How can we monitor and evaluate policy influence?

Toolkit Nº3

Establishing the basis for the M&E strategy

This toolkit is part of a series addressing the various steps to be followed in the process of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of policy influence.

Once we have produced the diagnosis and with a summary of its findings in hand we can begin to make decisions, and to outline the general strategy which will guide us in the design of the M&E process. The strategy basically consists on establishing the **(I) levels** as well as the **(II) objectives** on which the M&E effort will be focused, since both are clearly related. It is important to detect what influence objectives are to be used as a working base, since these are what guide the actions and determine precisely what is to be observed and measured.

Objectives	Project	Products
		Activities
		Impact
	Programs	Products
		Activities
		Impact
	Organization	Products
		Activities
		Impact

(I) Levels

Do we apply the M&E system to **I) a specific project, II) an organization program/area, or III) to the overall influence of the institution?** Naturally, evaluating the general impact of the research produced by the organization differs from monitoring and evaluating the influence a specific project with specific time duration. When we choose the level to be monitored and evaluated we will also have to define, within each one, what component/s we will observe: **products, activities, and impact.**

Products: tangible results of a project, program or institute: publications (policy briefs, work documents, etc.), use of new technologies (Internet, blogs, networks, etc.) or press notes, for example.

Activities: interventions carried out within the project, program or by the institution to influence policy. For example, public campaigns, seminars, training of officials, courses, etc.

Impact: changes in attitudes and beliefs, knowledge and interest, behaviors of public officials and other relevant stakeholders of policy processes, as well as in procedures or content of public policies (Weyrauch, 2011). Measuring impact is one of the most difficult tasks considering the complexity of the context in which we are working. Nevertheless, and according to Lindquist (2001), we can identify three major types of influence:

Types of influence	Examples
Expanding policy capacities	Improving the date/knowledge of certain actors
	Supporting the recipients to develop innovative ideas
	Improving capabilities to communicate
	Developing new talent for research and analysis
Broadening policy horizons	Providing opportunities for networking/learning with colleagues elsewhere
	Introducing new concepts to frame debates, putting ideas on the agenda, or stimulating public debate.
	Educating researchers and others who take up new positions with broader understanding of issues
	Stimulating dialogue between decision-makers
Affecting policy regimes	Modifying existing programs or policies
	Fundamentally re-designing programs or policies

(II) Objectives

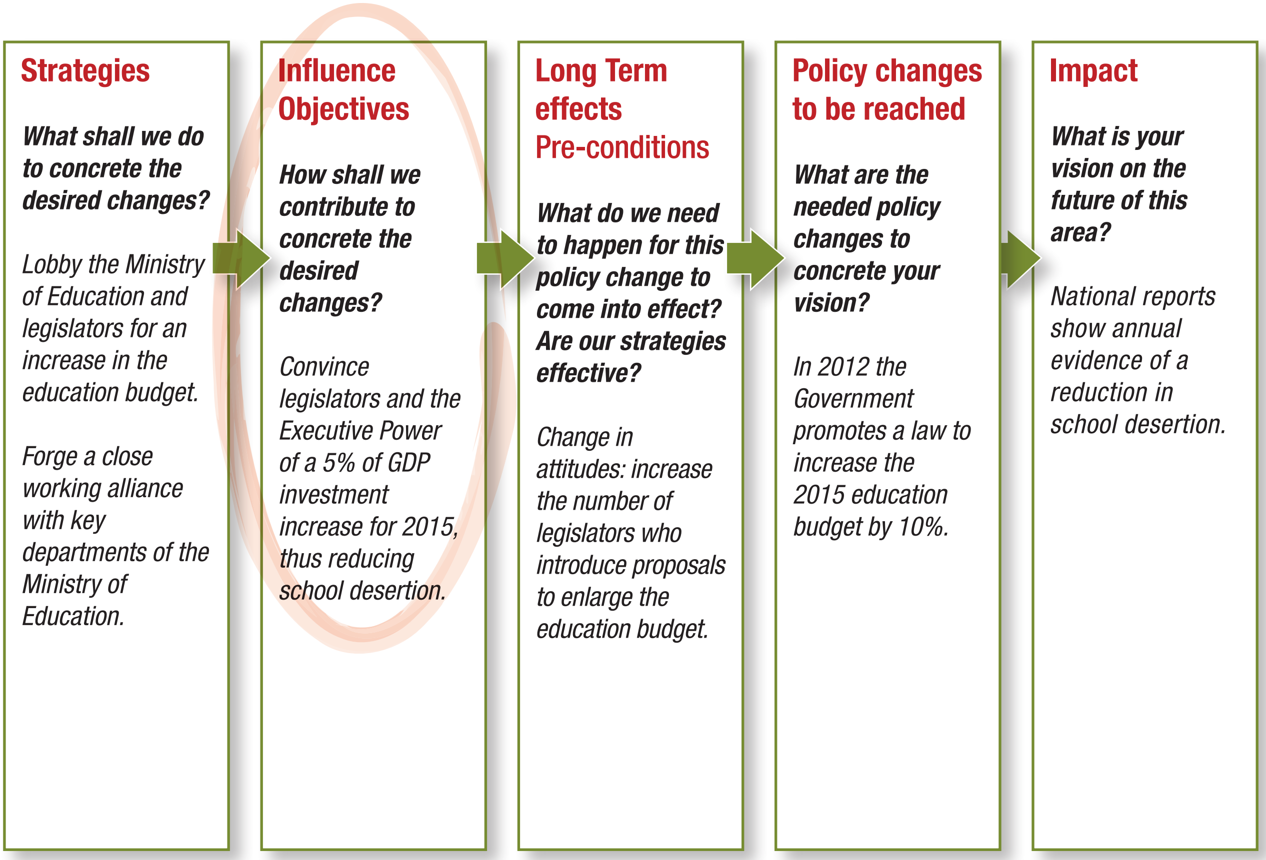
Hand-in-hand with the level we choose, we must consider the **influence objective/s** in which we will center the M&E task, which means counting on a **written** and **agreed upon** formulation of real influence objectives. This generally occurs in the project design stage, when creating a program or when we think about the general policy objectives of our organization. For example, a policy influence objective can be "To convince legislators and the Executive Power of a 5% of GDP investment increase for 2015, thus reducing school desertion".

