

AudienceScapes

Africa Policy Research Series: Kenya

Communicating with Policymakers About Development Issues



A Guide for the International Development Community

By David Montez

**Based on in-depth interviews with senior Kenyan officials as part of the AudienceScapes research project
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About InterMedia

InterMedia (www.intermedia.org) is a nonprofit research, evaluation and consulting company with expertise in media, communications and development. We equip clients to understand audiences, design projects, target communications and gauge project impact in developing and transitional societies worldwide. Based in Washington, D.C. and London, U.K., and with experience in more than 80 countries, InterMedia's key strengths are its people—area experts skilled in scientifically-based research and focused on client solutions—and its extensive network of local research partners and contacts.

The AudienceScapes project, launched in April 2009 with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, applies InterMedia's core competencies to the needs of development practitioners worldwide. This AudienceScapes report is part of a multifaceted program to inform development practitioners about ways to improve communication and media efforts aimed at the grassroots as well as at the policy level. The findings and conclusions of this report are those of InterMedia and do not necessarily reflect the positions or priorities of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.



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Introduction

- *How can targeted research help members of the development community hone their communication efforts at the policy level and at the grassroots level?*
- *What can members of the development community do to help improve the policy information flow in Africa, with a view toward supporting effective development policies?*



These questions are being addressed in the multiyear AudienceScapes project launched in spring 2009 by InterMedia, with initial support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The project focuses on the analysis of individuals' media use, access to information and communication technologies (ICTs), information flows and communication habits on the one hand; and that of policymakers, policy influencers, the public and key development stakeholders on the other.

AudienceScapes' broad aim is to provide baseline research and analysis to guide the communication and advocacy efforts of development organizations, and thereby indirectly support better development outcomes. Based on the project's quantitative and qualitative research, InterMedia is producing a series of reports describing what could be described as the "ecology" of development communication and information flows in selected countries.

Quantitative national surveys will yield one set of reports describing trends in media use, ICT use and information-sharing habits among the general public, with a particular emphasis on how different target groups acquire and use information on development topics such as health care, personal finance and agriculture.

This report on Kenya, part of a second set, draws lessons from the experiences of policymakers and policy influencers to determine how development policy information is flowing to those who need it, and to suggest ways to improve this flow, with a particular focus on the role of international development groups.

All of the analytical reports, as well as the complete datasets collected in the quantitative research, will be available on the new AudienceScapes website, scheduled for launch in early 2010. Armed with this material, development professionals and their local partners will be able to design better and better-targeted communication-based activities, improving the return on investments in them.

Policy and Information in Kenya - Methodology

This report presents the results of the project’s policy-focused qualitative research in Kenya. The chosen methodology was in-depth interviews with 15 senior-level members of the Kenyan policy community, including representatives from parliament, government ministries, business associations, non-governmental organizations and multilateral donor institutions. They are all directly involved in development-related policy formulation and implementation. The interview subjects were assured anonymity in the report to ensure candid responses to the questions posed to them.

The interviews, conducted in July and August 2009, lasted roughly one hour each and focused on three broad themes:

- ***Most important and influential information sources***—where policy actors typically go for news and information about key development issues; in what forms they prefer to get information; how they see news/information-gathering habits fitting into the policy cycle.
- ***Personal assessment of policy-relevant information sources***—their level of satisfaction with the availability and quality of information; recommendations for improvements; assessment of media coverage of key issues; assessment of information exchanges with development stakeholders (local NGOs, business groups, foreign groups, etc.)

- ***News and information sharing***—how and why the interview subjects share information with various parties, particularly the general public; assessment of the public’s capacity to dialogue on key issues; assessment of the impact of new technologies on information sharing; feedback loops with the public.

The interview transcripts were coded and analyzed in a “key subjects” matrix to identify common threads in the use, assessment, sharing and dissemination of policy information. The AudienceScapes analysis team then sought to highlight themes of particular interest to the development community. (The “Note on Research Methods and Next Steps” at the end of the report provides comments on the effectiveness of this methodology)

Structure of This Report

- The executive summary provides a quick overview of the main points.
- Chapter 1 describes the Kenyan context for the research with brief summaries of the state of national politics, development policy, the media, and information and communication technologies (ICTs).
- Chapter 2 is a detailed analysis of the interviews, divided into four parts: media sources; institutional and personal sources; dissemination and feedback; and structural challenges.

- Chapter 3 distills this analysis into a list of key recommendations for the international development community on: A. how to contribute more effectively to the Kenyan policy debate; and B: how to improve the policy making environment by providing Kenya’s policymakers with technical and related assistance.
- A final note provides a few recommended next steps for the project: how the current research methodology might be enhanced and expanded in the future, based on lessons learned so far. The appendixes provide further details on research methods, InterMedia and the AudienceScapes team.

We hope you find this report useful, and we welcome your feedback.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Goldstein', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Peter Goldstein

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Report Summary



InterMedia conducted in-depth interviews with senior Kenyan government officials and policy influencers outside government (collectively referred to in this report as “policy actors”), to find out how they gather, assess, share and disseminate information critical to development policy work. The aim was to understand how external stakeholders, particularly members of the international development community, can most effectively engage and assist these policy actors.

The 15 interviewees described several measures that development organizations can take to improve the policy information environment. They also mentioned several challenges in communicating with the public about development issues but also suggested some creative solutions.

Habits of Gathering Information

Although traditional media (radio, television and print) is viewed as a good source for staying abreast of general news and trends, it is not necessarily considered a good source for informing longer-term policy formulation. Kenyan newspapers are a particularly important daily news source for policy actors, even though there is frustration with a perceived lack of accuracy and objectivity.

Most policy actors said they listen to the radio daily for both recent news and entertainment. Policy actors usually listen to the radio during “downtime,” such as during drives to and from work or in the mornings at home.

Television, while not considered a critical everyday source for news for most actors, is often watched at the end of the day (if there’s time) to review the day’s news.

To compensate for a perceived lack of objectivity in local media coverage, most policy actors said they compare multiple news sources. For coverage of international news, policy actors tend to favor a few prominent global outlets, such as CNN, Sky and the BBC’s East Africa service.

A majority of policy actors have incorporated new technologies into their everyday information-gathering habits.

They and their staff use the internet on a daily basis to conduct research on specific topics or to visit particular websites (often those of popular newspapers).

Interviewees said they often use email and mobile phones to communicate more rapidly with colleagues and stakeholders. It is also common practice for policy actors to sign up for SMS or email alert services that notify them of the latest news. These services are often provided by mobile service providers or news outlets with a web presence.

Policy actors rely on a combination of formal institutional channels and informal networks for gathering policy information and advice. Formal networks are policymakers’ most important sources for policy information; multiple policy actors felt that informal contacts provided more candid opinions than they would get through official channels.

Politicians are able to monitor public opinion in their constituencies via mobile phone calls or emails from constituents or local contacts, and by participating in semi-formal public forums generally known as *barazas*—a Swahili term referring to a local social gathering where current events are discussed, knowledge is built and relationships forged.

Policy actors highly value empirical policy research, particularly the use of case studies or comparative policy studies

Policy actors highly value empirical policy research, particularly the use of case studies or comparative policy studies analyzing the experiences of foreign governments and international development organizations that may be applicable in the Kenyan context. This type of research is considered more helpful to the Kenyan policy design and implementation process than policy prescriptions lacking real-world examples or experiences. Policy actors or their staffs typically track down such studies on the internet or in workshops held by development groups.

A crucial gap in the policy design and implementation process is the lack of knowledge management systems. Policy actors spoke of their ministries' or agencies' inability to properly organize and exchange information, which ends up getting lost in the paper shuffle. Although a few government offices have been able to tap into the organizational power of new knowledge management software, (one example given was KOHA, an open-source library system), many initiatives fail to extend beyond central offices to include regional or local offices, where much of the critical information-gathering takes place.

The Role of Global Development Partners

How information is exchanged between policy actors and global development partners varies considerably by individual policy actor. Descriptions of information sharing with organizations ranged from regular formal consultations to sporadic ad hoc discussions.

Perceptions of the role of international development organizations in the policy process also varied considerably—from policy

advocates, to technical advisors, to regular source for information, to project implementers.



Although a majority of interviewees felt their relationship with donors was a positive one, many described concerns about the ability to retain control over Kenya's development agenda. Specifically, some policy actors called on global development partners to better consider Kenya's own development plans. Another complaint, particularly of Kenyan policy influencers, is that, primarily, development partners tend to work through the government instead of forging closer relationships with NGOs and advocacy groups active on the ground and ostensibly more in touch with the needs and priorities of target populations.

Recommendations to Development Organizations for Interacting with Policy Actors

- Policy actors will pay more attention to a given point of view if it is shown to be the consensus of a large, representative group in Kenya. Thus, there is good reason to ally with other influential interest groups before attempting to promote a particular development initiative or approach.

- It is vital to engage with policy actors at the right time—early and often. Many stated that stakeholder feedback is crucial not only at the early stages of the policy process but also during the implementation period (if not at all stages of policy implementation) so that programmatic adjustments can be made when and if they are needed. Policy input can be delivered through a number of feedback mechanisms discussed throughout this report.
- Try to use local traditional media (radio, TV, newspapers) as a conduit to inform about and raise awareness of particular policy issues. Despite policy actors’ criticisms about local media content and coverage, traditional media remains an important means of gaining the attention of both the public and politicians.
- Present material in preferred formats—concisely written briefs in electronic or hard copy that summarize key points, complimented with face-to-face meetings.
- Assist in forging stronger communication links between on-the-ground implementers, development stakeholders and policymakers wherever possible. This will help to improve the flow of timely evidence-based development information, contributing to more effective policy and project design and implementation.
- Support efforts to employ newer ICTs (e.g., mobile communications and the internet) for engaging the public and gathering policy information. As access to mobile technology expands among all segments of Kenyan society, there is ample opportunity for development partners to create appropriate programs and projects focused on improving information flows.
- Improve administrative capacity and information management systems within governmental agencies, and invest in supporting infrastructure. An improved information management system and increased staff capacity would help policy actors and staff cope with another paradoxical yet real challenge: information overload.

