Good Practices for Political Engagement and Influencing

Tips and examples for programmes within and beyond the land sector



Land Facility
Decision Support Unit

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About this resource

This resource was produced by Jojoh Faal, Emily Hayter and Chiara Ronzoni for the Land Facility Decision Support Unit, drawing on an internal review conducted for the Land Facility programme. The layout design and illustrations were developed by Magda Castria. The authors gratefully acknowledge the comments received on drafts from colleagues within and beyond the Land Facility.

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Overview

Effective policy engagement can help move from political economy analysis to politically informed action.

This resource illustrates how purposeful, creative and adaptive policy engagement approaches must be grounded in understanding of the political economy context. As these global examples show, influence goals take on many forms – whether it's reframing a narrative, changing budget allocation or changing how individuals and institutions function. Navigating these complex and non-linear environments with effective engagement approaches depends on having a strong understanding of the political economy context, a clear set of influencing goals, and an agile and multidisciplinary project team.

As part of an internal initiative in the Land Facility programme, we reviewed literature and practical resources on policy influencing and engagement. We also compiled diverse examples of engagement approaches used across the world to influence different policy outcomes in various ways. This resource distils some common good practices, tips and tactics that emerged from this review.

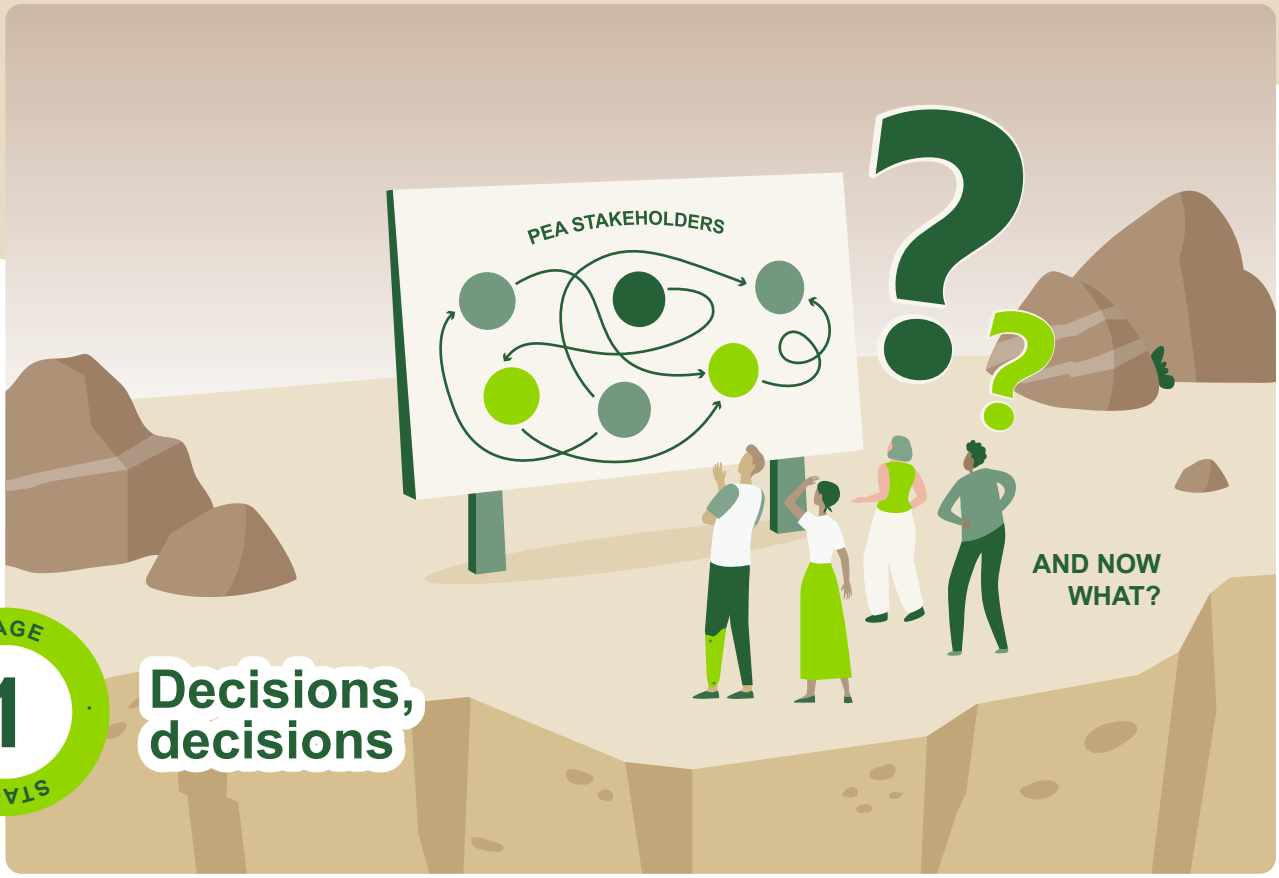
This resource is neither exhaustive nor comprehensive, and it does not recommend any single approach. Rather, practitioners from the land sector and other sectors can use it to draw inspiration from existing influencing tactics, helping them to respond directly to their political economy analysis findings and meet their influencing goals.

Moving from 'thinking politically' to 'working politically'

Many efforts to bring about reforms invest in 'thinking politically' through political economy analysis that is conducted during project design. In adaptive and flexible programmes, this analysis is regularly reviewed and revised based on emerging lessons and shifting contexts. To apply these insights to programme management and implementation decisions, 'working politically' is a crucial next step. Without 'working' politically, the 'thinking' remains just that—analysis without any practical action. For projects that aim to support policy reform, influencing and engagement approaches are key elements of an effective 'thinking and working politically' (TWP) approach.



