

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. In addition, providing training to local groups

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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.¹ 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.

For more information, contact us at audiencescapes@intermedia.org.

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ⁱ For more information see, "The Legislative Process". The Parliament of Kenya. Nairobi, Kenya. http://www.parliament.go.ke/parliament/intro_legislative.php.