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Policy Analysis

This chapter describes the first of the essential steps of the advocacy planning framework. The basic steps of the framework are the following:

- Policy analysis
- Outlining of advocacy strategies
- Finalising advocacy strategies
- Framing an advocacy action plan

These are the basic steps to be considered when taking any action in the name of professional advocacy. This chapter describes policy analysis, the first step of the mission.

Policy: In formal language, policy refers to public decisions taken by government authorities. However, this manual focuses on mountain communities where conventional practices and power relations prevail. Many informal policies and norms affect people's livelihoods. Therefore, both formal and informal policies have to be considered for advocacy strategies.

Policies also include the behavioural aspects of society, which operate as unwritten rules within families and communities. A society's traditional norms are not always in written form, but such norms still function as compelling factors within social life, and have policy implications.

Policy analysis: Knowing the existing status of formal and informal policies is the beginning of policy analysis. Power relations among various stakeholders determine the status of policy enforcement. The gravity of the analysis process is determined by the nature of the issue selected for advocacy.

The nature of a problem can look completely different if it is only analysed superficially. Addressing problems in a community requires in-depth knowledge of the underlying causes. Solid knowledge about deep-rooted causes is the

foundation for identifying solutions that have the potential to achieve high impacts in a sustainable manner. Good solutions are buried beneath the causes, and must be dug out and properly identified.

Policy analysis is the starting point when trying to discover the underlying causes of poverty and discrimination. If a problem is seen as an issue for advocacy, policy analysis helps deepen understanding of the underlying causes. This process also helps maintain the focus of the advocacy initiative.
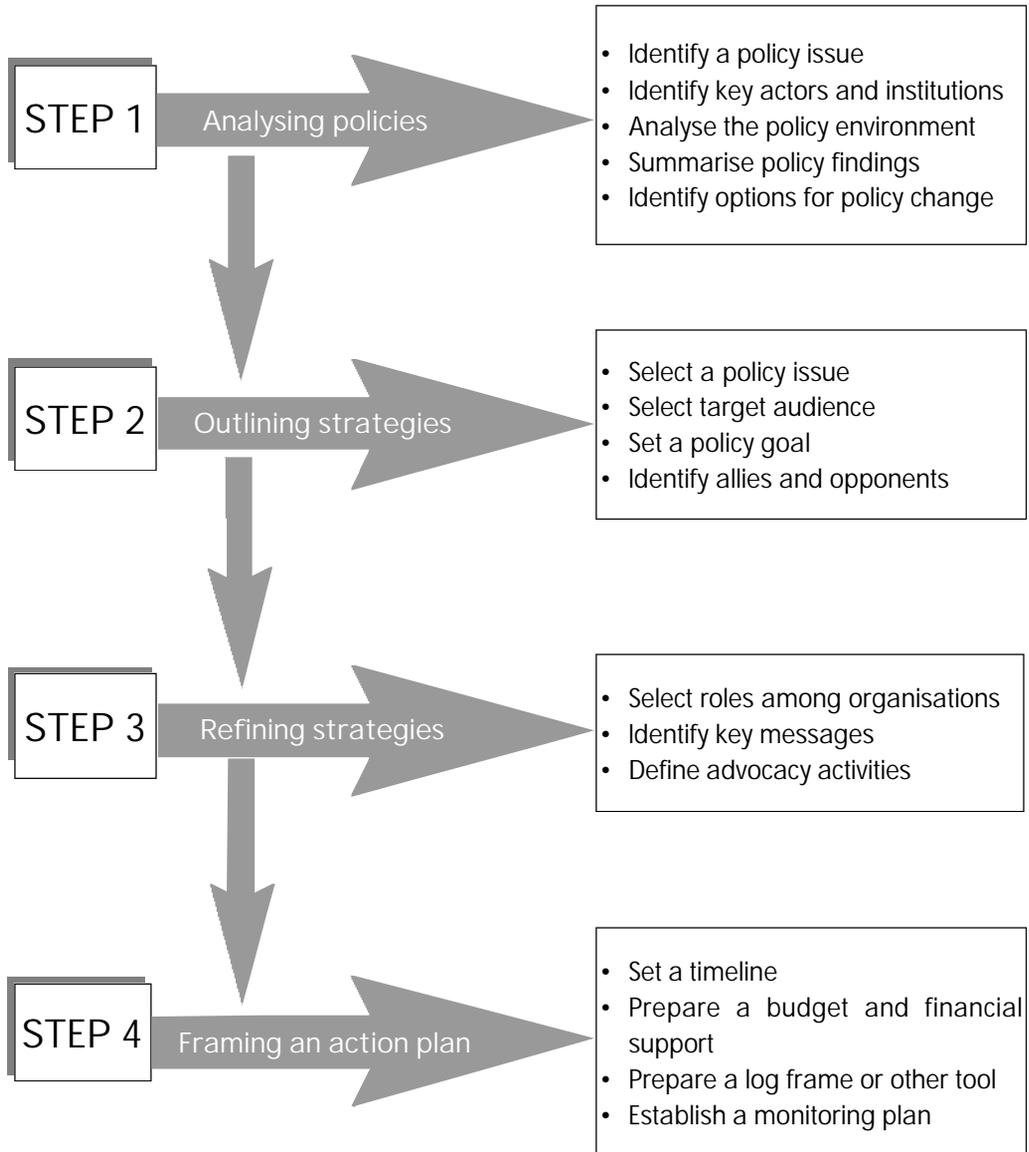
All information needed for an advocacy initiative must be collected, well understood and kept in a secure place. This includes the plan, regulations, and norms set by the government and other institutions in regard to the issue that is being taken up for advocacy.