Policy engagement: A practitioner's challenge



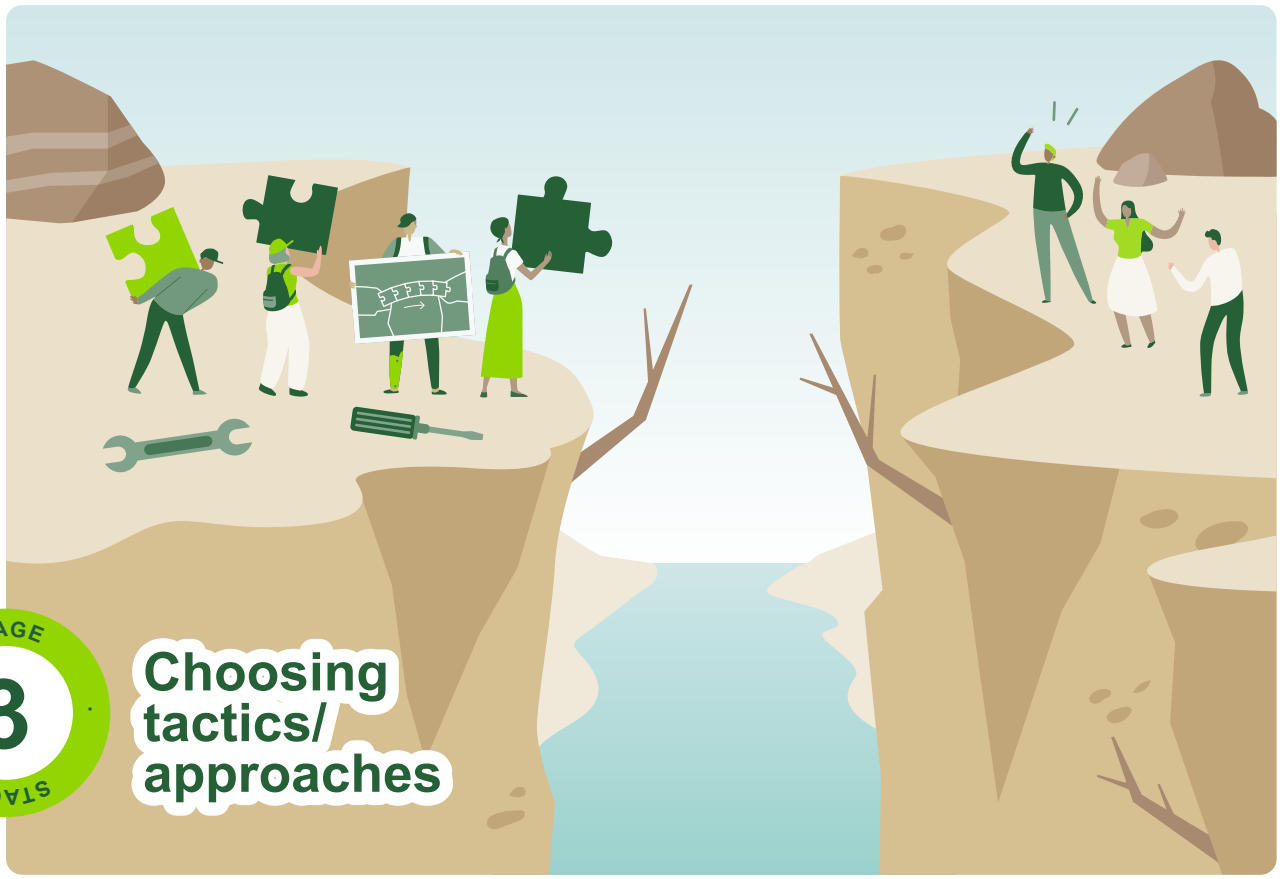
STAGE 1

Decisions, decisions



STAGE 2

Choosing influencing goals



STAGE 3

Choosing tactics/ approaches



STAGE 4

Walking the Path

Ten top tips and tactics

There is no single approach to policy engagement and influence. Only complexity and change are guaranteed. Despite this, there are some common good practices to consider which emerge from the literature and experience across many different contexts.



1

Combining approaches and collaborating

Approaches tend to be more effective when used in combination rather than alone. For instance, influencing individuals' skills and knowledge works best when combined with influencing the organisational processes and systems that shape their incentives and behaviour.

'Policy influence does not stem from a singular approach but from the cumulative and iterative effect of multiple strategies and actors working together.

Meaningful change is best understood as an outcome of these interlinkages rather than any method alone.'[1]

2

Target multiple layers of government

Successful policy engagement and influence happens at many different levels and via many entry points—not only the sectoral ministry but also subnational levels, other ministries, the centre of government, parliaments, and regulatory agencies. There are also different entry points within institutions—a ministry is not a monolith but is made up many departments and units, some of which may provide better entry points for influencing than others.

1. Luttrell, C., & Pellini, A. (2025). *Navigating land reform in the Mekong: lessons from a decade of adaptive policy engagement*. Mekong Region Land Governance project.

3

Take a long-term view…

Priorities shift, alliances change and processes unfold differently each time. Influencing journeys are not linear and may often be experienced as 'two steps forward, three steps back'. Political engagement and influencing is all about playing the long game, and it may take several years or more to reach influencing goals.