Helping Policymakers

Policy actors face some common challenges in the conduct of their work that development groups can help to address. Here are a few general suggestions of how development organizations can help:

- Bolster development data resources by supporting targeted and easily accessible research on Kenya and comparative country studies on a range of areas. Development groups should make sure that comparative studies relate to the lessons learned about the particularities of the Kenyan context.
- Support the training of journalists, particularly those involved in community radio stations, to strengthen their ability to judge the importance of, and report accurately on, various development issues.
- In addition, development organizations with media or communications campaign experience in African countries are encouraged to share successful strategies with Kenyan policy actors, so they may convey their message more effectively.

Information Exchanges with the Public and other Stakeholders

Policy actors identified a number of challenges in disseminating policy information to the public, including illiteracy, a general lack of understanding of development policy issues and a limited capability or willingness of local media to accurately disseminate such information.

- When considering the role of the public in the flow of development information, development organizations should be aware of how different government agencies and organizations interact with the public. This tends to vary depending on each body's typical level of engagement with citizens. For example, organizations or agencies that already engage the public regularly during policy implementation (such as the ministries of health or agriculture) are more likely to conduct localized information campaigns using barazas, vernacular radio, or district chief meetings. Other ministries or groups less engaged with the general public (such as the ministries of finance or energy) are more likely to use national media, press releases, or press conferences. The latter group may require more assistance to get the public involved in a development dialogue.
- A chief complaint among policy actors was that citizens do not understand the policy making process, making it very challenging to engage the public in a constructive dialogue. This knowledge gap was viewed as an area in which development organizations could step in and sponsor or

conduct civic education programs that otherwise would not be publicly available.

- Policy actors stressed the need for more creative strategies to engage hard-to-reach members of the public—particularly illiterate individuals, geographically remote groups or those who are simply not interested in the policy process. Some suggestions offered: use more local individuals as field officers or liaisons in development initiatives; work through traditional community leaders to better engage their communities, particularly among pastoralists and nomadic groups; use vernacular radio to a greater extent as an outreach tool; and conduct more public events such as barazas, which allow people to interact directly with policy actors.
- Using newer ICTs (email, blogs, SMS) as a public dissemination tool is still in the nascent stages, though their use is growing. One policy actor reported creating online discussion groups exclusively for people with an interest in his agency's sector of activity, and another spoke of the benefits of using mobile phones to streamline public surveys. As access to newer ICTs continues to expand, particularly to mobile phones, assisting policy actors in exploiting these technologies as information disseminating and collection tools will be all the more important.

Chapter 1. The Kenyan Context for Policy Information



Political Environment

As this report went to print, Kenya's political situation remained in a transitional phase roughly two years after civil tensions boiled over in response to contested election results released in late 2007. Relative calm was restored in April 2008 when a coalition government was formed between Mwai Kibaki's Party of National Unity (PNU) and the opposition Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) led by Raila Odinga. Under a power-sharing deal mediated by the African Union, the president (Kibaki) retained most of the power as chief of state and head of government, while the prime minister (Odinga) led parliament and has some executive powers. The agreement also created commissions to review the country's electoral framework and investigate violence and injustices committed since independence.

Bickering between the coalition partners persisted over political appointments and the drafting of a new constitution. Complicating the discussion was the deterioration of Kenya's humanitarian situation as drought, food shortages and high commodity prices deepened food and livelihood insecurity, placing other urgent priorities on the political agenda.ⁱ (Indeed, the combination of political tension and humanitarian pressures created a challenging environment for conducting the research for this report during the second half of 2009; many senior policymakers were either too busy to meet or reluctant to conduct interviews regarding any aspect of their policy work)

Development Priorities

Kenya receives more than 1 billion dollars annually in official development assistance; the total in 2007, the latest year for which data are publicly available, was \$1.275 billion, or around 15 percent of government expenditures.ⁱⁱ Even so, money for development work is modest in comparison to the country's needs, and Kenya's development policy actors face difficult choices when they set priorities for spending and investments.

It is therefore critical that policy actors have access to information that can help them make informed and effective decisions. This report focuses on the extent to which policy actors have access such information, and what they need to access it more readily.

The Kenyan development context has become more challenging in the past couple of years. The post-election crisis of early 2008 and the global financial crisis conspired to end a relatively healthy period of economic activity; growth in per capita gross domestic product downshifted to just 2 percent in 2008 from 7 percent in 2007.ⁱⁱⁱ

This has threatened Kenya's commitment to the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals—notably, that of halving extreme poverty and hunger by 2015. Kenya is also losing ground in its campaigns to reduce child mortality, improve maternal health and enhance gender equality. In the last years for which data are available (2005-2007), the World Bank estimated that:^{iv}

- Forty-seven percent of Kenyans, or 17 million citizens, are unable to afford food with sufficient calories to meet their

recommended daily nutritional requirements, while also meeting their minimal non-food needs.

- Average life expectancy is 58, compared to a world average of 69 and a high-income country average of 79.
- Only 60 percent of Kenyans have access to an improved water source; 80 percent of the population has access to basic sanitation facilities.

Kenya's development aims are laid out in its long-term Vision 2030 plan, which comprises three pillars:

- Economic—Sustained economic growth with an average annual GDP growth rate of 10 percent
- Social—The creation of a just and united society built upon equitable social development
- Political—An accountable democratic system that is issues-based and people centered

The central focus of Vision 2030 is job creation through sound macroeconomic policies, improved governance, efficient public service delivery, and public investments and policies that reduce the cost of doing business. The plan also includes a socio-economic agenda focusing on reducing inequalities in access to productive resources and basic goods and services. Furthermore, it promotes actions leading to the sustainable management of natural commons such as land, water and forests that the very poor depend on for day-to-day survival.^v

Media Environment

Healthy flows of information are often predicated on an open and vibrant media sector. Unfortunately, recent legislation and restrictions have cast some doubt on Kenya's commitment to this. In its 2009 Freedom of the Press Index, nonprofit democracy and media watchdog Freedom House described Kenya as "Partly Free," ranking the country 128th of 195 countries included in the index, and only just above the numerical cutoff point for being labeled "Not Free."^{vi}

The so-called ICT bill, ratified by President Kibaki in January of 2009, was hailed by the technology sector as a market booster but raised serious concerns among media support organizations. Reporters Sans Frontieres charged that the bill violates democratic standards by providing for heavy fines and prison sentences for media offences.

In addition, the bill grants the information minister unilateral power to interrupt broadcasts, dismantle radio and TV stations and tap telephones. The internal security minister is empowered to seize broadcasting equipment without referring to any other authority. The bill also envisages the creation of a government-appointed "communications commission" that would be in charge of granting broadcast licenses and would be responsible for ensuring the "good taste" of broadcasts.^{vii}

Generally speaking, some in the media view regulators such as the Communication

Commission of Kenya and the Ministry of Information and Communications as barriers to, rather than champions for, a healthy media environment. In addition, reports of intimidation and politically-motivated arrests of journalists are common.^{viii}

In addition to the state-owned Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), the media landscape is dominated by two private

companies: Nation Media Group and The Standard Group. Both are active across multiple platforms, having expanded over the years from successful newspaper operations to include TV, radio and website properties. Still, the KBC tends to dominate reach outside major urban centers, with coverage faulted by some critics as generally favorable to the government.^{ix}

The number of private radio stations continues to increase, with many smaller stations broadcasting in local languages.^x In addition to the official

languages of Swahili and English, more than 65 other languages are spoken in Kenya; **the growth of radio broadcasting in Kikuyu, Luo, Kalenjin, and other languages reflects the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the country.** According to Freedom House, local-language radio has been "increasing public participation as well as commentary unfavorable to the government through call-in shows.



Unfortunately, many of these vernacular stations were accused of broadcasting ethnic hate speech in the wake of the [2007] election.^{xvi}

In addition to commercial local-language radio, there are a very small number of community radio stations (typically local-language, volunteer-run stations broadcasting to an 8 kilometer radius or less). These community stations have drawn both praise and criticism, though many earned kudos for relatively balanced reporting during the post-election conflict.^{xvii}

Kenya is also an innovator in citizen journalism and crowd-sourced news and information, exemplified by the high-profile role of the Ushahidi website during the 2008 civil unrest. Ushahidi aggregated and mapped reports of violence and atrocities that were reported by citizens via email, SMS and Twitter messages.

Information and Communication Technologies

As Ushahidi clearly demonstrated, new information and communication technologies (ICTs) are broadening the range of information options for both citizens and policy actors worldwide. Indeed, Kenya is in some ways at the cutting edge of ICT development in Africa; mobile phones are becoming more widespread, with 42 subscriptions per 100 people in 2008, compared to an average of 32 per 100 for Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole.

The level of access has grown rapidly since 2003, when Kenya was on par with the

continent's average at that time of five mobile phone subscriptions per 100 people.^{xviii}

Much of the growth has come from the expansion of Safaricom, which began as part of the state telecommunications monopoly, was partially privatized in 1997, and became a public company in 2002.^{xix} Vodafone Group Plc of the U.K. has a 40 percent stake in Safaricom, whose successful strategy has featured low-cost, pay-as-you-go plans that are affordable even to very poor Kenyan households.^{xx}

Landline telephone coverage remains largely inaccessible to many Kenyans, with the country possessing less than one telephone line per every 100 people. Investment in ICTs has focused instead on bringing mobile and internet access to all parts of the country.

Although growth in mobile access has been rapid, it has by no means brought full

coverage, and internet access remains limited, especially in rural areas.^{xxi} Indeed, low levels of access are reflected in Kenya's ranking of 116th globally (10th in Africa) in the International Telecommunications Union's 2009 ICT Development Index. That said, the policy actors interviewed for this report said they had both personal and professional web access.

The country's ICT capabilities are poised to get a major boost from the SEACOM fiber optic cable, which reached Mombasa in July 2009 with the promise of vastly expanding bandwidth, increasing connection speeds, and lowering costs.

Although growth in mobile access has been rapid, it has by no means brought full coverage.

