

# TOOLS FOR EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY MAKING



**INASP**

International Network

---

for the Availability of Scientific Publications



# TOOLS FOR EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY MAKING

---

Published by:  
INASP  
6o St Aldates  
Oxford OX1 1ST  
United Kingdom

t: +44 (0)1865 249909

f: +44 (0)1865 251060

email: [inasp@inasp.info](mailto:inasp@inasp.info)

web: [www.inasp.info](http://www.inasp.info)

Charity No. 1106349

Company No. 04919576

© International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications  
(INASP), 2011

INASP publications terms of use:

The INASP mission is to enable worldwide access to information and we, therefore, welcome re-use of our materials for non-commercial purposes. Please credit INASP when you download and use our materials.

We publish under the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial  
ShareAlike License. <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0>

# Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Training to Use Research Evidence	9
Networking for Evidence-Informed Policy Making	19
Advocating for Evidence-Informed Policy Making	31



# Introduction

INASP works with partners to support global research communication through innovation, networking and capacity strengthening. We focus on the needs of developing and emerging countries.

The second, five-year phase of INASP's Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERii), works with partners to support global research communication through knowledge exchange, network building and capacity strengthening.

PERii consists of 5 key components: Evidence-Informed Policy Making (EIPM), ICT Training, Information Delivery, Library Development, and Publishing Support.

The EIPM component aims to promote uptake of research evidence in the policy making process through enhancing the capacity of various actors to access and use information. As capacity strengthening is a key aim, we use local expertise and make sure our activities are sustainable.

Through EIPM, we enable and support training, networking and advocacy for evidence-informed policy making.



# What is evidence informed policy?

When we talk about research policy we are usually talking about one of two things:

## 1. *Research informed policy*

This is where results from research are taken into account during the policy formulation process.

For example, research which shows the most effective way to distribute bednets could inform the government's anti-malaria strategy.

## 2. *Policy for research*

These are the policies which determine how research is done and can cover the areas of ethics or science funding etc.

Examples of this kind of policy would be policy that regulates government spending on research; or policies governing the proper way to get informed-consent.

As you can see, *Research informed policies* and *policies for research* are two very different things. Understanding which of these areas you are trying to influence is crucial when choosing the right strategy. We work with partners to achieve the first point, feeding research into the policy making process.

In the following pages there are examples of activities and programmes that can help you develop strategies to promote evidence informed policy making. These are by no means exhaustive but hopefully can begin to give you an insight into the various options available in this area.





# TRAINING TO USE RESEARCH EVIDENCE

---

A brief guide to effective training techniques

This section aims to highlight ways of improving training in the use of research in policy making. Researchers, intermediaries and politicians at all levels should be engaged in an active conversation to promote the sharing of ideas.

# 1



## Identify Training Needs and Wants

We are usually better at identifying what we want than what we need — often we don't even know the gaps in our understanding.

- Ask specific questions. Rather than asking a parliamentary librarian what their information searching needs are, ask how they found information before. What resources (websites, books, databases) did they use? What search terms? You can use this information to identify gaps in capacity.
- Don't just rely on stakeholder consultation. Consider using alternative, more objective research methods (for example, you could have policy briefs anonymously peer-reviewed to assess information quality).

"Whereas before I thought of myself as being comparatively 'street wise' and 'savvy'... as far as ICTs are concerned, my shallowness and naïveté in this medium have been exposed."

Workshop participant,  
Information Literacy Training at the Parliament of  
Zimbabwe

# 2

## Have a realistic agenda

An ambitious agenda can be a good thing, but overloading your audience can be worse than none at all.

- Don't try to cover everything
- It is more effective to focus on a small topic and cover it well
- Take breaks and pace yourself
- Always review the last session before moving on



# 3



## Engage, don't lecture

Issues that are debated and discussed are more likely to stick than those lectured. Engaging the audience can make a significant difference to the impact of a workshop.