'With hindsight, the team realised that it took around five years before they felt that they fully understood the interests and incentives within local authorities.'[2]

4

…and an incremental approach

Adopt a pragmatic stance when setting influencing goals, because compromises will be necessary. Often, small, regular steps are more sustainable than larger, broad-sweep changes.

'Perfection is the enemy of the good. Pursue "good enough" reforms, which are pragmatic and workable.

Incrementally improve reform and don't aim for perfection in the first cycle.'[3]

5

Be prepared and seize the moment

Windows of opportunity can open up unexpectedly and provide new opportunities for influence. Not everything takes five years. Ongoing nurturing of key stakeholder relationships can help identify sudden opportunities for influence that appear over just hours or days.

6

Understand (and explain) the root problem

Successfully explaining and framing the problem means you may be more likely to be called on to find the solution. Political economy analysis can help understand the root of a problem—not only its technical symptoms—and may reveal new entry points for influencing.

2. Thampi, G., & Nixon, N. (2025). *Ride the wind but know the tide: 15 years of politically informed subnational governance reform in Sri Lanka (2005–2020).* Thinking and Working Politically Community of Practice.
3. Oxford Policy Management. (2022) *Learning and Reflection Workshop Report: Reforming Governance in Pakistan: Experiences from SNG and PFM-II* Henderson, S., & Rakhmani, I. (2021) *Independent Strategic Review: Knowledge to Policy (Knowledge Sector) Investments in Indonesia.* Simon Henderson Research Ltd.

7



Use champions (but not exclusively!)

Reform champions are often necessary, but they cannot carry the weight alone. A basic level of wider interest and openness also is a factor.

'For all direct and indirect cases of policy engagement for the Knowledge Sector Initiative, reform champions were a necessary factor.

However, in cases where the proposed reform was not an already established priority and the authority to carry the outcome rested elsewhere, the presence of reform champions was not sufficient.

A minimum level of interest and/or openness about the issue on the part of other, important stakeholders was also important.'[4]

8



Process (really) matters

Understanding the nuts and bolts of the policy process is of fundamental importance, in order to know when and how best to engage—which meeting to target or which document to focus on. And in project design, attention to process details, such as facilitation approaches and relationship-building, can be key elements of successful influencing strategies.

9



Invest in (and use) communications expertise

Both an art and a science, getting your communications right is fundamental to getting the outcome you want. Don't leave it to chance or to the end of the programme but choose to invest in communications resources (human and financial) from the earliest stages of design for any project seeking policy influence.

10



Try, learn and adapt

You won't know what works well in any given context until you try—and even then, the context is constantly shifting. Influencing tactics that work with a government counterpart one year might not work the following year under new leadership. By trying different approaches and constantly learning, you can quickly change course and remain responsive!

'In all the stories we heard, either investing in communications was a success factor, or the need to invest more was a lesson learned.'[5]

4. Echt, L. & Ball, L. (2018) *Think tanks: why and how to support elections.* OnThinkTanks.

Case studies: Achieving policy influence outcomes

There are many possible ways in which you might aim to influence government, depending on what your political economy analysis and stakeholder analysis have shown. When choosing which tactics and approaches to use, it's important to have clear influencing goals in mind. Here we share some examples of common policy influence goals, and the tactics and approaches that have been used to meet them.



LEGEND

Policy engagement outcomes

Our Case studies have been categorised by their policy engaement outcomes. Use the icons to identify which outcome a Case Study was able to achieve.

Budget allocation
Changes in resource allocation (could be in national budget, or at institutional level).

Individual capacity
Changes to individuals' knowledge, skills, attitudes (eg. of civil servants or political actors).

Institutional capacity
Changes to processes, structures and procedures within one institution (eg. Ministry).

Legislation
Change (or no change) in legislation: passing a new law, amending a law, or retaining a law.

Narratives
Changes in discourse: language, rhetoric, framing, and commitments of policy actors.

Participation
Changes in which stakeholders are involved in the policy process and how.

Policy agenda
Change in policy priorities: putting a new issue on the agenda.

Policy content
Change (or no change) in policy, regulation or guideline content.

Reframing or informing
Reframing or informing an existing policy issue.

Relationships
Changing the way stakeholders relate to each other (eg. more coordination or more trust).

Scope of case study

Each Case Study contains information related to the following aspects:

- **Change level**
- **Key activities**
- **Targets of influencing**
- **Country/Region**
- **Policy stage**

1 Influencing the policy agenda

Elevating a previously overlooked issue to the point where decisionmakers acknowledge it as a priority. This might also include shifting how an existing policy issue is framed by, for example, providing evidence or perspectives that can change the focus of the debate or link policy issues in new ways.

CASE STUDY

The power of framing: Producing ASEAN guidelines on the recognition of customary tenure

OVERVIEW

Customary tenure was a politically sensitive topic. It had been pitched by the Mekong River Land Governance (MRLG) project to ASEAN governments in MRLG Phase 1 via a '*land and natural resources*' framing but with only limited traction. In 2019, MRLG tried a different approach: relying on existing trusted relationships, it helped convene a regional multi-stakeholder customary tenure alliance to engage more strategically with ASEAN bodies.