Policy analysis also examines the dynamics within society in relation to the issue. Without undermining conventional modes of problem analysis and the formation of a problem tree, policy analysis gives priority to deepening the processes of analysis that is to provide inputs for the advocacy projection (Figure 2.1).
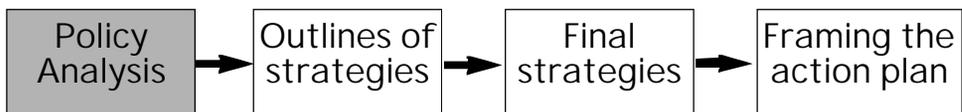
As the first step in the advocacy planning framework, this section presents various tools for policy analysis. Some of the tools come in a logical sequence, while others apply on a random basis. This chapter also makes certain suggestions as processes for policy analysis. It includes knowing the policy issues, identifying key actors, identifying the institutions and individuals that influence the policy environment, and how to craft policy options (Figure 2.2).

'Policy' refers to a plan, a course of action, and sets of regulations adapted by government and other institutions to influence and determine decision making in public affairs. Three basic deficiencies of policies can be identified: (a) lack of policies, (b) inadequate policies, and (c) policies that exist but are not operational. In the mountain perspective of the HKH, the third condition is very common.

Policy analysis is not only important for advocacy but is also needed to reflect the context of the challenge that your organisation is dealing with. The analysis gives you a better idea of how to frame the outcomes and impacts of your action. Therefore, policy analysis is an integral part of your development mission even if you are not carrying out advocacy. Some of the conditions for policy analysis are as follows.

STEP 1 — Analysing policies

- Identify a policy issue
- Identify key actors and institutions
- Analyse the policy environment
- Summarise policy findings
- Identify options for policy change

STEP 2 — Outlining strategies

- Select a policy issue
- Select target audience
- Set a policy goal
- Identify allies and opponents

STEP 3 — Refining strategies

- Select roles among organisations
- Identify key messages
- Define advocacy activities

STEP 4 — Framing an action plan

- Set a timeline
- Prepare a budget and financial support
- Prepare a log frame or other tool
- Establish a monitoring plan

Figure 2.1: Advocacy initiative planning framework – a vertical view point

Policy Analysis → Outlines of strategies → Final strategies → Framing the action plan

Figure 2.2: Advocacy planning framework – a horizontal viewpoint

Capitalise on immediate opportunities: While advocacy initiatives should always be well planned, you sometimes have to capitalise on opportunities that arise immediately. A policy maker, for example, may suddenly come to visit you, giving you an opportunity to influence them in an unplanned way. In this situation, an advocate should not remain quiet, but should make an effort to influence the policy maker, utilising whatever policy-related information the advocate possesses.