Kenya will also be connected via the East Africa Submarine Cable System (EASSy) and The East Africa Marine System (TEAMS).^{xvii}

Additional bandwidth may contribute to greater internet access in homes, businesses and internet cafes across the country. An increasingly popular alternative form of internet access—via mobile phones—may grow as well. However, improvements are still needed to last-mile connectivity and cost structures to support affordable broadband web access to consumers.

Kenyans have already fully embraced one innovative use of mobile phones: financial transactions. Safaricom introduced M-PESA, its

money transfer service, in 2007, and it already boasts more than 7.5 million registered users. M-PESA has handled transfers of more than 230 billion Kenyan Shillings (approximately \$3 billion) within Kenya. Its latest innovation, announced in October 2009, will allow remittances from the U.K. to be transferred directly to M-PESA users.^{xviii}

Following on the success of M-PESA, new players have begun to enter the mobile money market in Kenya and replicate the services in other countries. The ability of services like M-PESA to provide comprehensive banking solutions to the bulk of the unbanked population is still under debate, but the field is growing and changing rapidly.^{xix}

Chapter 2. Analysis of the In-Depth Interviews



Drawing from recordings and transcripts of the 15 interviews, this chapter identifies trends in, and challenges to, the quality and availability of information about development issues for policy actors, as well as the means by which they share or communicate such information with various stakeholders.

Section 2.1 describes the role of media sources (radio, television, internet and print) as well as information services delivered via email and cell phones. Section 2.2 discusses institutional and personal information sources. Section 2.3 discusses dissemination and feedback dynamics in policy information. Finally, Section 2.4 focuses on structural challenges to gathering the right policy information.

In-Depth: Information-Gathering Habits

Interviewees were asked to describe the ways they access information throughout a typical work day. Although specific habits varied, overall trends were remarkably similar. This composite profile highlights the most common daily routines.

A Typical Policy Maker's Information Diary

Tuesday, September 15

AM

6:00

Wake up and begin organizing the day's agenda. Turn on the TV or radio while preparing for the day.

**6:30-
8:30**

Leave house and commute to work: listen to the summaries of newspaper headlines on Capital FM, Classic FM, and Kiss 100. Buy the *Daily Nation* and *Business Daily*.

**9:00-
12:00**

Check email and Blackberry for news alerts. Two meetings: morning staff meeting and a consultation with a business association concerning possible new regulations. Skim newspapers or news websites before staff meeting. Send an email or call district project manager's mobile phone requesting latest report on activities.

PM

12:30

Attend lunch workshop discussing the launch of a new social change media campaign.

2:00

Formal briefing by UNICEF staff on impact assessment of latest project.

3:00

Return calls and follow-up to cross-check latest field reports. Review internal newsletter and internal memos. Call friend at Ministry of Planning and National Development to ask him to bring over a copy of the latest report on road construction projects.

4:30

Search the web for examples of successful projects from other African countries. Draft initial comments to submit.

5:30

Call staff member to confirm the next day's schedule: morning consultation with the country director of CARE, attend press conference announcing new poverty reduction measures, and appear on local radio program to further explain new activities.

6:30

Have a working dinner with ministry colleagues and NGO stakeholders to discuss latest parliamentary committee meetings and how they may impact future policy.

8:00

Return home. Review impact assessment of recent project in Taveta while KTN's 9:00 o'clock news plays in the background.

2.1. The Role of Media-Based News and Information Sources

How and where do policymakers and influencers get information?

Information-gathering habits among the interview respondents proved to be fairly similar despite their broad range of policy interests, occupations and personal preferences. Here are a few key observations:

- Traditional media are widely used to gauge general public opinion and to gain insights into the future political agenda.
- The internet has become a daily source for news and information for a large majority of policy actors.
- News and information services delivered by email or SMS are becoming commonplace among policy actors.

I. Traditional Media

Policy actors rely on a combination of several major radio stations and newspapers to keep up with current events and public opinion. Despite busy schedules, policymakers said they find time to monitor local news by listening to the radio. They often tune in while getting ready early in the morning or heading to work in their cars. Some of the most commonly mentioned radio stations were Classic FM, Capital FM and Kiss 105 in Nairobi.

Vernacular radio stations were identified as indispensable for policy actors to gauge the mood of their constituents. Key vernacular stations listed by interviewees were the Kikuyu-language stations Inooro and Coro and the Luo-

language station Ramogi. These stations do not have national reach but their respective coverage areas span multiple provinces. The BBC's East African service was the lone international radio station mentioned as an important source and it was clearly quite popular among interviewees.

Policy actors often mentioned newspapers as their most important news source. However, they were very critical of papers' perceived lack of objectivity and inaccurate coverage.

Policy actors said they skim multiple newspapers for articles that address their policy interests; papers most commonly cited were the *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and *Business Daily*. With the expansion of internet access, some policy actors have taken to reading newspapers online. All of Kenya's major daily newspapers now have online versions, which also provide popular email alerts. A few interviewees mentioned reading international publications as a regular source of news, and they primarily read news magazines such as *The Economist* and *Newsweek*.

Television was seen as a less important source of local news and information than radio and print media, yet it is watched by some in the evening as a means of reviewing what has transpired during the day. Interviewees reported sometimes watching national channels—KTN, NTV, Citizen and KBC, the state-owned and operated station—often flipping between more than one. These stations also broadcast morning programs in which presenters read and comment on the day's newspaper headlines.

Interviewees said they watch these programs sporadically, depending on their schedule. Among international stations, CNN and BBC are popular for world news.

Multiple policy actors spoke of how the media fails to cover development issues constructively. To fill this information gap, one policy actor suggested the creation of regularly published electronic or hard copy newsletters that summarize the latest developments in particular Kenyan development sectors.

II. Traditional Media's Quality and Value

Even though policy actors listed newspapers and radio as key sources for news and information, they also voiced distrust of and frustration with the content produced by these outlets. Interviewees described newspapers as biased, overly politicized and sensationalist, with journalists and editors more concerned about selling newspapers than publishing the truth. Radio broadcasts were also perceived as slanted or sensationalist. Television, praised by some interviewees as less biased than radio, still drew criticism for a lack of substantive coverage.

Several interviewees observed a deterioration of journalistic quality since the civil turmoil in Kenya in early 2008. One policy actor in government saw the post-election violence as a tipping point for the newsprint industry in terms of credibility and incorruptibility:

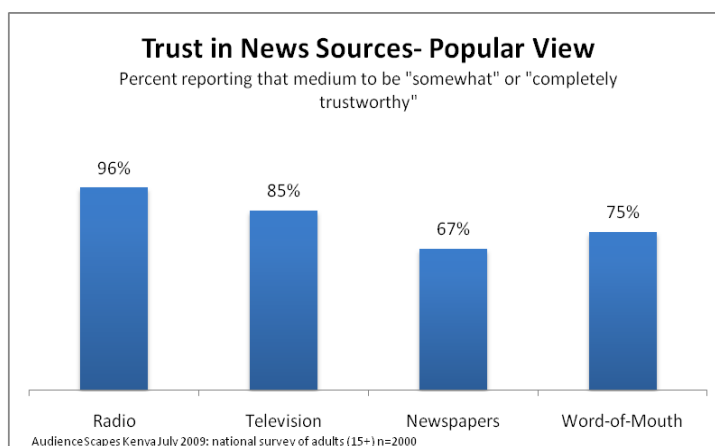
[During the politically heated elections] and post election violence, I personally lost

confidence in the newspapers. I came to see that they are all available for purchase. You can pay money to a media house and you publish a story that favors you as a politician.

What's more, several interviewees felt that Kenya's media fail to positively influence the policy process, in that coverage sensationalizes issues relating to people's lives instead of addressing underlying causes or exploring how problems might be rectified. For example, one official involved in health issues referred to coverage of a recent cholera outbreak, which focused on the details of the disease without providing useful care or preventative information to those at risk or to those already affected by the disease.

Policy actors' distrust in traditional media runs counter to the general public's opinion, according to a national survey of Kenya conducted by the AudienceScapes team in summer 2009.

Policy actors' distrust in traditional media runs counter to the general public's opinion



Distrust in Media and the Need for Media Training

Comparing different sources of news to parse their relative accuracy is common practice among most interviewees. Policy actors spoke of the need to cross-check information and gauge for themselves the trustworthiness of each piece of information. To fact check or substantiate the claims of news stories, policy actors said they often compare news sources and even check with their own internal sources (such as field officers and research assistants) when articles address issues within their own policy purview.

Interviewees blamed a lack of journalism training and even corruption within the profession for the misinformation or unsubstantiated information published:

The worst aspect is that we don't have able journalists. If [one] gets your story in the pocket, he will be the highest bidder in the whole country, which is very unfortunate. That is not information, it is distortion, but that is the case at the moment. (Member of Parliament)

We have reporters who have no clue and a lot of time they misinform the public. The data is wrong and as far as I am concerned the columnists are probably the worst. Columnists are making sweeping generalizations [but] not knowing the facts,

*[and] making rush conclusions.
(Nongovernmental official)*

One policy player urged more issues-based training of journalists:

*We have tried to engage the media as much as possible, but what we have done is not enough.... I strongly believe that we need regular capacity building workshops with the media so that we can discuss with them how to report facts. You see, with the media, a big number of them would like to put salt into some information so that it sells....
(Nongovernmental official)*

International media were praised for the trustworthiness of their coverage, but criticized for their treatment of events in Kenya and in Africa generally. As one ministerial official observed:

You know when the international media covers us they also just focus on the negativities. When do you see an African country being given prominence in the international media like CNN, BBC? When there is a disaster like an earthquake, drought, the animals that were dying. But they don't [cover] achievements, like when you make a discovery or something is positive.

Comparing different sources of news in order to parse their relative accuracy is common practice among most interviewees.

III. News and Information Services via Email or Mobile SMS

A number of policy actors said they use mobile SMS and email alert services to gather news and information, particularly services offered by mobile service providers and the websites of newspapers such as *The Standard* and *Daily Nation*. One policy influencer mentioned that the SMS and email alerts he receives on a daily basis allow him to easily prioritize which news items he needs to read.

However, as useful as these services are for keeping up to date on the latest news, they are not considered vital sources of policy-related material. In other words, they do not provide the kind of technical and contextual detail required to influence the formulation of policy.