The alliance pivoted its framing away from one seen through a *'sustainability and climate resilient'* lens to one that aligned customary tenure recognition with ASEAN commitments on forestry cooperation and climate change. As part of this, the alliance engaged directly with the ASEAN Working Group on Social Forestry (AWG-SG). This shift led to the inclusion of customary tenure as an explicit target in the Strategic Plan of Action for ASEAN Cooperation on Forestry (2016–25) and subsequently in the Plan of Action for ASEAN Cooperation on Social Forestry (2021–5). From there, the plan was incrementally revised to include developing and producing guidelines, which then went through extensive stakeholder review.

In 2022, the ASEAN Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry formally adopted the ASEAN *Guidelines on Recognition of Customary Tenure in Forested Landscapes*. In 2023, AWG-SF endorsed the *ASEAN Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) Handbook*. Subsequently, the customary tenure alliance turned its efforts to sharing these resources widely across diverse national contexts, including through radio programmes, translations, and training and exchange programmes. Though non-binding, these documents now guide and inspire national-level country-specific approaches.

NOTEWORTHY TACTICS

- Leveraged existing, trusted relationships and entry points between alliance partners and the influencing target.
- Reframed the issue to resonate better with targets, gaining traction with ASEAN policy narratives.
- Shared early findings to inform guidelines, as the full analysis was not finalised until after the development of the guidelines.

SCOPE OF CASE STUDY

Systems | **Evidence brokering, technical advisory, consultations** | **Regional body** | **East Asia (Greater Mekong subregion)** | **Adoption, implementation**

Source: Luttrell, C., & Pellini, A. (2025). Capitalisation of experience: *Navigating land reform in the Mekong: lessons from a decade of adaptive policy engagement*. MRLG.



CASE STUDY

United Nations agencies collaborating for policy influence on sexual and reproductive health

OVERVIEW

Between 2018 and 2021, the 2gether for SRHR (sexual and reproductive health and rights) programme brought together UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO, under the auspices of the UN's *'Delivering as One'* approach, which aims to enhance coordination of UN agencies to ensure they *'speak with one voice'*. Funded by Sida, the programme aimed to create an enabling legal and policy environment to ensure all people (especially young girls) can exercise their sexual and reproductive health rights.

Working through the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the programme advised on the development or revision of laws, provided technical assistance to member countries, and shared learning amongst them. Given the nature of the programme—joint planning across multiple UN agencies—a dedicated coordination team was necessary to ensure that all the agencies were able to work together to coherently use *'one voice'* in influencing and engagement. The programme successfully facilitated six EAC health ministers to adopt a joint commitment on SRHR and 16 SADC Ministers of Health to adopt a shared strategy and scorecard on SRHR.

NOTEWORTHY TACTICS

- Defined and promoted synergies between collaborating agencies early by investing time to identify areas of overlap and complementarity.
- Dedicated and allocated extra resources to joint planning. This is both valuable and resource intensive.
- Clarified roles and responsibilities.
- Recognised that the nuts and bolts matter: administration, procurement, HR and finance teams should be involved from the start to enable effective collaboration amongst agencies.
- Coordinated messaging and speaking with *'one voice'* helps amplify visibility and impact.

''*Delivering as One*' is not one big change that occurs at once—it is many incremental changes, involving people who are committed to moving in the same direction over a period of time and requiring supportive structures and systems.'

Sherman, 2024

SCOPE OF CASE STUDY

Systems

Coordination mechanisms, technical advisory, pledges and declarations, scorecards

Eastern and Southern Africa

Adoption, implementation, monitoring

Source: Sherman, J. (2024) *Delivering as one: learning and insights from 2tgether for SRHR, a regional UN Joint Programme*. 2gether 4 SRHR K

2 Changing or preserving policy content

Targeting the technical content of policy to insert new content, change or reframe existing content, or protect content from dilution. This can involve, for example, influencing the choice of wording, pitching an issue from a new angle to better resonate with policy priorities, creating or changing official guidance, or defending existing policies to prevent them being weakened.

CASE STUDY

Fast-tracking national policy: Rapid response evidence to inform national guidelines in Brazil

OVERVIEW

In 2024, the Secretariat of Social Communication of the Presidency of Brazil wanted to start developing a new approach on children's screen time. The issue was already a high priority, and the Secretariat needed adequate analysis to inform their approach in a very tight timeframe (nine days). A local thinktank, the Veredas Institute, collaborated with government counterparts to co-design research questions and produce an evidence brief.

The brief was circulated amongst government agencies, leading to further research, while a more engaging public version was developed and shared with non-governmental stakeholders. Within six months, this approach led to national action that built on the themes and insights presented in the brief. The government was able to launch a national consultation, publish a national guide for families, and action specific policy measures, such as new legislation banning cell phone use in public schools.

NOTEWORTHY TACTICS

- Responded with agility and speed to tight windows of opportunity for influence.
- Co-designed research questions with policymakers to respond directly to needs.
- Used global benchmarking and lessons from other countries to inspire feasible, actionable policy paths.
- Invested in communications beyond just dissemination: redesigned the product and worked with the media to amplify audience, reach and message.

'We delivered exactly what they wanted to know.'