- Rather than giving people facts, consider asking them a question. You may be surprised by how much they know already and they may even think of answers you had not considered!
- Allow room for questions and answers
- Make training participatory through group activities and debates

"My approach to training in our institution will definitely change since I learnt so much regarding adult learning and participatory training."

Librarian, Parliament of Zimbabwe  
after Training of trainers workshop in Information Literacy

# 4

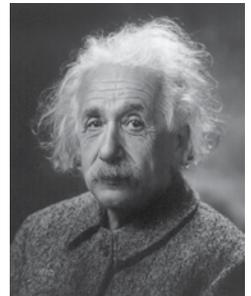
## Don't depend on technology

Technology can help convey a point, but don't lose the message in the medium.

- Sometimes complex ideas are best communicated with a pen and paper
- The more complex the technology, the more potential for technical difficulties
- Flashy or distracting technology can obscure the point you are trying to convey — remember, it is only a medium

“Make everything as simple as possible but not simpler.”

Albert Einstein



# What needs to be covered when training in...

## Information literacy

- How to recognise where information is needed to influence a decision
- Where to find reliable sources of information and using the internet to source information
- How to judge the quality of information
- How to apply information to a defined problem and incorporate the information into your knowledge base
- An understanding of the legal, ethical, social and copyright issues surrounding the information accessed



# Understanding science

## *Why policy makers should care about science and research*

Appropriate use of research can enrich the policy making process by reducing the risk of implementing flawed policies.

## *The scientific method*

Scientists in all fields work within a clear set of principles broadly called the scientific method.

## *Understanding statistics*

Understanding if the right statistical method has been used helps us judge the quality of any research.

## *Understanding peer-review*

Research published in academic journals goes through a rigorous process of peer-review to determine if it is of sufficient quality to be published.

## *Scientific consensus*

Some topics have broad scientific consensus such as evolution or climate change. Understanding the gaps in knowledge and the controversies allows us to better use research evidence.

## *Sources of good accessible research*

The internet is an abyss of information. Knowing where to go for clear, unbiased and accessible information is an important skill.

## *The importance of local scientific expertise*

Making use of local scientific expertise is very important in gaining a regional perspective.

## Writing skills

Many people think that they need to make their writing complicated in order to be impressive. In fact, simple, clear writing is much more likely to make an impact.

### *Bad writing*

- is pompous
- uses long complicated words
- uses too many words
- is confusing
- is misleading

### *Good writing*

- is easy to understand
- is well structured
- is no longer than it needs to be



# Useful sources of information

The INASP website features a number of free materials available to download. There are also links to other sources of information and guidelines on training.

[www.inasp.info/resources](http://www.inasp.info/resources)

## **SciDev.Net**

SciDev.Net – the Science and Development Network – is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to providing reliable and authoritative information about science and technology for the developing world.

[www.scidev.net](http://www.scidev.net)

## **Sense About Science**

Sense About Science are a charitable trust that equips people to make sense of scientific and medical claims in public discussion.

<http://www.senseaboutscience.org.uk/>

If you would like to work with INASP to develop your own training resources, please contact:

Alexander Ademokun ([aademokun@inasp.info](mailto:aademokun@inasp.info))



# NETWORKING FOR EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY MAKING

---

*A brief guide to networking activities that promote evidence-informed policy making*

This section highlights ways of promoting the use of research in policy making by making use of innovative networking opportunities. Researchers, intermediaries and politicians at all levels should be engaged in an active conversation to promote the sharing of ideas.

We propose different models and tips that can be easily adapted to your regional needs. Most of these models need an initial push to get started and people that are willing to sustain it. If you would like to get involved, please contact INASP to see how we can support you.

# Why should researchers and policy makers interact?

## It strengthens policy

Networking events provide a space where ideas can be presented and fed into thinking without the pressure of making formal presentations. Policy makers who have good links to researchers and research intermediaries are able to call on them to get up-to-date factual information when they need it.