Use available information: In some cases, you or your partners may have the policy information that you need. Minor research or no research at all may be sufficient to plan your advocacy initiative properly. If you know the policy causes, the key actors, and the policy environment around your issue, you can proceed on this information alone. You can plan to carry out ongoing research to update and verify available information.

Use your best judgement: The fundamental requirement is that the more you analyse issues, the actors, and the policy environment in advance, the more likely your advocacy initiative is to succeed. However, you may not always have the required funds and energy for policy analysis. Therefore, you must use your own best judgement about what to do, and what not to do.

Key elements for policy analysis
- Identification of policy issues – policy causes of poverty and discrimination
- Identification of key actors and institutions who make policy decisions
- Identification of individuals and institutions influencing policy decisions
- Analytical view of political power distribution among the actors
- Identification of formal and informal processes of policy formulation
- Understanding of the social and political context of the communities

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Identification of Policy Issue

Policy causes of poverty and discrimination are referred to as 'policy issues' in advocacy. Policy issues include one of the following situations: absence of policy, inadequate policy, or improper enforcement of existing policies. It is good to present reports of your policy analysis in a form other than long essay-type reports. One example of a matrix form is given in Table 2.1. An organisation working to promote women's education might analyse the information as given here. This is a very simple example. Other examples related to practical field interventions can be drawn in a similar way.

Table 2.1: An example for tabulation of policy issues

Areas for analysis	Present condition	Policy issues	Focus of advocacy
Do existing policies promote women's education?	No	Absence of adequate policy for women's education	Establish new policy
Do existing policies hinder the promotion of women's education?	Yes	Policy functions to discourage women's education	Change existing policies
Are existing policies related to the issue properly implemented?	No	No proper enforcement of policy	Enforce existing policies

All problems identified in communities have direct or indirect links to policy issues. Policy issues are related to larger political dynamics. As an advocate, you should be familiar with this idea, which is much more complicated than it first appears.

Sometimes, such policy connections can be seen or identified easily from field experiences, observation, and interactions. Sometimes, systematic research about existing laws and law formulation processes are required. For some issues, certain groups may have vested interests leading them to influence policy formulation processes. These possibilities depend upon the gravity of the issue and the context in which it is emerging. Through the policy analysis process, you must be able to identify the following.

- **Exact nature of the problem:** What is the problem all about? Is the problem the same as it appears on the surface or are there other hidden factors?
- **Policy causes of the problem:** How is the problem connected with a policy cause? Where is it connected? To what extent is it connected?
- **People affected by the problem:** Which groups or communities are actually affected? How many are affected and in what geographical region? For how long have these people been suffering from this type of problem? Has the situation changed over time or not?

These questions help identity various aspects of a community's problems. Remember that there are some individuals who benefit and would like to keep the situation as is it now.

The analysis demands a review of the historical background of the problem and its relation to policy formulation processes. The review should also identify the supporting mechanisms, opposing groups, ideological connections, and attempts at change at various time intervals. Such an historical perspective can provide several strategic options for advocacy as well as a vision of future achievements. To make this clear, Table 2.2 gives an example of the tax imposition issue in community forestry in Nepal.

This example was generated based on information gathered from informal sources. These findings may not be uniformly acceptable to all parties involved in this issue. Facilitators can make available several such blank formats on various issues for group exercises throughout the learning process.

Table 2.2: Issue from Nepal: The tax on community forest user group earnings

SN	Areas of analysis	Findings
1.	What is the problem?	Imposition of 40% tax on community forest user groups earning in Nepal.
2.	Who are the affected communities?	All user group members (around 2 million people) throughout Nepal are affected by this decision.
3.	What are the supportive policies?	The following are the supportive policy environments: • National policy of decentralisation and local governance reflected in various laws and regulations. • Nepal's community forestry law and regulations enacted between 1990-2000. • Local self-governance act and regulations enacted in 1999/2000. • Approach paper to tenth five year plan of Nepal prepared and published in 2002.
4.	What are the restrictive policies and practices?	There is some confusion and contradiction among various laws and regulations in Nepal. While no law specifically restricts the community forest policy of Nepal, there are certain restrictive factors, as follows: • Forest master plan and follow-up plans in relation to maintaining national reserve forest under bureaucratic control. • Some laws related to the promotion of national parks and reserve areas. • Contradictory clauses in the local self-governance act and regulations. • Conventional attitudes of bureaucrats working with the forestry sector. This mindset is heavily influenced by institutional corruption in this sector. • Conventional attitude of politicians who use forest resources as a vote bank during elections. • Influence of timber mafias for illegal sale of timber.
5.	What is the situation of policy enforcement?	Many policies in relation to community forestry in Nepal are good, but attitudinal problems exist at the operational level. The following points show the present state of law enforcement: • Bureaucrats working with the forestry sector fail to understand that they are 'the servant' of the people. They still believe they are the 'master', 'provider', 'controller' of forest resources. • Most capacity building programmes supported by foreign agencies are being converted into personal benefit instead of institutional strengthening. • There is a two-sided forest system – community forest and national forest. This has slowed down the promotion of user groups.