Veredas Institute, quoted in Africa LEEPs, 2025

SCOPE OF CASE STUDY

Systems | **Evidence brokering, consultations** | **Central government** | **Brazil** | **Adoption**

Source: Africa LEEPS Partnership (2025). *Delivering evidence in 9 days: how a rapid response brief shaped the conversation around screen time in Brazil.*



CASE STUDY

Using a collaborative approach to policy design: Developing weather index insurance in Uganda

OVERVIEW

70% of Ugandans rely on smallholder agriculture. These smallholder farmers face both extreme climate risks, such as droughts, and counterfeit agricultural inputs. Between 2014 and 2016, under the Development and Economic Growth Research Programme (DEGRP), researchers from the University of East Anglia and the Field Lab Uganda, with support from ODI's Evidence and Policy Group, carried out research on how Ugandan farmers perceived and managed risk. The project was able to leverage the window of opportunity provided by strong government interest in agriculture reform at the time.

The findings informed the design and prototyping of an innovative *'bundled'* agricultural insurance scheme. Adopting a highly collaborative, reflective approach, a multidisciplinary team consulted farmers, insurers, local government, and NGOs to help interpret and then translate research findings into accessible, locally relevant lessons and recommendations. One of the results of this participatory approach was the creation of new public–private coordination structures, such as the Agriculture Insurance Consortium.

The weather index insurance was incorporated into Uganda's Agricultural Sector Strategic Plan (2015–2020) as a strategic priority. Launched in 2016 in collaboration with ten insurers, this approach helped raise awareness of the government's adoption of this insurance as a core element of its national insurance scheme. From 2020, *'bundled'* insurance models were digitised and delivered, via apps and village agents, with demand projected to protect over half a million farmers by 2025.

NOTEWORTHY TACTICS

- Developed policy briefs incrementally, testing and refining recommendations with different stakeholder groups via workshops along the way.
- Collaborated with credible intermediaries to support the translation of findings into *'policy language'* and appropriate formats to support uptake of recommendations in policy.
- Took an iterative approach that prioritised different measures at different times, in response to shifting priorities, and to enable the development of scalable models.
- Applied an integrated model combining research with capacity development, relationships, institutional structures and other outcome areas.

SCOPE OF CASE STUDY

Systems | **Evidence brokering, consultations** | **Line ministry** | **Uganda** | **Adoption, implementation**

Source: Sempé, L., Pande, S., Kelly, C., Anwar, H. B., Echt, L., & Jessani, N. (2025). *Evidence-informed policymaking: A conceptual framework.* FCDO, Research Commissioning Centre.

3 Changes in resource allocation

Securing allocation of the financial resources necessary to implement existing policy in practice. This can include influencing the national budget, or institutional-level budgets within a specific ministry, department or agency, to allocate new resources or protect existing resources.

CASE STUDY

Creative framing for change: Sustainable financing for social protection in Ghana

OVERVIEW

UNICEF, in collaboration with social ministries and other stakeholders, including the World Bank, used the new International Monetary Fund (IMF) economic reform programme as an entry point in 2013–2014 to expand a national cash transfer programme which had been shown to be effective in reducing child poverty.

A simulation of the potential impacts of pending reform showed how savings from a proposed decrease in fuel subsidies could expand the cash transfer programme to an additional 500,000 households. It was shown that this redirection of funds could potentially protect the poorest from the impacts of the reform, as well as lifting over 600,000 more people out of poverty.

UNICEF built on this simulation to hold a series of high-level policy dialogues with key stakeholders, including the Minister of Finance, Minister of Social Protection, and the Presidency. These efforts eventually led to a quadrupling of the budget for the cash transfer programme previously funded with an IMF loan, allowing it to grow from 77,000 households in 2013 to over 550,000 households in 2018.

NOTEWORTHY TACTICS

- Piggybacked on an existing, successful economic reform initiative to garner wider support for the government's reform efforts.
- Combined knowledge generation with policy dialogues to get the right information to the right decisionmakers.
- Invested in internal capacity to understand and influence Ministries of Finance, via its 'public finance for children' approach, internal training and sensitisation for staff.

'UNICEF efforts…helped establish sustainably financed social protection as a central component of the government's national development strategy, while contributing to improved efficiency and sustainability of government spending.'

Chai & Yuster, 2017

SCOPE OF CASE STUDY

Systems | **Events, evidence brokering** | **Ministry of Finance** | **Ghana** | **Implementation**

Source: Chai, J., & Yuster, A. (2017). *UNICEF's engagements in influencing domestic public finance for children (PF4C): A global programme framework.* UNICEF

CASE STUDY

Successive political engagement and policy coordination: Child Malnutrition Initiative in Peru

OVERVIEW

In Peru, human development outcomes, especially child malnutrition, had not improved by the mid-2000s despite of a decade of economic growth. Successive governments instituted a range of new social programmes and governance reforms, with the support of the World Bank, UN agencies and development partners.

From 2006, momentum on malnutrition accelerated after a group of civil society organisations, research institutes and development partners formed the Child Malnutrition Initiative to promote public policies and concrete actions to address malnutrition. Understanding that the root causes of this crisis were multi-faceted, the Initiative responded with a cross-sectoral, multi-level, non-partisan approach, and was able to build a shared narrative.

Building on its successful *'5x5x5'* campaign in the 2006 election, which saw ten presidential candidates commit to reducing chronic child malnutrition by 5% in children under five years of age within five years, the Initiative continued to sustain political will and keep malnutrition high on the policy agenda through advocacy and campaigning efforts during two further elections (2011 and 2016).

The Initiative both contributed to and leveraged a window of opportunity created by a series of poverty reduction reforms from 2006. These placed malnutrition within the context of a wider range of policy interventions and a more diverse and devolved government and non-government stakeholder framework. This was complemented by better resourcing via the new results-based budgeting approach, for which malnutrition became a *'testing ground'*.

