

# Some tips on writing policy briefs

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# What is a policy brief?

A short publication presenting a set of insights from your research and/or analysis that you think should be taken into account in a specific area of policy-making

# What's in a brief?

- Policy messages
- Title
- Arguments and evidence
- Graphics, statistics and tables (optional)

# Policy messages

- The heart of the brief – and the campaign
- Tailor to audience, policy process
- Hone them
- Write them first

# Titles

- Short and clear
- About the policy issue, not the research
- A promise
- Questions make good titles

# Arguments and evidence – the body of the brief

- Good first paragraph
- Persuasive arguments
- Provide evidence
- Establish credibility
- Map the (direct) route to your policy messages

# Language and style

- Plain
  - Clear
  - “The above mentioned issue is one that is widely considered to be of substantial importance.”
  - No jargon
- = “It is important.”

# Keep paragraphs short

- No more than 120 words
- Good writing discipline
- Look better



# Avoid abbreviations

- Unless
  - they are very familiar (e.g. AU, ECOWAS, CO<sub>2</sub>)
  - They save *a lot* of reading work
- (Nearly) always spell them out on first use:
- "Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)"

# Graphics

- Can be very useful, but ...
- They must tell part of your story
- They must look good
- They must be easy to read

# Numbers and tables

- Statistics can
  - encapsulate the story
  - add evidence and credibility
- They can also
  - Be a distraction
  - Make a text unreadable
- So use them with caution

# Don't forget to mention ...

- Author
- Funder
- Project or paper where insights come from

# WHAT COMES NEXT?

# Get help

- Ask for advice
- Ask for comments on your draft
- Get editing help and graphics help
  
- Talk to policy-makers
- Read around

# Delivery

- Policy messages, not brief
- Policy brief plus ...
  - Social media, videos, press releases, seminars, meetings, blogs, OpEds ...
- Share it with partners and allies
- Write the brief first

# Four messages to take away

- Policy briefs are about policy
- It all starts with policy messages
- Keep it simple
- Don't just write: deliver



**THANKS!**