Identification of key actors and institutions

Several types of policies are applicable in all communities. Many people living in mountain villages do not know how policies are formulated and who plays the important roles in formulating those policies. Most policies are formulated with the problems of the plains in mind, and are made operational in the mountain areas as well. However, all policies are formulated with individual efforts being made at different levels. Some individuals are made directly responsible by the state system and others become indirectly responsible, willingly or unwillingly. An analysis of key actors in relation to the issue of imposing a 40% tax on community forest user group earnings in Nepal is presented in Table 2.3

Advocating for policy change is not possible without identifying the key actors as individuals or as position holders within certain institutions. Sometimes, an individual contributes to policy change as a single person. Sometimes a group

Table 2.3: Key actors: the tax on CFUG earnings

Key actors in decision making	Level of influence in policy decision making	Areas of interest	Resources they have at present	Resources they do not have at present
Minister of Forest Department	High	Public support as a successful leader	Financial and bureaucratic expertise	• Analytical data • Fresh opinion of users
Bureaucrats of ministry and districts	High	• Promoting 'boss-ism' • Managing to procure excessive earning	• Internal finance • External projects	• Good public image • Impartial public opinion • People-centred attitude
Parliamenta-rians	Medium	• Being popular leaders • Increasing vote banks	• Political workers • Party lines	• Reality of grassroots • Mutual trust
Actors influencing decisions	**Level of influence in policy decision making**	**Areas of interest**	**Resources they have at present**	**Resources they do not have at present**
Timber corporation	High	• Earning excessive profits • Maintaining good linkages with leaders	• Accumulated profits • Good linkages with bureaucracy	• Public faith • Expertise • Business security
Those with business interests in timber	High	• Overnight income • Individual security	• Group strength • Business networking	• Know-how on biodiversity • Ways of starting fair business
Local elites	Medium	• Popular local leaders • Earning extra income	• Some people in villages • Linkages with govt. ministry	• National interest • Technical expertise • Development interests

of individuals makes a collective contribution. Advocates should be familiar with these various dynamic processes.

Key actors for policy consideration can be grouped into two categories: (a) direct policy makers; and (b) those who do not directly make decisions but who can influence decision makers. Both these types of individuals play a vital role in policy formation, change, and enforcement. Therefore, both are very important from an advocacy perspective. Sometimes, the second category may be even more important for advocacy initiatives.

Advocacy is a form of professional struggle to bring about desired change. As in a war strategy, it is also relevant to know about your opponents who are working as key actors in relation to the issue that you are dealing with. If you do not know much about your opponents, you cannot design winning strategies for your struggle. With a clear picture of the key actors and their roles in policy considerations, you can devise good advocacy strategies.

You can identify the first category of individuals and institutions (direct policy makers) very easily because they are publicly announced as having certain responsibilities. However, identifying the individuals and institutions in the second category (those who influence the decision makers) is challenging since being able to influence policy makers is not something that can be seen. It is not necessary to be visible to influence a decision. Someone living at a distance from the decision maker can still exercise considerable influence in decision taking at local levels.

Table 2.3 gives a summary of an analysis of key actors. This example was created for learning purposes. If you look at this example, it is very simple and clear cut. However, in the real-life formulation of strategies for advocacy it is not so simple. Several such examples will emerge when you plan advocacy initiatives for a real-life issue.

Analysis of Policy Environment

The political system of the country and the democratic culture of the community determine the policy environment as a whole. Working towards such an environment is critical for preparing a good strategy for your advocacy initiative. Policy analysis helps to assess whether policy change is likely to be successful or not.