IV. The Internet

Policy actors are part of Kenya's "internet elite" and the web has transformed their conduct of everyday information gathering, whether for news or policy-related input. According to AudienceScapes' survey research, only about 14 percent of Kenyans use the internet on a regular basis (weekly) and only 11 percent possess home internet access, whereas the policy actors interviewed, along with much of their staff, have easy web access—if not in their offices, than either at home or on their mobile phones.

Policy actors' first stop on the web is typically a search engine such as Google or Yahoo! to either get a quick view of news or look up specific information.

As mentioned, newspaper websites are popular; some policy actors also mentioned frequent visits to the websites of prominent global development partners such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

A large majority of interviewees said they have begun to use the internet as an efficient means of researching specific information and cross-checking sources. As one policy actor noted, "If you are looking for information that is not opinionated, then the internet is the place to visit because a lot of articles in the newspapers have opinions already."

The internet has become a crucial means of conducting policy-related research. Notably, policymakers use the internet to find examples of policies and best practices from other governments as well as for resources on the websites of major international organizations such as the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme, and the African Development Bank.

The internet (particularly as an email conduit) is widely used for internal and external communication. Multiple policy actors spoke of how email has simplified and streamlined information exchange within their organizations and with others by allowing them to send information electronically instead of by courier or mail. In addition, web-based email, combined with mobile communications, has allowed policy actors and their staffs to coordinate meetings more effectively with multiple stakeholders.



2.2. The Role of Non-Media Sources - Institutional and Personal

- Policymakers use informal networks of trusted experts to discuss the effectiveness of current policy or the viability of new policy proposals. Policy influencers use informal networks to share information and coordinate lobbying efforts.
- Some policy actors cited the need to pay for costly custom research or reports to get the details they need to be able to formulate sound policies.
- Global development partners were described as valuable resources in the policy process, but some policy actors want to see such partners forge greater local participation in project design and ownership.
- Email, SMS and mobile voice calls have made two-way communication among policy actors much more efficient and have helped to greatly expand formal and informal networks and thus increase information flows.

Timeliness is a key shortcoming of obtaining information through official channels.

- Barazas (public forums) were identified as crucial for obtaining feedback from the public on policies and programs and in turn inform the public about policy strategies.
- Policymakers spoke of the need for improved government data collection and processing so that they may be able to create policy with relevant information.

1. Formal Networks and the Hunger for Timely Information

Formal networks, which are the core sources of policy information, are composed of policymakers, policy influencers and other stakeholders exchanging information through official channels or within structured forums. Examples would include reports issued by regional field offices to central offices; policy workshops held by global development partners or local CSOs; and impact assessments of development projects from government ministry officials or NGO partners.

Essential as these networks are to the policy formulation process, **the interviewees in this study highlighted timeliness as a key shortcoming of obtaining information through official channels.** This is particularly problematic for ministries and agencies (such as those involved in education, agriculture or health) that need a reliable stream of information, data and other input from the field to help formulate policies and adjust programs to maximize their efficacy.

As one official dealing with education noted:

By the time we get it [the information or data]...some of the information could be stale.... We should be able to come up with a [solution] where information can be used as it is collected.

Often, policy officials said they are forced to commission third parties to conduct topical studies or surveys to try to circumvent slow official channels or supplement what those channels eventually produce. For example, one government official, dealing with economic and social development issues, spoke of recently commissioning studies about unemployment and inequality in Kenya from Finland's Service Center for Development Cooperation (KEPA), an association of Finnish NGOs involved in development.

Of the reasons policy actors gave for commissioning external custom research, feedback or reconnaissance, two stood out: the lack of proper resources and expertise internally in their own organizations, and the evidence-driven demands of international development partners (*relationships with these partners are explored further in Section IV below*).

Policy actors said they are often challenged by donor agencies to prove the credibility of the information, data and research they cite or use as the basis for policy choices and for requesting policy assistance. One policymaker expressed great frustration with international partners' opinions of what is considered trustworthy:

If I want to talk to [American and European aid donors], who will they believe? If I said that I gathered this data and this is the

situation in Kenya in terms of information technology and what benefits they can get by investing here, who would they believe? They don't believe [us]; they don't believe the government. And so because of that, they also don't believe many other people who may be researchers. They (only) believe certain people.

In response, many policy actors in and outside the government said they are forced to commission costly studies or surveys conducted by either domestic or international organizations that already have credibility in the eyes of investors and donor agencies.

II. Informal Networks – The Trust Factor

Informal networks of trusted experts, colleagues and friends are indispensable sources of policy ideas and opinions. In these networks, information can be debated or shared on an ad hoc basis without the burden of institutional or hierarchical obligations and restrictions.

The colleagues, contacts and friends included in such informal webs are viewed by policy actors as personal consultants with whom they can freely share ideas and discuss the viability of new proposals. Policy actors spoke of having personally vetted the individuals within their networks and thus trusting the information they provide. In addition, interviewees explained that trust built through such channels allows people to express their opinions, whereas they might be more reserved in official forums.

As one official dealing with economic issues described it:

I have built up relationships with individuals whom I can talk to on a personal basis without bias, knowing that we have a certain confidential relationship. Although it is [information] that they would not normally give out, I can go and ask them and they can give me information that allows me to form an opinion. You build this [kind of relationship] over time.

Thus, for development organizations, **it is essential to know who are the key figures in policy actors' informal circles, as these are the people likely to be stepping stones for communicating with those in positions of influence.**

Interviewees outside the government, particularly officials with NGOs, placed a particular emphasis on the creation of networks as a tool of coordinating lobbying efforts. For example, a head of a national NGO spoke of the importance of networking with the leadership of other development partners to effectively share information and coordinate their efforts at influencing policy. The NGO director also emphasized the need for some NGOs to convert these networks into coalitions so they may be able to tackle the ups and downs of the political process.

III. The Growing Impact of New Communication Technologies

Newer communication technologies have fundamentally changed how Kenya's policy actors conduct institutional and personal information exchanges, be they formal or informal.

The spread of email, SMS messaging and mobile voice calls have made such communication faster, cheaper and more flexible.

For example, at the informal level, one policy actor said he has various groups of contacts divided by topical interests (such as governance issues, economics and political developments of the day) and their key means of sharing information is by sending group emails with links to articles or studies that have recently caught someone's attention.



Institutionally, the common use of email as an intra- and inter-agency communication tool is only now becoming commonplace in Kenya. One business association official explained that the use of email (which he referred to as “e-shot”) has reduced costs and greatly expanded the amount of information that can be shared effortlessly and broadly. Policy actors said SMS messages are widely accepted as a common means of communication. Many interviewees provided examples of its usefulness for staying in touch with colleagues and constituents, organizing events and arranging lists of event attendees, and as an information dissemination tool.

Newer technologies, particularly mobile phones, are also helping to speed up critical

information flows that otherwise might be slowed by bureaucratic inertia. For example, a government official dealing with health issues described how citizens were able to use their mobile phones to alert medical officials about a cholera outbreak before the ministry's own field officers could relay the information officially:

When there was a cholera outbreak in Turkana, even before getting information from my officer, the public there had already called me and told me that they were really dying and the government was doing nothing.

Mobile technology is also being used to help gather policy relevant field research. For example, an international health expert said a recent pilot project run by his organization used the EpiSurveyor mobile software application to conduct an immunization field survey. The software is a free mobile-phone- and web-based-data collection system that allows field surveyors to fill out questionnaires using mobile phones and electronically transfer responses to a central server.

The health expert said that a similar survey previously would have taken months to conduct and process, but the new software can produce results within hours of the survey's completion. This is a prime example of how new technologies can help provide policy actors with the sort of timely and development-specific information they are seeking. Currently there are plans for future replication and scaling of

the EpiSurveyor software in several other countries.^{xx}

IV. Information Sharing with Global Development Partners

A majority of interviewees felt that their relationships with development partners were constructive overall, but many expressed concerns about the partners' disproportionate influence over policy—that is, who is ultimately controlling Kenya's development agenda. Both government officials and policy influencers expressed the need for global development partners to better consider Kenya's own development strategies.

As mentioned in Section II, policy actors take issue with the challenges they get from global development partners about the credibility of the information and data used in policy

formulation. Beyond that concern, multiple interviewees complained that international partners do not work closely enough with local NGOs or advocacy groups. As one public policy advocate described the situation:

If [international donors] are going to bring in grants to run a certain sector of the economy, they come in and give the grants to the government to build a certain section of the economy. [But], how much have they actually understood about that sector of the economy? ... Whom have they talked to? Or have they just relied on their embassy? They should come out and consult through the private sector so that they can understand what is going on in detail.

Donors and other development partners were advised to more closely engage local project stakeholders.

Donors and other development partners were advised to more closely engage local project stakeholders so that they have a better understanding of the local context and can make appropriate adjustments to project designs when needed, and properly assess project impacts. As a business association official explained:

[Development partners] must get that rapport [with local groups] going so that when the aid comes in, it will not be coming to the government. [Rather], the aid is coming in on a targeted basis where implementers already know how and where to execute projects. But too often you find that the government goes and requests aid and it goes to the government. It does not reach the point of the economy where it is supposed to reach.

That said, policy actors added that such relationships with local groups need to be coordinated with government officials to ensure actions taken are in accordance with Kenya's official development agenda and priorities.

Meanwhile, policy actors urged global partners to make sure that the Kenyan perspective on development priorities has a stronger voice at the policy discussion table. One official with a larger nongovernmental organization explained his experience with global development partners this way:

[Development partners] often seem to know the country [only superficially]. If you really want to know something about the Kenyan economy, say, you must go back and research how these things were set up... Then you can see, but of course they don't.

Another official elaborated:

Let all the development partners know that as a country and a government, we are very much interested in the support they are giving us to be within our development agenda. Let the support be in line with the national priorities rather than someone coming to us and saying we have so much money and we want you to do this, because it is Kenyans who know what our priorities are, and because that has been a big challenge to us.

