacity to do so.

## Developing an objective

Child health was identified as a priority area. The team visited two communities, where it worked to facilitate a number of focus group discussions using a list of 34 questions prepared under four headings (child health, awareness, access and coverage). A short summary encapsulated the various discussions that took place, noting the following issues:

- Long distance from health centre;
- Very few qualified health personnel;
- Low-level understanding of prevention of parent-to-child transmission;
- Immunisation preventing diseases that lead to child mortality (e.g. measles, polio, chickenpox) thereby keeping children healthy;
- Strengthening health care system at the community level: this would require training community-based health care workers and establishing a referral system with rural health care centres and district medical officers;
- Nutrition: government should formulate deliberate policies to encourage the integration of nutrition into health service provision.

Through discussion, participants agreed that a 'high prevalence of childhood diseases' was the most important issue the team should address. Drawing on the 'five whys' technique, the team was asked to answer the following questions: 1) why is this issue important? 2) who is it a problem for? 3) how are government, donors and civil society responding to the issues? 4) what needs to change and how? and 5) what evidence do we have and need to collect to inform policy development on this issue?

Several recommendations were made, including:

- Improve the citizen voice and (downward) accountability mechanism at local level for better delivery of health care (e.g. between local government and health care centres and between health care centres and the community).
- Increase government grants to health care centres.
- Improve salaries, housing allowances and transport provision for health care workers.
- A key criterion when prioritising recommendations was whether the issue needed to be taken forward at a national level. After further discussion, the team decided to work on 'improving accountability mechanisms at the local (district) level and promoting better and more participation in the delivery of local health care services'.

## Identifying outcomes

Participants were asked to develop actor-specific outcomes, and found this a challenging process. Initially, they favoured phrases such as 'improve policy implementation, or policy formulation'; after some coaching, they tended to specify in greater detail, coming up with phrases such as 'the minister of youth, sport and child development proposes a bill to parliament to develop a policy on vulnerable children'.

Table 5 lists the outcomes identified for different priority actors.

**Table 5: Progress markers**

Actor(s)	Expect to see	Like to see	Love to see
UK Department for International Development (DFID) social protection advisor Priority outcomes: 1 (attitudes) 7 (behaviour change)	To participate in impact mitigation thematic group meetings, read our position paper	To see DFID advance our cause in their policy engagement with Ministry of Sport, Youth and Child Development (MSYCD) and Ministry of Finance and National Planning (MFNP)	DFID to provide active support and put pressure on MSYCD and MFNP to formulate national Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Policy
National AIDS Council (NAC) impact mitigation committee Priority outcomes: 4 (change in discourse) 6 (change in policy content)	To participate in the proposition of the OVC Policy	To see NAC at the forefront championing the OVC Policy	Active support from NAC in drafting the OVC Policy
Parliamentary Caucus on Children (PCC) Priority outcomes: 4 (change in discourse) 8 (networks) 6 (change in policy content)	Propose and influence formulation of the OVC Policy among their peers	To see the committee champion the formulation of the OVC Policy	Active support from the PCC in engaging other stakeholders on the OVC Policy
MFNP director of budgeting Priority outcomes: 1 (attitudes) 5 (procedures)	Relationship built with MFNP; director of budgeting becomes aware of the situation of OVC	To see director of budgeting being more aware and appreciative of the OVC issues	To provide the financing framework and support for policy implementation

## Developing a strategy

Participants worked through the force field analysis, which resulted in the following table.

**Table 6: Progress markers**

Description of possible intervention	Influence on the force (1-5)	Positive		Change	Negative		Influence on the force (1-5)	Description of possible intervention
		Description	Influence on the change (1-5)		Influence on the change (1-5)	Description		
	4	NAC better placed with policy issues of HIV and AIDS/OVC	4	Active support from NAC in drafting the OVC Policy	5	Not final authority on matters of policy	1	
	1	Financial resources	3		4	Limited financial resources	1	
Raise awareness through the media for public engagement	3	Public demand	2		3	Lack of proper collaboration between MSYCD and NAC	2	World Vision will facilitate a meeting between NAC and MSYCD on issues to do with OVC
Share best practices and OVC policies from other countries with government	3	Civil society organisations	3		4	Resistance from government to formulate a policy focusing on OVC alone	3	Share best practices and OVC policies from other countries with government

## Assessing internal capacity

The team worked through Table 7, which outlined their capacity to implement a specific activity, what capacity was needed, what actions were required to meet those capacity needs and who would be responsible for doing so.

**Table 7: Capacity and resource assessment**

Activity	Resource available (staff, funds, time etc.)	Capacity need	Actions required to secure new competencies, skills, alliances etc.	Person responsible
Commission a study to generate evidence on the situation of OVC in the communities	Funds, staff to manage and review	Need for more financial resources, packaging of evidence	Recommend to World Vision UK to engage external organisation for further capacity-building in evidence packaging Generate concept papers for funding the study	X
Working with community radio stations to run a series of live discussions programmes on OVC issues	Funds, staff and time and links to other experts	Need for more financial resources	Generate concept papers for the radio programme	Y
Produce and distribute flyers about the need for the OVC Policy during the Day of the African Child	Funds, staff to facilitate the celebrations	Need for more financial resources to produce flyers	Generate concept papers for the production of flyers	X

## Conclusion

The World Vision team in Zambia found that generating the information to intervene in the most appropriate and relevant way was not a linear process. A step often required information they did not yet have, which meant doing additional work on a previous step. Often, the team found it had to move to the next step before it had a complete understanding of the current one. The key message was to use the approach flexibly to fit within the constraints presented by the context and the problem at hand.