One of the prerequisites for policy analysis is that there must be some policies operational in the communities with an established form and manner. The policies could be from the government mechanism or from cultural norms based on the traditions of the communities. If the public affairs of

communities are running on an ad hoc basis, policy analysis becomes very difficult. The policy environment remains fragile and unpredictable in countries of high transition. Iraq, Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Palestine can be taken as examples at present. In general, policy analysis should focus on the following parameters as given in the box below.

> - Can people participate in decision-making processes in relation to the issue you are dealing with? Do channels exist and are they accessible for interested people to participate in?
> - Who controls the major decisions and at what location? – At the district level, state level, national level?
> - Are the issues widely discussed in public? Are people interested in participating in the discussion? Does the media get involved in such discussions?
> - What is the level of priority of the current government regarding the issue you are dealing with? Is the government planning to bring in certain changes? What plans and programmes were discussed during recent years?
> - Is there enough political openness for such policy debates in the country or in the location where people who are affected reside? (See also Table 2.3).

The whole analysis of this sub-section depends upon political openness for policy debates. As one who advocates for the marginalised, you cannot overlook all rules, regulations, and practices that exist in the society. You have to be able to operate your advocacy mission maintaining a minimum level of legitimacy. If you want to go beyond the broader frame of the state law, your mission becomes a much broader political movement targeting change in the system, rather than the policies within the system.

It is obvious that a more democratic society provides more space to NGOs and CBOs to influence policies. Advocacy initiatives are not completely risk free in many contexts. However, democratic society normally poses little risk to different groups participating in political life. Advocacy initiators are one such group. Therefore, advocates have more options to develop advocacy strategies to influence policy decisions in this situation.

In some political systems, policy decisions in certain sectors are made open and in other sectors they are closed. For example, most democratic countries seem open to policy dialogues on issues related to society (health, education, community development, etc.) but closed on issues related to national interest (e.g. defence, security, international relations). Advocates should be aware of this situation while framing advocacy strategies for certain issues. Knowing the informal channels of decision making is also very important. Strategy

formulation for advocacy initiatives is almost impossible without a sound knowledge of how policy decisions are made and who controls such decision-making processes. If you formulate advocacy strategies in an ad hoc manner, the likelihood of gaining success is limited. Advocacy in a closed political system may make sense for some activities, but it does not make much sense for those whose rights are denied at present.

Analysis of the policy environment also includes the extent to which social interactions are taking place on the selected issue. If your issue is already an issue of public debate and many know about it, it will be easier for you to take some steps forward. But if the issue is very new and many people do not know about it, you may need to create public awareness. Then you can expect people to express their opinion in favour of, or opposing your line. In addition, all other social and political factors of the country/state affect your advocacy mission. For example, if there is an election in the near future, your normal strategies for advocacy may not work because all social forces will pay far more attention to the election and the change/retention of the government of the day, rather than to any other policy change. Advocates should be able to strategise their mission accordingly.

International forces impinging on your own government is another important factor to be considered while formulating advocacy strategies. For example, if all external forces (neighbouring countries, donors, bilateral agencies, etc.) are on the opposite pole of the issue, you may not be successful. You should be able to convert such forces in your favour before beginning your advocacy mission.

Information collection for policy analysis

A potential source of information for policy analysis includes government ministries, departments; and regional, state, provincial, or district branches of the government. Similarly, you can also obtain information from bilateral and multilateral agencies – the United Nations, the World Bank, other multinational banks, and NGOs. The public media is an easily and widely accessible source of information. However, you have to be able to verify the information these sources publish.

Academic institutions, academic research, and publications are also an important source of information. Similarly, you can obtain information from the speeches of government officials. It is of course up to you to judge the reliability and accuracy of the information collected from these sources. Sometimes, the information you want is easily available even on the Internet. However, if you are taking up complex issues, you should seek the help of those who are familiar with the issue and who are a rich potential source of information.

Some examples for finding such information and support are given below. If you are dealing with an issue related to local governance, look at the following tactics.