Regarding global development partners' information and communication efforts, the interviewees' overall message to them may be summed up as follows:

- Tailor the presentation of policy and project recommendations to illustrate clearly how suggested measures would further the stated goals of Kenya's own development agenda. Policy actors are more likely to be receptive to recommendations if organizations demonstrate understanding of the Kenyan context, and that the desired effect of suggested recommendations or proposals fall in line with policy actors' own development goals.

- Reinforce efforts to include in policy discussions all stakeholders that would potentially be affected by new policies or projects. Stakeholder consultations—such as interviews with officials from local NGOs and civil society groups, or focus groups with citizens—will allow global development partners to gain a better

grasp of the Kenyan context and allow them to better explain to policy actors how their recommendations fit into the country’s needs. Of course, it is important to consult stakeholders prior to making policy or project recommendations. This is further explored below.

In-Depth: Mapping the Sources of Informed Decision-making

The policy community's sources of information can be mapped according to their type (traditional media, new technology, or direct contact with individuals and institutions), their purpose (to monitor news and the public agenda, to provide input for policy design, implementation, and evaluation, or to educate the public), and the manner in which they are typically used:

New Technologies	Primary Outlets/Sources	Use in Monitoring News & Public Agenda	Use in Policy Design, Implementation, & Evaluation	Use in Public Awareness & Education
Internet	Google, Yahoo!, Newspapers with Web Presence	Use search engines to cross-check information and visit newspapers' website	Search for examples of other countries' policies, cross-check information and visit websites of int'l organizations.	Post information on agency website (where available).
Email	n/a	Receive information/news alerts from listservs	Set up meetings, coordinate with staff; pose questions to colleagues/experts. Receive feedback from constituents.	Send updates to colleagues, members of associations and other stakeholders.
Mobile Phones	SMS Alerts/Flashing from news outlets or mobile service provider	Receive calls from field officers/constituents with reports of local events, cross-check information.	Set up meetings, coordinate with staff/colleagues; receive feedback from constituents and SMS surveys.	n/a

Traditional Media	Primary Outlets/Sources	Use in Monitoring News & Public Agenda	Use in Policy Design, Implementation, & Evaluation	Use in Public Awareness & Education
Newspapers	Business Daily, The Standard, Daily Nation	Skim multiple papers for key stories.	Monitor public opinion and possibly new on-the-ground developments..	Invite Journalists to Press Conferences, send press releases, Grant interviews.
Radio	Classic FM, Capital FM, vernacular stations like Inooro, Coro, or Ramogi	Listen to news and headline reviews, in the morning during commute	Participate in call-in shows to gauge public opinion and inform the public about new policies or programs.	Appear on Call-in or Talk Shows, send press releases, buy airtime to deliver messages, and invite journalists to events.
Television	Local: KTN, KBC, Citizen, NTV International: CNN, BBC	Watch int'l coverage of world events; occasionally watch local news at night.	Monitor world events; watch evening news wrap up.	Invite journalists to press conferences or project roll outs, Grant interviews; buy air time for public service announcements.

Individuals and Institutions	Primary Outlets/Sources	Use in Monitoring Public Agenda, Policy Design, Implementation, & Evaluation	Use in Public Awareness & Education
Written Documents	Colleagues, International NGOs, Multilateral Donors, Bilateral Donors, District-level Offices	Office Circulars that keep up to date the latest goings on of the Ministry/ organization; Convey opinions and policy briefs, request information, keep minutes of meetings, provide research results, draft policy documents, provide comments on policy drafts, and provide reports of activities.	Publicize policy decisions, inform stakeholders about policy issues.
Stakeholder Consultations	Barazas, Civil Society, Local NGOs, Traditional Authorities, Business Associations, International NGOs, Multilateral Donors	NGOs: Regularly Scheduled District-Level Meetings; Input on draft policies, receive feedback on policy and project impact and solicit proposals.	n/a
Meetings & Briefings	International NGOs, Multilateral Donors, Bilateral Donors, Business Associations, Traditional Leadership (Pastoralists)	Seek advice on policy design, monitor progress of implementation, project oversight and review public feedback.	Use local and traditional authorities to create effective links with hart to reach groups, Inform key individuals/ institutions about policy issues,
Workshops	Colleagues, International NGOs, Multilateral Donors, Bilateral Donors, Business Associations, local NGOs	Learn about policy issues; report on activities, and monitor progress of programs.	Educate journalists and stakeholders about policy issues.
Informal Consultations	Colleagues, Constituents, Traditional Authorities, Local Experts	Monitor the “word on the street.” Informally ask specific questions about prospective policies and projects, cross-check information.	Inform public or key individuals about policy issues; establish relationships with key local officials.
Events	Civil Society, Local NGOs, Traditional Authorities, Business Associations, International NGOs, Multilateral Donors, Bilateral Donors, District-level Offices	Receive appeals from grassroots level at barazas.	Create public awareness about policy issues; draw media attention to policy issues.

2.3. Policy Information: Public Dissemination and Feedback

- Policy information targeted at the public is often channeled through the media (most commonly radio, but increasingly television) or through non-media conduits, such as district level barazas.
- The use of vernacular radio and traditional community leadership as delivery mechanisms for policy information has been particularly successful for reaching specific subgroups of the population or hard- to-reach communities.
- Policymakers generally rely on well-organized, broadly representative interest groups as policy interlocutors, putting stakeholders who are less organized (such as youth or HIV sufferers) at a disadvantage in the policy process.
- For some government and NGO officials, the policy-making process has adopted too much of a “top-bottom” approach and needs more grassroots input.
- Government agencies and officials who (by the nature of their policy area) are not regularly in contact with the public are forced to use less convenient, typically more expensive means of gathering feedback (such as focus groups or surveys).



I. The Role of Citizens in Development Policy

Are citizens interested or engaged?

The politicians interviewed in the executive and legislative branches had mixed views about citizens’ level of interest in policy issues. Many felt that their constituents knew little about the jobs they do and how policies are made, while other politicians felt that a good many people were interested in and well informed about policy.

Interviewees acknowledged that much of Kenyan society is left out of policy discussions, primarily because most people lack access to policy-relevant information—either due to it not being readily available, or due to the person’s inability to take advantage of available materials (for example, because the person is illiterate or does not know the language in which the material is made available).

Among those policy actors who were more skeptical about the level of public interest in policy, they noted that citizens frequently contact them to discuss issues important to them personally or to request assistance in personal matters, rather than to discuss an issue that is relevant to the broader community or constituents as a whole.

These politicians described such personal appeals as inordinately burdensome, leaving less time available for real policy work.

Another chief complaint was that citizens simply do not understand the policy making process and what goes on in parliament or in government bodies, making it very challenging to engage the public in a constructive policy dialogue. This knowledge gap was considered a potential focus area for development organizations, where they could sponsor or conduct civic education programs that otherwise would not be publicly available.

Engaging the Public

Regardless of the public's level of interest, policy actors employ multiple avenues of communication in an attempt to engage citizens and constituents. Common venues include press conferences, appearances on radio or TV shows, and regularly scheduled public appearances (often with district chiefs) during legislative recesses.

Radio, Kenya's dominant information and communication medium, is used heavily for informing the public about new policies or programs, as well as for creating two-way discussions. Policy actors said they either listen to or participate in radio talk and call-in shows as a means of gauging public opinion and directly interacting with citizens who have policy-related concerns. Of course, radio is one of the most efficient and convenient means of reaching illiterate or remotely located citizens.

Radio is one of the most efficient and convenient means of reaching illiterate or remotely located citizens.

One official described how using vernacular or community radio stations in Kenya's linguistically diverse environment was much more effective at reaching target audiences than nationally broadcast stations. What's more, policy actors said that vernacular radio's content is often considered more trustworthy by local populations. An official of a local NGO explains:

We discovered that only a small number of people had known about our call for [grant] proposals, so we went to vernacular radio stations and now the [interest] became overwhelming....We have discovered that with [national stations such as] Nation TV,

KTN, Citizen-those are not enough. Go to the small ones, the Inooro (Kikuyu language station), Ramogi (Luo station), and you will get everybody.

Challenges Connecting to the Grassroots

To reach local audiences, one policy actor involved in agricultural issues stressed the need to adapt to and accommodate the local environment as much as possible. He suggested some ways of doing so: ensuring that field officers can communicate in local languages, working with traditional leaders to gain communities' trust, and hiring local individuals as project staff. Such practices are vital when attempting to communicate with hard-to-reach populations, as another official involved in agricultural issues explained in the context of Kenya's pastoralist societies:

Pastoralists have sometimes very rigid rules, like when we talk to the Maasai [an ethnic group that is largely pastoralist]...so that sometimes when you want to pass certain information or certain changes that you want to implement, you may need to talk to their leaders. And you see once you talk to their leaders, the information they will disseminate will be well received, [better] than when you just say [directly that] you want to do ABCD...But when you deal with their leaders, the information will be taken in very good faith and you will achieve more.

The use of religious authorities to help communicate issues to the general population varies by organization and their particular missions. For example, a policy actor dealing with health issues reported that his organization recently spoke with religious authorities before conducting a project, even though they knew the religious authorities would not like the project. By doing so, the organization hoped to limit confrontation with them. On the other hand, another government official explained that their agency chooses not to engage with religious authorities regularly because they do not want to be seen as favoring specific religious groups.

Of course, **illiteracy continues to be a major challenge to reaching the public.** Kenya's literacy rate is 73.6 percent of the population, on a par with neighboring Uganda and Tanzania.^{xxi} However, according to a study

Policy actors are optimistic about how new ICTs can be used to engage the public.

conducted by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics in 2006, less than 30 percent of Kenyans had a "mastery level" of literacy, while the majority have only marginal literacy skills and are at risk of losing them.^{xxii} **This underlines the continued need for assistance in expanding adult education programs. It also reinforces the central role of radio and local public forums as a means of reaching illiterate Kenyans.**

In addition to radio, word-of-mouth is a key means of gathering news and information among the illiterate, hence the importance of public forums as a means of disseminating information. According to the AudienceScapes national survey of Kenya, 52 percent of the population looks to friends and family as daily sources for news and information, and 86 percent do so at least weekly.