In addition, interacting with researchers can give policy makers a better understanding of research processes which can help them to think critically about a range of policy issues.

## It improves research

Researchers who understand policy making can ensure their research is relevant to the country's priorities and talking to policy makers may give them new perspectives on their approach. It can be very satisfying for researchers to have the opportunity to influence key decisions using their knowledge and expertise.



# Who should network and with whom?



## Scientists/Researchers

Should engage more with the public and policy makers to communicate what they do. It is not enough to publish academic papers. To have real influence non-academics must understand how research is done and why it is important.



## Politicians

Must take strides to ensure policies are not framed by ideology alone. They should seek opportunities to engage with researchers. If they do not understand the research, they should demand a clear and concise explanation.



## Intermediary organisations

NGOs, CSOs, universities and think-tanks have a responsibility to demonstrate the use of evidence in decision making. This builds credibility and promotes understanding.

# How?

## Café Scientifique

Café Scientifique is a place where, for the price of a cup of tea or coffee, anyone can come to explore the latest ideas in science and technology. Meetings take place in cafés, bars, restaurants and even theatres, but always outside of the traditional academic context.



They usually involve a short talk from a researcher or science journalist on an issue of public interest, followed by an informal discussion, usually audience driven, to find out what the public really wants to know.

It provides a forum to ask questions you may think are 'stupid' but may be very insightful. It also uses a flexible model that can be set up in your area and adapted to local needs.

To find out more about the concept, or if you need help setting up your café, contact:

[www.cafescientifique.org/startacafe.htm](http://www.cafescientifique.org/startacafe.htm)

"The public are very interested in seeing the interface between research and policy, i.e. when we used to have scientists only the public would ask questions like why isn't there a policy on this... so we started bringing in people from government who would speak on existing policy etc..."

Juliette Mutheu  
Organiser of Kenyan Café Scientifique

## Scientist pairing schemes

The scheme works by pairing researchers with policy makers (eg: MPs or civil servants). It aims to allow both sides to understand the framework within which the other works and identify ways to work together.

It is a two-way process. Policy makers learn how research is done, while researchers learn about the realities of political processes.

If you need help, information or advice on setting up a scheme in your country please contact Alexander Ademokun:  
[aademokun@inasp.info](mailto:aademokun@inasp.info)

“This scheme, to me, is a great initiative that will positively impact the lives of Ugandans especially in rural areas... It is my wish that such projects between scientists and politicians are encouraged and expanded so that rural communities can benefit from the knowledge of this country’s scientists. It will, I suppose, also give politicians a sense of fulfilment in seeing their constituents benefit from such schemes.”

Dr Da Silva  
Vice-Chancellor Strathmore University, Kenya

# FameLab

FameLab is a competition modelled on the Pop Idol television series (with judges coming from academia and the media) to find the new voices of science and engineering communication. Contestants explain a scientific concept to the panel and are judged not only on their ability to communicate science in a clear way, but also on being engaging and entertaining.

Over the past five years FameLab has been running in the UK in partnership with NESTA, the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts. It is also supported internationally by the British Council.

Policy makers/influencers could be included in this format as invited guests or as members of the judging panel.



For information or advice on setting up a FameLab type event in your region please contact FameLab International, a collaboration between FameLab and the British Council:

<http://famelab.org/famelab-international.html>

# The World Café

World Cafés allow discussion of socially relevant topics within an informal but engaging setting. They involve small groups of 4-5 people discussing a particular problem for about 30 minutes.

At the end of the first round one person stays at the table to 'host' while the others swap tables carrying with them the key outcomes of the discussion. They then share this with other tables. Meanwhile the table host welcomes in others with new perspectives.



On the third round everyone returns to their original tables thus bringing in new insight to the original discussion. This is followed by a general town-hall style discussion and sharing.

For help setting up your own café go to:

[www.theworldcafe.com/involved.htm](http://www.theworldcafe.com/involved.htm)

## Online networking

Online networks are very popular and it seems everybody is involved in them, but there are a number of things to consider when using online networks. There are different platforms available for online networking such as *LinkedIn* and *Facebook*.