* Read the local newspapers regularly for at least a week to identify interest groups expressing opinions regarding local governance in your constituency.
* Establish a relationship with the public information desk of the concerned ministry and find out about the various commissions formed in the past and their reports. For example, in the case of Nepal, the concerned ministry for local governance issues is the Ministry of Local Development.
* Search the Internet and explore the scenario of other countries with regard to local governance. This kind of information gives you a comparative outlook.
* Obtain copies of government laws from the concerned ministry or from other publishers and read them carefully.
* Contact university professors or intellectuals who are interested in this topic and initiate discussions with them on the historical background and intellectual assessments of the policy environment.

Policy analysis: a case study for discussion

Mining labourers in the Jainta Hills: The Jainta Hills in Meghalaya, India contain a large area devoted to coal mining. For convenience, these hills can be called 'Koilapahad' (which means 'coal mountains'). An assessment conducted by ICIMOD in 2003 showed that mining labourers comprise a large part of the informal labour sector in Koilapahad. The mining area is spread all over the hills and around 40 000 people from the countries of India, Nepal, and Bangladesh work as full-time or seasonal labourers in these mines. The monthly turnover of

the labourers is about INR 2000. From a legal point of view, most of these labourers from Nepal and Bangladesh are illegal migrants. However, some of them have already settled in the nearby hills of Meghalaya, India.

This labour force is contributing extensively to the national economy by providing cheap labour and consequently cheaper coal to consumers, and income for a large portion of the population of different countries. However, the livelihood security of these people is vulnerable. Most of these labourers do not earn enough money to procure reasonable land and housing for their families. The government has introduced laws related to labour security and wage rates but most such matters are settled by informal interactions rather than existing laws. According to law, these labourers are technically illegal and do not have licenses or tax certificates. In addition, the established coal business sector feels threatened by the labourers and fear that any government support for labourers would result in loss of income to them.

The problems of these labourers include lack of security of tenure in their workplace, as well as constant harassment from the police and local authorities. The labourers who have already settled in these hills do not have credit facilities, legal services, or social security. A number of laws have been enacted at the state level to ensure security in the workplace for registered labourers. However, these rules and regulations have not been implemented in good faith by the local authorities.

Sometimes these labourers form labour unions, which function like civil society organisations. They also file some of their complaints with local authorities. However, the local authorities trust the contractors and mine owners far more. Nobody listens to the labourers' complaints. There are also some international and national agencies working to improve the livelihoods of these people but they have not had any significant achievements to date.

Questions for discussion
- What problems have been identified? Who are affected and in what location?
- What are the supportive policies for these labourers?
- What policies and practices restrict the basic human rights of these labourers?
- Who are the main actors influencing policy decisions?
- Can these labourers participate in policy decisions?
- Is this analysis helpful for formulating advocacy strategies? If so, explain how.