New ICTs and Public Engagement

Interaction with the public via the internet is limited. The vast majority of Kenyans cannot afford home access to the web or the cost of internet cafés. Even so, many policy actors said web-based and mobile communication activities are the future of public engagement.

As individuals with ready access to the web, policy actors experience first-hand how it can spur communication; as such, they are optimistic about how these technologies can be used to engage the public. In addition, the recent explosion in access to mobile phones, and the media attention focused on mobile banking in Kenya, is cause for optimism for many policy actors.

One government official who works with youth pointed out that it is imperative that policy actors use newer ICTs to reach out to young Kenyans:

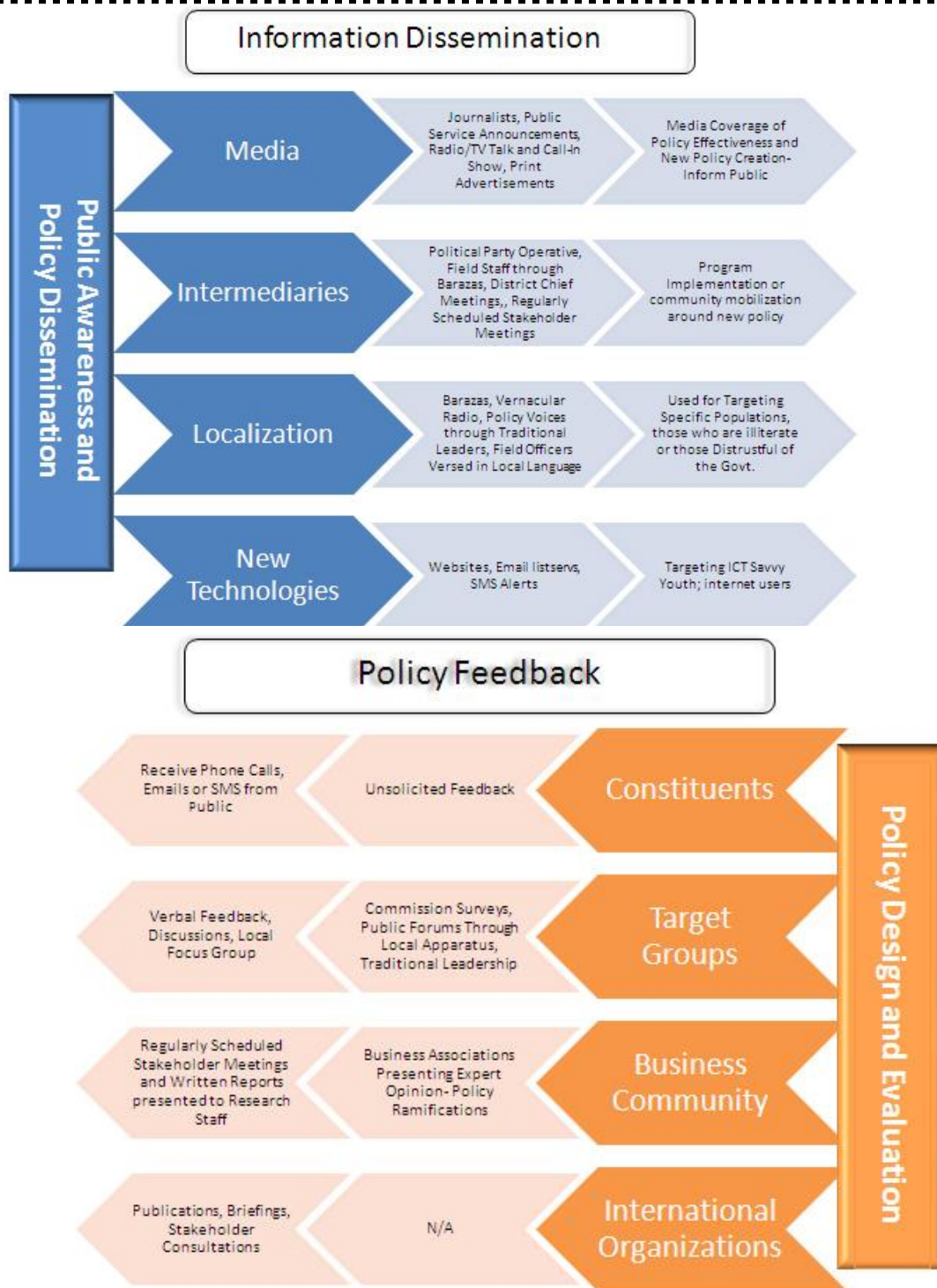
We have of course the website that we [use to] interact with youth, but we would like it to be more interactive through Facebook, blogs and all these things. One important area that the youth have strength in is ICTs, and if you are to change them then you have to rely on that so much.... We are actually in the process of developing our information outlets through ICTs because that is where the future is.

While many policy actors mentioned multiple advantages of new ICTs and their potential to help engage the public, one interviewee stressed that people still want to make personal contact with officials:

The possibilities of faster communication are there, but what I find is that people still hunger for personal contact. I don't think you just want to listen to a recorded voice—that if you want to do this, press one, if you want to do that, press six. You will want a direct way of engaging with people. So I don't think all forms of communication is going to become digital and web based.

In-Depth: Mapping Information Flows

These diagrams highlight the various paths through which policy information can follow between high-level policymakers and the Kenyan public.



II. Inclusion of Local Development Stakeholders

Interviewees from executive branch ministries and parliament all said they hold regular local stakeholder consultations on policy issues. Although the types of stakeholders invited to such gatherings vary by policy area, those most likely to attend include organized civil society groups, policy experts, business and labor associations, traditional authorities, and (in some cases) religious groups.

Stakeholder consultations generally are either regularly scheduled roundtables between policymakers and invited groups, or ad hoc meetings fitted around parliamentary and ministry officials' schedules. Written documents (for example, a draft policy or impact assessment) typically are distributed to stakeholders before the meeting.

Policymakers' preference for including well-organized, highly visible interest groups in such consultations obviously puts less-well-organized segments of the population at a disadvantage.

Indeed, marginalized groups who are often targets of development policy initiatives (e.g., youth, people living with HIV/AIDS, small business entrepreneurs or dispersed rural communities) may therefore have less of a voice in policy matters than more organized interests such as business associations.

One suggested method to help empower such groups is to support the creation of cross-cutting coalitions so they are able to pool resources and speak with a united voice.

Another possibility is to provide training to local

groups about how to conduct publicity and awareness campaigns geared toward local and national policymakers, to sensitize them about issues important to the excluded group.

Although stakeholder meetings carry most weight during the initial stages of the policy design process, a majority of policy actors interviewed said such gatherings should be repeated throughout all stages of the process.

Stakeholder feedback was viewed as particularly crucial during the policy implementation period so that programmatic adjustments can be made if and when necessary and as early as possible before

potential problems only grow bigger. At the same time, as one policy advisor with an international organization cautioned, policy implementers need to manage such input so the project or program in question isn't pulled in too many directions:

Don't take a step without consulting [stakeholders]. But on the other hand, don't be a

slave to other people's opinions or to the stakeholders' opinions; sometimes you don't need an opinion.

Multiple interviewees reported extensively using stakeholder meetings both at the local and national levels. However, some policy actors still said that the interests of target populations are often ignored. For example, a government official involved in rural issues explained that the majority of policy making by his ministry occurs from "top-bottom."

Stakeholder feedback was viewed as particularly crucial during the policy implementation period.

The official said his colleagues often make assumptions about what farmers need without consulting farmers or their representative groups. He felt that ministry officials should instead adopt a more “bottom-top” approach:

You sit in this office and assume that livestock farmers in this country need [assistance]. And you want to think on their behalf and tell them that the government has decided that that is the way to go. You find that we don't involve stakeholders. And that does not augur very well. So I think we need to adopt the bottom-up approach in most of the things that we do, so we don't appear to be [doing the thinking] for people.

III. Feedback on Policy Performance

Gathering feedback on existing policies from constituents appeared to be easier for agencies and organizations with a longer tradition of establishing concrete avenues of communication with the public. For example, ministries and NGOs dealing with health or agricultural issues most likely have already established public communication mechanisms for regular feedback on project or policy implementation. As one official involved in agriculture noted:

Sometimes it is instant (feedback), like if it is Baraza, [people] will ask you questions and tell you whether they like something or not. Some people also write to us to give suggestions on how the sector can be improved. And like even those field days [public events designed to educate farmers], we record the names and contacts of those who come and after that they fill out some questionnaires. They don't have to indicate

their names. Maybe we are just carrying out a survey about the function that was held, if it was organized well or not, and then they give us feedback.

Other ministries or agencies without a tradition of making regular contact with the public (for example, the Energy Ministry or the Finance Ministry) face different challenges gauging public opinion on policies and projects. Their alternative methods may include the use of focus groups among target populations, or even commissioning large-scale surveys. However, gathering public feedback by these means is less convenient and viewed as relatively expensive.

Apart from organized feedback mechanisms, officials receive unsolicited feedback in emails, phone calls or letters from constituents, though the frequency of such contacts varies by agency or organization. One internet-savvy government agency has even set up informal discussion groups on its website to allow stakeholders to weigh in on policies whenever they like.



2.4 Structural Challenges to Gathering the Right Policy Information

The policy actors interviewed identified a number of structural challenges to how they conduct, find and disseminate policy information. Of particular concern are the mechanisms through which information flows and in which it is organized, along with the content and quality of information. To summarize these issues:

- Policymakers consistently spoke of the need for making more research available on the successes and failures of policies in other countries.
- They emphasized their need for more timely data so that the policymaking process is more effective and relevant to circumstances on the ground.
- The policy community lacks efficient and effective information management systems, limiting policy actors' ability to be as well-informed as possible, and forcing some to spend precious resources on redundant fact-finding efforts.

I. Lack of Practical and Comparative Development Data

The chief concern among interviewees was a perceived lack of information about practical policies that had been tried in other African countries. As one ministry official put it:

We [don't get much information] on the real, practical part of implementing policies [in other countries]. For instance, I would like to have the Harvard Business School explain how policies work in other countries and be able to compare practical modules across developed and developing countries to help customize our policy to suit [Kenya].