On the basis of these objectives, those involved in the process should agree on the form in which they believe is possible to reach the outlined objective/s, that is to say, how will the desired "change" be attained.

How do we understand change?

It is highly relevant that all members of the organization engaged in a specific influence process share their vision and their assumptions about the desired "change". To facilitate this process, a useful tool is the "Map of Change" which deals with the links among strategies, the results and the objectives outlined for the team to attain a wider mission or vision. The map allows to visualize the steps which must be implemented or promoted (since some do not depend directly on us) to reach the desired change. It shows how to get from here (strategies and planned activities which are under our control) to there (total impact which is even broader than the direct results of our efforts). The map can be updated while we move forward with the implementation of our M&E process of influence based on what the indicators reveal. Indicators can show whether the designed strategies bring us closer to the changes we hoped for. It is possible, for example, that we may cast aside a weak strategy to promote another which is showing better results than those we had hoped for. Therefore, this is a highly dynamic tool.

A **Map of Change** can also help people to better plan their strategy, and to think about the steps to be taken, and in which manner change might emerge in the different levels of influence. When members of the organization have a clear view of their final impact goal and of the ways in which they hope to achieve it, it is easier for them to detect what is to be measured and which types of tools and methods are most adequate to gather the information they need[1]. An example is shown below:



1 Action Research on Planning, Assessing and Learning in People-Centred Advocacy (Working Paper 1, 2005).

I need help!

Recommendations for reading or consultations by CIPPEC´s Civil Society Directorate for the M&E of policy influence.

- *Tools for Policy Impact: Handbook for Researchers,* Daniel Start and Ingie Hovland, 2004, pp. 31-32).
  Available at http://www.odi.org.uk.

- *A Case for Surfacing Theories of Change for Purposeful Organisational Capacity Development,* Alfredo Ortiz Aragón (2010).
  Available at www.impactalliance.org.

- *Action Research on Planning, Assessing and Learning in People-Centred Advocacy* (Working Paper 1, 2005).
  Available at www.actionaid.org.

- *Citizen voice and state accountability. Towards theories of change that embrace contextual dynamics,* Fletcher Tembo (2012).
  Available at www.odi.org.uk.

- *Theory of social change and implications for practice, planning, monitoring and evaluation* , Doug Reeler (Community Development Resource Association, 2007).
  Available at www.cdra.org.za.

- Website: Theory of Change
  www.theoryofchange.org.

Next Toolkit:

Defining how to measure short, medium and long term results

If you wish to quote this document: Weyrauch, V. (2012). Toolkit N°3: Design/Establishing the pillars of M&E strategy. In: *How to monitor and evaluate policy influence?* Buenos Aires: CIPPEC.

Other guides from the series:

How can we monitor and evaluate policy influence?

Toolkit Nº 1. Why should we monitor and evaluate policy influence?	**Toolkit Nº 2.** How can we monitor and evaluate policy influence?	**Toolkit Nº 3.** Establishing the basis for the M&E strategy.	**Toolkit Nº 4.** Defining how to measure short, medium and long term results.
Toolkit Nº 5. Data collection methods.	**Toolkit Nº 6.** Using knowledge to improve policy influence.		

Other series:

How to design a policy influence plan?

Tools for policy influence

Available at www.vippal.cippec.org

CIPPEC thanks GDNet for their support
in producing this Toolkit.

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