The Child Malnutrition Initiative also publicly monitored the implementation of government commitments, as well as acting an informal coordination mechanism for channelling inter-agency contributions. This contributed to the wider shift from short-term, disconnected priorities and actions to long-term policy coordination and consistent engagement with civil society. Malnutrition rates fell dramatically in Peru over the period.

In more recent times, however, the gains made have begun to backslide, against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic and the associated economic recession. Researchers have suggested that malnutrition may no longer be perceived by the current government as a cross-sectoral, high-level political priority. Malnutrition rates, which were in rapid decline, have stalled and anemia rates have begun to rise.

NOTEWORTHY TACTICS

- Broadened the policy framing of malnutrition from a single *'health'* issue to a multi-dimensional crisis involving food security, development and poverty.
- Secured and sustained political buy-in across successive administrations by engaging candidates during electoral campaigns.
- Facilitated agreements around a common policy platform and shared goals between government and non-government actors.
- Used public monitoring to ensure that high-level policy commitments were implemented and translated into change on the ground.

SCOPE OF CASE STUDY

Systems

Peru

Coordination mechanisms, networks and coalitions, pledges and declarations, campaigns

Central government, regional body, subnational government

Adoption, implementation, monitoring

Source: Jara, M. (2024). *Child Malnutrition in Peru Driven Up by Poverty and Food Insecurity. ReliefWeb*
Acosta, A. M. & Haddad, L. (2014). *The politics of success in the fight against malnutrition in Peru.* Food Policy, Volume 44, Pages 26-35, ISSN 0306-9192.
Acosta, A. M. (2011). *Analysing Success in the Fight against Malnutrition in Peru - Case study prepared for CARE.* Institute of Development Studies.
World Bank Group. (2018). Results Brief: *Fighting Malnutrition in Peru: Enhancing the Demand for and Supply and Governance of Health and Nutrition in Three Regions.*
Yosef, S. & Goulden, J. 2016. Commitments and accountability: *Peru's unique nutrition journey. In: Nourishing millions: Stories of change in nutrition.*

4 Changing participation in the policy process

Changing which stakeholders are involved in the policymaking process and how. This can include, for example, ensuring that the expertise of specific groups or the lived experiences of marginalised communities are routinely integrated into policymaking consultation and decision-making processes.

CASE STUDY

Beyond personal networks: Indonesia Development Forum

OVERVIEW

In 2017, early contextual diagnostics in Indonesia revealed that policymakers lacked formal multi-stakeholder channels for engagement with evidence and tended to rely on personal networks for research and analysis. To resolve this, the Knowledge Sector Initiative partnered with the Ministry of National Development Planning to launch the first annual Indonesia Development Forum, in 2017. These annual forums were national events (held up until the 2024 election) that enabled interaction between policymakers, policy analysts, researchers and other stakeholders. The forums were timed to coincide with official policy and planning cycles.

By 2021, the Ministry had assumed nearly full financial and organisational responsibilities for the forums—reducing donor funding from 95% to 5%—and established permanent standard operating procedures and an annual budget allocation for them. Evaluations suggested the events informed national planning processes and led to wider stakeholder interaction.

NOTEWORTHY TACTICS

- Focused on providing evidence and information, as well as practical application of the findings, through alignment with government timing and decision-making windows.
- Targeted activities based on an early contextual diagnostic.
- Embedded a new formal multi-stakeholder dialogue platform into routine government process, supplementing existing coordination spaces by bringing in new perspectives and spurring new informal connections at/around the events.

SCOPE OF CASE STUDY

Institutions | **Events, evidence brokering** | **Central government** | **Indonesia** | **Adoption**

Source: Henderson, S. & Rakhmani, I. (2021) *Independent Strategic Review: Knowledge to Policy (Knowledge Sector) Investments in Indonesia*
Knowledge Sector Initiative (2022) *The Knowledge Sector Initiative Project Completion Report - Volume 1 - Main Report*. Knowledge Sector Initiative.



CASE STUDY

Institutionalising interaction: Utafiti Sera policy engagement 'houses' in East Africa

OVERVIEW

Building on its long experience of navigating research and policy in several African countries, the Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR) developed the Utafiti Sera model. PASGR and its partners now host eight Utafiti Sera *'houses'* across the region that serve as facilitated, multi-stakeholder spaces for identifying priorities, exploring evidence and applying it to live policy issues. The Utafiti Sera approach to policy engagement emphasises understanding of the political economy environment, effective communications, strategic timing and relationship-building.

In Nairobi, the Urban Governance Utafiti Sera House is hosted by the Pamoja Trust, bringing together the Urban Roads Authority, Council of Governors, and National Highway Authority, alongside civil society organisations and academic institutions. It is organised into thematic groups, each led by government actors.

Through this *'house'*, new stakeholder partnerships have been forged and the evidence gathered has informed a new Strategic Planning Framework for urban areas. The approach has also led to the institutionalisation of a new stakeholder engagement model first introduced by the Urban Roads Authority, which has since been adopted by multiple government agencies.

NOTEWORTHY TACTICS

- Understood the political economy of policy reform and invested in identifying the root causes of problems.
- Aligned findings with policy issues, priorities and windows of opportunities to influence stakeholders.
- Invested in strategic communications and picked the right moment to target influence.
- Facilitated participatory processes with thoughtfulness, inclusion and attention.
- Secured buy-in through trusted, adaptable and longstanding relationships, through government champions.