However, there are other networks listed below that focus on specific areas. For links to these networks, see page 29.

- *AuthorAID* focuses on mentoring and research communication
- *Research and Media network* is a site for journalists, researchers and others who work in science, health, environment, agriculture and sustainable development
- *Communication for Development* is a professional platform for sharing news and information
- *Evidence-Based Policy for Development Network* is a worldwide community of practice for think tanks, policy research institutes and similar organisations working in international development.

**When setting up an online network you need to ask...**



*Will an online network really meet your needs?*

There were 126 million blogs on the internet at the end of 2009 (as tracked by BlogPulse). How many blogs are actively read?

*Does another platform already do what you want well?*

Don't go reinventing the wheel. If another network does what you want then join it. You also have a ready made audience.

*Is there a need for the network?*

You need to consider if the goal you are trying to achieve can be more effectively reached by other methods.

*Is there is a critical mass of participants?*

Don't presume that if you build it they will come. People are already involved in myriad online networks and are not necessarily keen to sign up for yet another one. Before you start make sure you know your audience.

*Will people be proactive in using it?*

For an online network to be successful it needs engagement. The success of any network depends on its users being engaged with it.

# Other networking opportunities

- Fellowship programmes to allow researchers and influencers to conduct cross-disciplinary research by bringing them together to tackle a common issue. This provides a space where a socially relevant issue can be tackled from two sides – the political and the academic hopefully producing more balanced and robust outcomes.
- Incorporating sessions at research conferences dedicated to communicating to policy makers, influencers and the general public. This is a very important and often overlooked part of academic conferences. Most research is publicly funded and it is imperative that the public gets a sense of what is being achieved. It also encourages people to engage more broadly with research.
- Engaging with the public through newspaper articles and letters to the editor. Add research to the social discourse by writing articles reviewing the latest developments in your area. It demonstrates relevancy but also allows you to interact with a much wider audience.



A network is only as useful as its active members. Think about potential internet access issues of your target audience. Is your network too bandwidth intensive?

# List of useful websites and contacts

Café Scientifique

[www.cafescientifique.org](http://www.cafescientifique.org)

World Café

[www.theworldcafe.com](http://www.theworldcafe.com)

Famelab

[www.famelab.org](http://www.famelab.org)

## Online networks

AuthorAID

[www.authoraaid.info](http://www.authoraaid.info)

Research and Media Network

<http://researchandmedia.ning.com/>

Communications for Development (C4D) Network

<http://c4dnetwork.ning.com/>

Evidence-Based Policy in Development Network

<http://www.ebpdn.org/>

## Online networking platforms

Ning

[www.ning.com](http://www.ning.com)

Wordpress

[www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com)

Blogspot

[www.blogspot.com](http://www.blogspot.com)



# ADVOCATING FOR EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICY MAKING

---

A brief guide to effective promotion and advocacy methods

This section highlights ways of promoting the use of research in policy making by successfully advocating for change. Researchers, intermediaries and politicians at all levels should be engaged in an active conversation to promote the sharing of ideas.



**Campaigning**



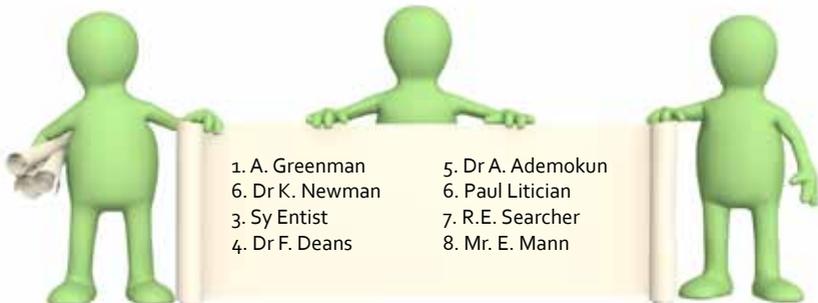
**Focus groups**



**Letter Writing**



**Lobbying**



1. A. Greenman
2. Dr K. Newman
3. Sy Entist
4. Dr F. Deans
5. Dr A. Ademokun
6. Paul Lician
7. R.E. Searcher
8. Mr. E. Mann