Development partners were encouraged to support easily accessible comparative research covering a range of development sectors, making sure lessons learned are analyzed with a view toward the Kenyan context. In other words, policy actors are seeking analytical guidance on whether policies deemed successful in one country would be likely to yield positive or negative results in another country, and why, given local circumstances.

Policy actors also seek policy analysis and input that is less technically dense. They said that their busy schedules don't allow time to pore over policy briefs or research studies in complex technical or legal jargon. They want information presented to them in a clear and concise manner, highlighting the "so-whats"—that is, what the results mean for them on a practical level.

II. Weak Information Systems and the Timeliness of Data

Individual and Organizational Capacity

While a lack of appropriate policy information is a common complaint, a majority of interviewees also complained about their inability to organize and make readily accessible the range of information already circulating in their offices and from partner organizations. This gap in organizational and storage capacity limits the scope for well-informed policy and programmatic decisions.

As one government official explained, there is “so much (information), so at times one would not be able to follow what is coming and at times you will find your internet is bombarded with information from all kinds of sources.

Others lamented the lack of “computerization” of ministry records and studies completed so far. Even when information about a particular policy issue exists—data, a case study, an impact assessment—it frequently cannot be located. Interviewees reported that in many agencies, recordkeeping and archiving are rudimentary, if they exist at all.

As limited as the adoption of new information management systems is among most agencies and organizations, one government official described how international donor agencies recently helped his agency install the knowledge management software KOHA, an

open source library system, to handle its large database of studies and research projects. The software allows customizable searches so that agency research assistants can easily navigate the wealth of information compiled from internal and external sources and share it with colleagues. Following this example, he said, the existence of electronic archives in all agencies would go a long way to avoid waste of scarce resources to search for or even duplicate information.

Placing research findings online, where other agencies and organizations can access them, not only would improve information exchange but also could potentially bolster the transparency and accountability of government programs and policies. These are key areas in which development partners can potentially provide technical assistance.^{xxiii}

The Need for the Communication of Timely Data

As mentioned in Section 2.2, multiple policy actors spoke of a lack of timely, policy-relevant data. Due to weak information systems and a lack of resources on the district-level, the timeliness of field research delivery to policymaking centers—particularly from rural areas of the country where it may be collected—is a major issue.

There is great opportunity for development partners to assist policymakers and government officials in streamlining information collection and distribution.

As two policy actors described the situation:

Routine data takes a long time to come. For example, on immunization, in a month's time maybe only 60 percent of institutions will have reported back, in two months maybe 80 [percent], and after three months close to 100 percent....Internet-based information collection would help.- International nongovernmental official involved in health care issues

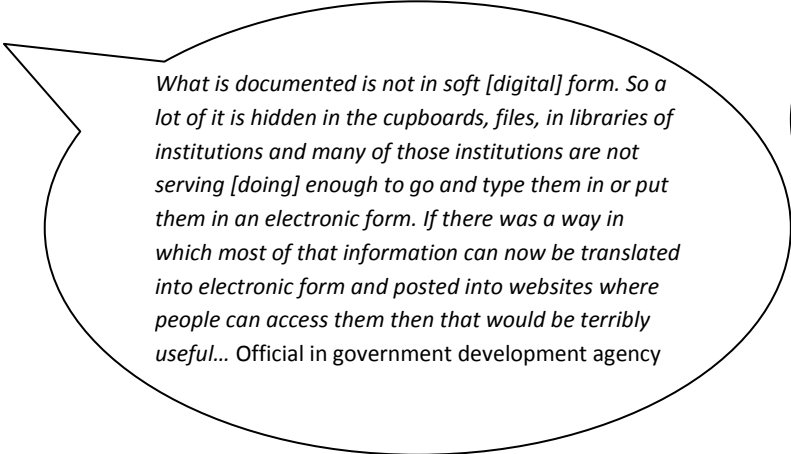
Real-time information is often not available—like how many cars were imported last month or how many tons of steel and by whom. So some real-time detailed useful information for quick response or quick engagement [is needed]. –Business association official

Even though a few government agencies and NGOs are beginning to exploit new ICTs and software programs as a means of collecting and organizing data, many still lack the connectivity or expertise to expand these communication techniques beyond central

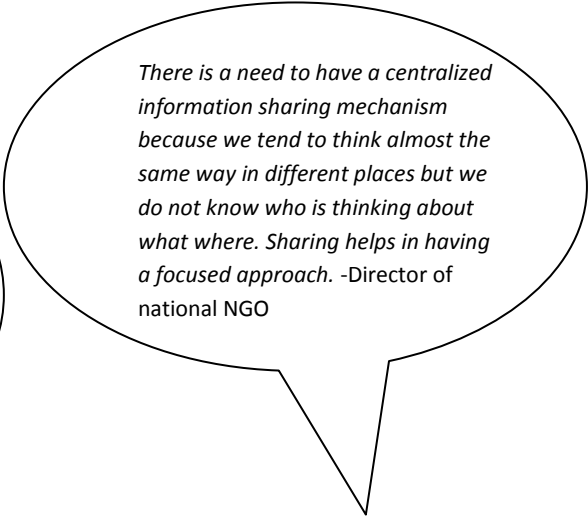
offices. These gaps in physical resources and organizational capacity are most often found at the district level or in rural areas where much of the policy feedback and policy assessments originate. Here an NGO official explains:

The gaps are actually in the area of technology. We are connected to the province..., but we are not connected to all the constituency [municipal-level] teams and there are some districts where regular supply of electricity is a challenge. So we are not connected and we cannot send information through email for example.

In light of these challenges, there is great opportunity for development partners to create new programs and projects that will assist policymakers and government officials in streamlining information collection and distribution. Such programs could include capacity building, targeting municipal officials or ministerial field officers or even telecommunications infrastructure investment to better connect branch and central offices.



What is documented is not in soft [digital] form. So a lot of it is hidden in the cupboards, files, in libraries of institutions and many of those institutions are not serving [doing] enough to go and type them in or put them in an electronic form. If there was a way in which most of that information can now be translated into electronic form and posted into websites where people can access them then that would be terribly useful... Official in government development agency



There is a need to have a centralized information sharing mechanism because we tend to think almost the same way in different places but we do not know who is thinking about what where. Sharing helps in having a focused approach. -Director of national NGO

Chapter 3. Recommendations for the International Development Community



The findings of this analysis point to several ways that global development organizations and other development stakeholders can better interact with and assist Kenyan policy actors, with a view toward promoting constructive policies and improving development outcomes.

I. Contribute More Effectively to the Policy Debate

Discussions with policy makers and influencers yielded nine key points about how development partners can more effectively navigate through, and make useful contributions to, the policy formulation process:

- **Use local media to raise awareness**

Local media is a primary source for determining which issues are on the public's mind, even though it is not a central means of informing policy actors about technical policy information. Being cognizant of and conversant in the flow of information from these media sources is critical to speaking credibly about trends in public issues.

In addition, getting a story picked up by local radio and newspapers may help put an issue onto policy actors' radar. Despite policy actors' criticisms about content and coverage quality, traditional media remains an important means of gaining the attention of both the public and policy actors.

The key outlets monitored by policy actors, as highlighted above, include radio (particularly Capital FM, Classic FM, Kiss 105, along with some vernacular stations), newspapers (especially the *Daily Nation* and *Business Daily*), international news stations (CNN, BBC), and KTN, NTV, Citizen and KBC, the state-owned and operated station.

- **Support the creation of sector-specific policy bulletins or regular updates**

As mentioned above, there are gaps in Kenyan media reporting on specific development topics. One suggestion to fill this gap: the creation of regular electronic or hard copy bulletins or updates that summarize the latest news in a given development area such as education, health, sanitation or energy.

- **Help elevate the public's understanding of the policy making process**

A chief complaint among policy actors was that many citizens are not familiar with the policy making process, posing a challenge to engaging the public in a constructive dialogue. This knowledge gap was viewed as a fruitful area for development organizations to intervene by sponsoring or conducting civic education programs that otherwise would not be publicly available.

- **Address issues of trust and cost**

Policy actors are often forced to commission outside organizations to conduct custom studies and surveys for policy-formulation purposes. This mainly reflects the lack of proper resources and expertise within government agencies, and development partners' mistrust of state-conducted research.

Many policy actors complained of the hefty financial cost of such studies. Contributing financially to cover these information needs, or providing the infrastructural or personnel resources to conduct timely policy research, would help to fill this information gap.

- **Provide timely and comparative policy research**

Many policy actors spoke of the need for better data and research that spoke to practical policy needs. This void could be filled through more accessible and targeted research on Kenya, as well as comparable country studies. In addition, some policy makers complained of a lack of timely data, often citing a lack of resources or internal capacity.

Training in research methodology, and investments in communication technologies and infrastructure, would give Kenyan institutions enhanced ability to collect, organize and share data themselves furthering their ability to use field research to inform the policy making process.

- **Help to connect grassroots organizations and high-level policymakers wherever possible.**

Policy actors spoke of the need to better connect with the grassroots to ensure that policies incorporate the needs, priorities and concerns of the intended beneficiaries of development projects.

Unorganized or hard-to-reach communities such as pastoralists are often the most likely to be left out of the policy and development dialogue. Multiple policy influencers spoke of the need for development organizations to help develop institutional voices for these groups so that they may be included more readily.

It is also important that these disadvantaged groups receive assistance in the creation of broader coalitions so they are better able to pool resources and speak with a single voice.

It is also important that these disadvantaged groups receive assistance in the creation of broader coalitions so they are better able to pool resources and speak with a single voice. In addition, providing training to local groups about how to conduct media campaigns and how best to raise awareness among local and national policymakers about issues important to their communities will go a long way towards strengthening their cause.

- **Provide policy actors with information in preferred formats—concise written briefs that summarize key points in either paper or electronic form, complemented by face-to-face meetings.**

Another practical suggestion: when conducting briefings or meetings, provide stakeholders with a short written “takeaway” document that summarizes the meeting’s key points. In gatherings covering a great number of topics and viewpoints, a follow-up document highlighting salient points is essential.