'Utafiti Sera's policy engagement house on urban governance found that, when they used a participatory, problem-driven approach to investigate the root causes of policy problems, 'land' came out as a root cause of most of the issues identified... It was deliberated that key land stakeholders should not be left out when it comes to infrastructure matters.'

Utafiti Sera, 2018

SCOPE OF CASE STUDY

Institutions | **Events, evidence brokering** | **Central government** | **Africa, Kenya** | **Adoption, implementation**

Source: Kaketch, J. (2024). *Reflections on Utafiti Sera Journey: Important Lessons from the Utafiti Sera Houses [blog post]. Utafiti Sera*
Utafiti Sera (2018). *First Utafiti Sera Forum Report: Urban Governance and City Transformation in Kenya.*

5 Passing, amending or retaining laws and regulations

Focusing on the legislation and regulations which enact policy, whether through national parliament/congress or subnational legislative bodies. This can involve a bill being successfully enacted or improved through amendments or protecting it from being repealed.

CASE STUDY

Multi-level stakeholder engagement: ‘Our Land is our Future’ pledge in Sierra Leone

OVERVIEW

In Sierra Leone, over 95% of the land is held under customary tenure, adult literacy sits at 49% and intimidating legal processes have historically excluded local communities from exercising their customary land rights. This challenge led to the country’s experiment with *‘community paralegals’*, who provided direct legal support to hundreds of communities, addressing environmental injustices, negotiating fair lease agreements and securing community land rights.

Between 2019 and 2020, draft bills on customary land rights were crafted and debated in various environments, bringing together women’s groups, chiefs, landowners, land users, youth groups, local council officials, government ministers, civil society organisations and the media. Storytelling from people with lived experiences of environmental degradation meant that community leaders were able to secure a unified land reform pledge from 17 political parties, ahead of national elections.

Subsequently, in August 2022, Sierra Leone’s parliament enacted one of the most progressive pieces of legislation on customary land rights. This law provides for the *‘protection of customary land rights, the elimination of discrimination under customary law and the management and administration of customary land’*. The law provides a means to positively transform the way the vast majority of the country’s land is held, transferred, managed and protected.

NOTEWORTHY TACTICS

- Used a systems change approach, adopting a long-term, persistent view.
- Involved communities in leading these campaigns. This led to increased and sustained engagement in forums, making sure that communities were able to shape the policy discourse themselves.
- Trained non-lawyers drawn from within communities as paralegals to ensure that support was embedded within the communities from the start.
- Ensured diversity amongst stakeholders to ensure that the real issues surfaced and a more comprehensive approach was applied when drafting the bill.
- Mapped out the influencing strategy based on the actor, the desired outcome, their interest, their incentives and how best to influence them.

SCOPE OF CASE STUDY

Systems **Parliament** **Sierra Leone** **Adoption, implementation, monitoring**

Campaigning and advocacy, pledges and declarations, communications

Source: Burns, T., d’Andrea, C., Kitchell, E., Tanner, C., & Meadows, J. (2025) Presentation at the World Bank Land Conference 2025: *Navigating political economies to strengthen land governance for climate action.*

Conteh, S., & Maru, V. (2023). *How Sierra Leone enacted one of the most progressive land, climate, and environmental justice laws in the world*. Environmental Justice.

CASE STUDY

The power of persistence: CIFOR-ICRAF's role in shaping Ethiopia's forestry sector

OVERVIEW

The Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF) sought to support reform in Ethiopia's forestry sector to ensure that communities could benefit from sustainable conservation of the existing forests. For over two decades, CIFOR-ICRAF implemented a long-term, multi-pronged engagement strategy that combined capacity building, evidence brokering and direct technical advisory. This strategy supported an enabling environment for policy reform, with actions that included action research and co-developing university curricula within a centre of excellence and knowledge hub, brokering evidence through knowledge products, and providing direct technical advisory during legislative drafting.

This sustained presence helped inform and accelerate a series of documented reforms, including the following: a revised definition of national forests, including dry-forest biomes, submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2016; the 2018 Forest Proclamation 1065/2018, which included concepts relating to participatory forest management; the 2024 Forest Regulation, which enshrines an 80% carbon revenue share for local communities; and the enactment of the Green Legacy and Landscape Restoration Special Fund, which authorised the channelling of 0.5–1% of the federal government's domestic revenue to restoration.

NOTEWORTHY TACTICS

- Invested in local research/education capacity early to build credible national champions.
- Built long-term relational trust and legitimacy with government partners (often through low-profile, 'backseat' facilitation).
- Produced targeted policy briefs, annotated texts and comparative legal analyses (and field demonstration summaries) to translate evidence into policy-ready inputs for decision points and consultations.
- Embedded reforms within institutional design and clarified mandates to sustain action beyond individuals.
- Promoted and contributed to dedicated financing to link legal and policy reform to implementation at scale.
- Maintained adaptive learning through successive institutional and political transitions.

'[Ethiopia's] institutional environment related to forestry has been evolving since 2013, from ministry to commission to now the Ethiopian Forestry Development (EFD). EFD needed a clear legal mandate from the Council of Ministers. CIFOR-ICRAF supported us to draft that mandate, drawing on best practices and lessons learned from other countries, and facilitating consultations among key stakeholders.'