**Petitions**

# Stimulating demand

## Know your message

*What are you trying to change?*

Are you lobbying for greater use of evidence in policy making in general or are you lobbying for a particular policy outcome? Advocating the use of research evidence is not the same as advocating the use of *your* research evidence.

*Why are you trying to change this?*

Is there a specific project where you feel research could improve the outcomes? Is there a project where the use of evidence has led to a better outcome? You need to be sharing these.

## Share your message

*Who do you need to speak with to ensure change?*

Think about the range of policy makers and influencers involved. These could include government officials and staff; parliamentary officials and staff; relevant civil society organisations, etc.

The person you need to influence might not necessarily be the person with the job title you expect. Understand the organisation you are trying to influence.

# Understand the limitations of research

## *Understand the constraints politicians work under*

Decision making by policy makers is governed by a lot more than evidence. As such evidence alone cannot be the basis of every policy. Other factors including cost, ideology, political expediency and urgency play a role. Understanding the context within which policy is made would allow you to better highlight useful research.

## *Use opportunities wisely*

When you have an opportunity to influence change, such as a networking opportunity, do not spend the time defining new problems. Focus on solutions to the problems that already exist.

Show how your proposals and solutions will help respond to the needs of those you are trying to influence.

## *Understand the other side of the argument*

There isn't always one simple solution. Show you understand the alternative research evidence — both advantages and disadvantages. Politicians that demand research are often faced with conflicting evidence. Communicating differences in methodology, for example, is a good way to explain conflicting results.

“Science has been demystified - in particular as a result of the session on science publications. I work with the women’s caucus who are interested in maternal mortality. Now I know sites I can go to, to get policy briefs to give to them.”

Public relations officer  
Ghana Parliament after Information Literacy workshop

# Communicating research evidence

There can be no demand if the relevant authorities are unaware of the research — use networking opportunities to highlight research being produced where there is local research expertise. Highlight academic institutions, think tanks, civil society organisations and departments producing good quality research locally.

## *Make it relevant!*

There is no point promoting research without context. Highlight the relevance of the work to specific policy issues. For example the role of energy science expertise in climate based policy making

Researchers should invite politicians to public lectures and politicians should invite researchers to public debates on relevant issues.

## *Make it accessible*

Researchers should not shroud their work in complexity. It benefits everyone if policy makers understand research methods and findings. They should also be clear and honest about any limitations to their research.

Policy makers should not be ashamed to admit they don't understand a research issue. If they are confused by an issue, they should demand a clearer explanation from researchers and research intermediaries. It is their duty to the general public to ensure they understand relevant issues so that they can make informed policy decisions.

# Use the right medium

Petitions might be a simple way to get signatures but is it relevant to what you are trying to change?

Can I better get my point across to a wider audience by writing an opinion piece in a newspaper?

Using an online medium is an easy way to get 'e-signatures' but are you really changing opinion or engaging with the right audience?

Engage with the broader discourse. If you see something factually incorrect in the public sphere (such as in a newspaper), don't just complain about it. Write to the paper and point to the relevant evidence.

Build relationships, don't burn bridges. Just because you disagree on a particular issue now does not mean you will disagree on the next issue that comes up.



# Useful links

*African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP)*

<http://www.afidep.org>

*Overseas Development Institute (ODI)*

Understanding the links between policy and practice

<http://www.odi.org.uk/work/programmes/rapid/work-advisory.asp>

*World Health Organisation (WHO)*

Evidence-Informed Policy Network

<http://www.who.int/rpc/evipnet/en/>