- **Engage with policymakers early—and stay in contact throughout the policy process.**

Early engagement is important in both the executive branch and with Parliament, as either body can initiate policy formulation and legislation.^{xxiv} In addition, interested parties are encouraged to keep close tabs on the evolution of policy proposals as they make their way through the formulation process.

But that isn't the end of the job for development organizations; input and feedback is also considered crucial during policy implementation so that any necessary programmatic adjustments can be made with sufficient input from all concerned.

- **Forge multi-level relationships within and outside government ministries, not just at the top.**

Policy actors' reliance on both formal and informal networks for information, insights and input provides a wealth of opportunities to connect with them through trusted third parties, both within their organizations and outside them.

For example, ministry and parliamentary research staff are important cogs in the policy development process. The data and information they supply will directly inform the policy drafting process. Keeping in contact with such key staff members, and presenting them with relevant, timely material, can contribute tremendously to effective policy formulation.

Policymakers use their personal networks of colleagues and friends as trusted sources for advice and consultation. Thus, for development organizations, it is worth knowing the key figures in policy actors' social circles, as these people may be an effective stepping stone for reaching those in positions of influence.

Several policymakers pointed to a lack of engagement between international development groups and local NGOs; these are critical relationships that need to be reinforced. Ongoing and mutually respectful dialogue between these two sides of the development

fence can go a long way toward informing international partners about the context and implications of the projects they fund and the policy prescriptions they propose.

That said, creating such connections should not undermine the policies or authority of government ministries; rather, they are meant to inform and strengthen Kenyan voices in the development discussion.

In-Depth: Lessons from Policy Influencers

The four interviewees from outside of government described their experiences providing information to help shape development policy in Kenya. Here are some of the successful methods they mentioned:

Hold regular meetings or briefings with higher-level ministry and parliamentary officials, along with their staff, to help set the policy agenda. Interviewees reported that scheduled regular meetings with policymakers are very important in keeping key decision makers informed about your issues and will allow your organization also be informed about the policy making process.

Use local media to augment your campaign. Conducting a policy consultation may not be enough to get a policymaker to act upon your proposal or advice. Use the local media to draw attention to your issue and potentially further public support.

Use ICTs to remain continually engaged with policymakers and their staff. Policymakers reported high levels of connectivity where they are constantly were engaged with their staff and colleagues through email and mobile activities. By updating policymakers or their staff on what your organization is doing or of new developments surrounding your key issues through email or SMS your organization will stay on their radar screen.

Cooperate with other like-minded organizations to strengthen your voice. Multiple policy influencers spoke of their efforts to coordinate with other like-minded organizations either in a forum to discuss new sector developments or as a means of acting as a unified voice. If a particular policy or project has the support of multiple stakeholders it is more likely to be taken seriously and acted upon. In addition, by harmonizing efforts you lessen the chance of overloading policymakers and their staffs with information.

- **Support the training of journalists and community radio stations, and training for policymakers on media strategy.**

There were widespread complaints about the lack of impartiality and accuracy in national media. Training journalists and editorial staff in reporting on different development sectors has the potential to be useful both in reporting new projects and policies but also how to constructively report in times of crisis.

Vernacular or community radio stations are a worthy target of such training, as many interviewees emphasized these stations' ability to reach the very people whom development organizations try to help.

Meanwhile, policy actors urged training for elected officials in how to better convey new policies in different media formats, including multilingual environments. Development organizations with media campaign experience in other African countries can also share strategies with policy actors.

A Note on Research Methods



As mentioned in the beginning of Chapter 1, the interviews for this report took place during a momentous period in Kenya’s political history. Senior officials in government as well as the business and the nonprofit sectors were involved in a high-stakes national debate over fundamental political reforms that left them little time to attend to other duties—much less take pauses from those duties to participate in our research. The process of requesting, scheduling

and conducting the interviews demanded extreme flexibility from the AudienceScapes researchers as they dealt with frequent appointment delays and cancellations; a number of interviews were either interrupted or cut short by urgent matters, rendering the results inadequate for use in the project.

What's more, the subject matter of the interviews—namely, how those in positions of influence gather, assess and share policy information—prompted many potential interviewees to conclude that such questions would be better handled by their communication departments. However, the AudienceScapes team persevered, and in the end they found a sufficient number of senior-level officials to participate. It was essential to speak directly with decision makers to discover their personal views on the value of various types of information available (and not available) to them, and their views on how the global development community can play a more constructive role in this regard.

Now that we have completed this research in Kenya and Ghana, we have identified ways in which this research model might be expanded to provide a more holistic view of national policy information environments:

- Conduct focus group discussions with international development officials and other key stakeholders active in the country to discuss their experiences providing

information in the policy arena, and to pinpoint what they view as assets and shortcomings of the current policy process.

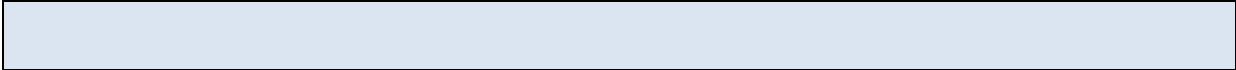
- Add one or two case studies of how information flows influenced a given policy-formulation experience (for example, the creation of a new program to promote youth employment, or to expand primary health care services to rural areas), to provide real-world examples of the current state of affairs in the policy arena.
- Provide further analysis of the how various types of domestic stakeholders (such as business groups, religious groups, citizen's groups, local NGOs) interact with each other and either ally or compete for influence on policy issues. This appears to require targeted research beyond what can be collected from the comments of policymakers and leading influencers.

We hope to incorporate these elements into forthcoming research, particularly in Zambia, which will be conducted in Spring 2010.

Appendix A: In-Depth Interview Questionnaire

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1. To what extent, and in what ways, have your daily habits of gathering news and information changed recently, for example over the past two to three years?
 2. How have your sources of news and information changed over this period, or become more or less important to you? Why?
 3. Going through your typical work day, can you describe your routines of gathering news and information?
 4. Think about the policy process. Can you say when in this process it is best for interested parties to provide you with information about an issue? In other words, at what point in the process are you most in need of information or seek it?
 5. Generally speaking, what form is it most convenient for you to receive information from interested parties to help you make policy decisions? (i.e., written briefs, video/TV, discussions with co-workers and advisors, SMS messages, email). What form do you find easiest to absorb when you are pressed for time?

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6. What information needs do you have as a policymaker (*or policy influencer if not in the government*) that are not being met?
 7. What improvements would you like to see in the availability and quality of news and information in your work?
 8. How well do you think the media cover issues that are most relevant to your policy work in Kenya? Please differentiate between Kenyan media outlets and international media outlets.
 9. I am going to go through a list of various types of Kenyan organizations that have a stake in development issues. Can you tell me how useful to you are exchanges of information with these groups regarding development issues you focus on? 1. Local NGOs; 2. Business groups; 3. Citizens' groups; 4. religious groups
 10. Now I will go through a list of various types of international organizations that have a stake in development issues you focus on? Can you tell me how useful to you are exchanges of information with these groups regarding development issues? 1. International NGOs; 2. The World Bank and other development banks; 3. UN agencies; 4. Large foundations focused on development; 5. Bilateral development agencies.

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11. In what ways do you or your organization make policy-related news and information available to the general public? If possible, can you give examples?
 12. Do you or your organization face any particular challenges in communicating policy information to the general public?
 13. How do you get feedback from the public on your policies and programs? Which channels and strategies do you normally use? Please provide some examples.
 14. How well informed do you think the general public is on the issues you work on? Why?
 15. Do you think the increasing availability of mobile phones and other communication technologies will change the way that you and your organization communicate in the future? If so, how?
 16. These are all the questions I have for you. Is there anything I should have asked you about that you would like to discuss?

Appendix B: List of agencies and organizations from which interviewees were selected

Governmental Bodies:

Ministry of Education

Ministry of Information and Communication

Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs

Ministry of Livestock Development

Ministry of Medical Services

Ministry of Planning and Vision 2030

Ministry of Youth Affairs

National Economic and Social Council

Parliamentary Committee on Education

Parliamentary Finance Committee

Nongovernmental Bodies:

Kenya Association of Manufacturers

Kenya Private Sector Alliance

National Council of NGOs

United Nations Development Program

UNICEF

Appendix C: The AudienceScapes Research Team for Kenya

David Montez is a Research Analyst at InterMedia and the primary author of this report. David earned a BA at Florida State University and an MA in International Affairs from the School of International Service at American University. He has worked with the National Democratic Institute's Middle East division as a project assistant and he worked with the Henry L. Stimson Center as a research assistant focusing on security issues within Southwest Asia.

Dr. Joachim Bruess is the Research Director of InterMedia and is in charge of research activities for the AudienceScapes project. Joachim has a MA and a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Bielefeld in Germany. He has more than 12 years experience in statistical analysis, demography and migration studies. He has designed, budgeted, organized, and directed research projects for the National Committee for Quality Assurance and AARP, and for the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Social Conflict and Violence at the University of Bielefeld.

Peter Goldstein is the Project Director of AudienceScapes. He contributed to this report. Peter holds a MA in African Studies from Johns Hopkins University's Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, and a BA in Politics from the University of California, Santa Cruz. Peter was previously a journalist with Kiplinger in the U.S., and Dow Jones & Co., and the Wall Street Journal in Europe.

Dr. Raul Roman is a Senior Project Manager at InterMedia and a research advisor on the AudienceScapes project. He has MS and Ph.D. degrees in Communication and International Development from Cornell University, and he is an adjunct professor at the Johns Hopkins Nitze School of Advanced International Studies. Raul brings a decade of experience as a research and strategy consultant in communication and international development programs in more than 20 countries in South Asia, Latin America, and Africa. He has served as a consultant for international organizations (such as UNESCO, FAO, USAID, and Rockefeller Foundation, among others), governments, companies (such as Microsoft and Intel), and research institutions.

Klara Debeljak is a Project Manager at InterMedia and oversees the implementation of AudienceScapes research in Kenya and Zambia. Previously, she worked at Echo Research in the UK and Media Tenor in South Africa. Klara also worked with NGOs and international organizations and completed research on media coverage of politics, AIDS/HIV, innovation, crime and corruption. Klara holds a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.

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Endnotes

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