EFD, quoted in Rouge, 2025

SCOPE OF CASE STUDY

Systems, institutions, individual

Ministry of Finance, line ministry, subnational government

Ethiopia

Adoption, implementation, monitoring

Events, coordination mechanisms, evidence brokering, technical advisory, networks and coalitions, internal structures, consultations, training

Source: Rouge, J.-C. (2025). *From research to reform: Assessment of CIFOR-ICRAF's role in shaping Ethiopia's forestry sector* CIFOR-ICRAF.

6 Changes to institutional capacities and processes

Modifying the internal ways of working within government that shape how policies are drafted, implemented, monitored and evaluated. This can involve, for example, influencing standard operating procedures within a ministry or creating a new unit, but also less tangible changes like shifts in collective working patterns or cultures within an institution.

CASE STUDY

Leveraging existing platforms: Nutrition scorecard in Nigeria

OVERVIEW

Nigerian state governors had made a joint commitment to tackle the country's malnutrition crisis, including through increased financing. In 2021, the Nigeria Governors Forum, a platform providing a meeting space for all 36 governors, adapted a scorecard approach previously used in health to monitor the implementation of this commitment. The scorecard was developed by the Governors Forum in collaboration with partners, such as Alive & Thrive, using a participatory process which included stakeholder consultations and workshops.

Reviews of the scorecard were incorporated into monthly meetings, and the results were shared publicly. After three rounds (2022), the scorecard was adopted and expanded nationally by the National Council on Nutrition and included new indicators to reflect the intersection of nutrition with other sectors.

By 2025, remarkable policy outcomes had been achieved. All 36 states had a functional state committee on nutrition, up from only five states. Nutrition departments were established in seven federal ministries, departments and agencies, creating the potential for federal funding flows. Eight states passed new legislation on nutrition, compared to three at the start of the scorecard. Additionally, nutrition-specific budget lines were introduced in both state and federal budgets.

NOTEWORTHY TACTICS

- Adapted trusted tools that had worked in other sectors.
- Invested in communications and presentation for buy-in, including explicit identification of the targeted users and goals of influencing.
- Tapped into peer learning and competitive incentives to drive progress.
- Integrated into policymakers' existing meeting/dialogue spaces.
- Pinpointed cross-sectoral linkages.

SCOPE OF CASE STUDY

Systems

Pledges and declarations, internal structures, scorecards

State governors

Africa, Nigeria

Monitoring

Source: Africa LEEPS Partnership (2025). *Red light, green light: how a scorecard turned data into progress in Nigeria*.
Oreh, C. et al. (2020). *The Nigeria Governors' Forum Nutrition Scorecard*

7 Changing individuals' knowledge, skills or attitudes

These changes are targeted at individuals within government—either civil servants, high-level decisionmakers/political appointees, or both. This might involve, for example, deepening these individuals' knowledge about a policy issue, or increasing their practical skills in regard to strengthening the formulation and implementation of policy.

CASE STUDY

Tackling the root cause: Training local government in facilitation approaches in Sri Lanka

OVERVIEW

As part of a subnational governance programme spanning 15 years and several donor-funded projects, the Asia Foundation's Sri Lanka team worked in partnership with the Ministry of Local Government and Provincial Councils and the Sri Lanka Institute of Local Governance to develop a training initiative to improve how local officials engage with citizens. Through a problem-driven approach to understanding how capacity issues affected accountability, the team was able to identify and address a root issue: while local governments were officially required to conduct participatory processes, limited attention to the *'soft skills'* required to do this effectively meant that in practice this was largely tokenistic.

Drawing on lessons from the Asia Foundation's experience in the Philippines, the initiative introduced the *'Technology of Participation'* approach, blending 'soft' skills (such as communication, negotiation and other interpersonal skills and behaviours) in ways that could complement 'hard' technical skills like digital budgeting. The approach was delivered by local facilitators from within government, as well as civil society organisations and other non-government agencies.

Implemented between 2005 and 2009—a period that coincided with the end of the civil war in Sri Lanka—this programme was introduced in 35 local authorities, successfully widening and deepening stakeholder participation in annual planning and budgeting cycles. In 2008, the model's proven effectiveness led to its subsequent extension to the national level and project partners co-published a facilitation guide based on the *'Technology of Participation'* techniques.

NOTEWORTHY TACTICS

- Built on existing trusted relationships with local governments.
- Used capacity assessment to understand the incentives that were at the root of the problem, and tailored interventions to respond to these.
- Included a *'soft skills'* approach to learning design to complement *'hard skills'*.
- Invested in thoughtful, participatory facilitation approaches in the delivery of training, including the selection of trainers to enhance legitimacy and credibility at the local level.

SCOPE OF CASE STUDY

Institutions, individual | **Training** | **Subnational government** | **Sri Lanka**

Source: Thampi, G., & Nixon, N. (2025). *Ride the wind but know the tide: 15 years of politically informed subnational governance reform in Sri Lanka (2005–2020).* Thinking and Working Politically Community of Practice and the Asia Foundation.

Land Facility
Decision Support Unit

As the Land Facility's learning partner, the Decision Support Unit facilitates knowledge production and exchange within and beyond the programme to support adaptive decision making for land governance.



Useful practical resources

ODI · "ROMA (RAPID Outcome Mapping Approach): A Guide to Policy Engagement and Influence"

EXPLORE

LSE · **"**Activism, Influence and Change Programme"

EXPLORE

Oxfam · "Influencing for Impact Guide: How to Deliver Effective Influencing Strategies"

EXPLORE

Abt CIFOR World Agroforestry CADMUS UK International Development
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