Summarising Policy Findings

A problem tree is a useful visual technique for summarising the findings of policy analysis. You can use the following steps to present your findings in a problem tree format (Figure 2.3).
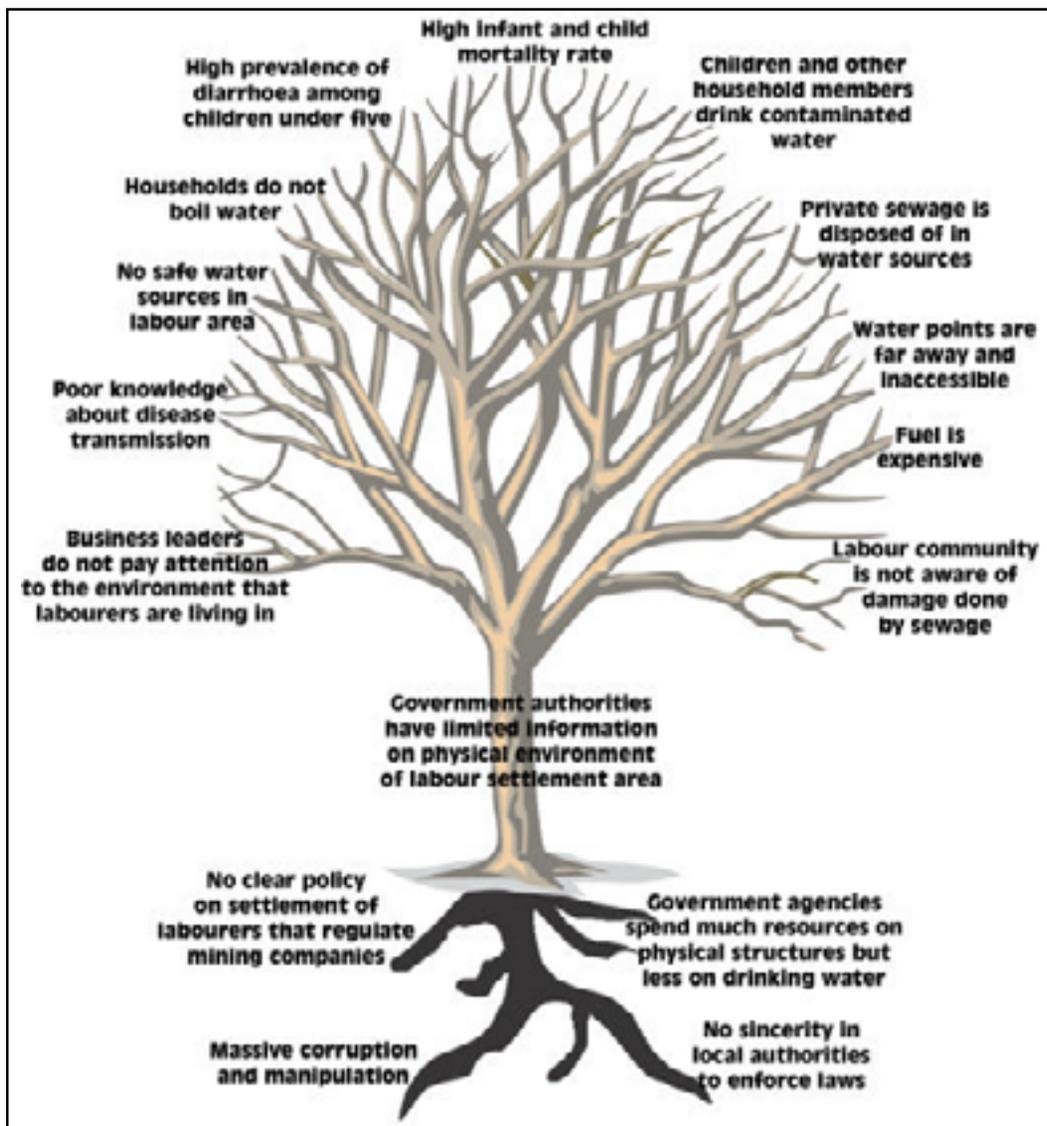
High infant and child mortality rate

High prevalence of diarrhoea among children under five

Children and other household members drink contaminated water

Households do not boil water

Private sewage is disposed of in water sources

No safe water sources in labour area

Water points are far away and inaccessible

Poor knowledge about disease transmission

Fuel is expensive

Business leaders do not pay attention to the environment that labourers are living in

Labour community is not aware of damage done by sewage

Government authorities have limited information on physical environment of labour settlement area

No clear policy on settlement of labourers that regulate mining companies

Government agencies spend much resources on physical structures but less on drinking water

Massive corruption and manipulation

No sincerity in local authorities to enforce laws

Figure 2.3: An example of problem tree analysis for the case of Koilapahad

Problem identification: This can be done for different purposes. It could be for a national programme, a long-range strategic plan, or a simple project. If you are doing this exercise for a larger purpose, the problem could be more general. Examples of general problems are: poverty, livelihood insecurity, violation of human rights, etc. If you want to identify the problem for a specific project, the problem statements could be the poor educational status of women in a particular area/region, the low literacy rate of a tribal group, or the high infant mortality rate of mining labourers. Therefore, you have to be clear about the purpose of this exercise. Finally, you should keep such a problem statement on top of your problem tree.

Direct causes: A direct cause is very close to the problem. For example, the most direct cause of high infant mortality rate could be diarrhoea. There may be more than one direct causes of a problem. You can keep such contributing causes together side by side.

Behavioural causes: For each of the direct causes, the problem tree identifies the behaviours of the affected community that lead to these causes. You can often find several such behaviours under the cause of the problem. For example, contaminated drinking water contributes to diarrhoea but there are several behaviours that contribute to the contamination of drinking water. As shown in the problem tree (Figure 2.3) these could include not boiling water and an unmanaged sewage system. These are the behaviours of the people contributing to water contamination.

Cause that leads to behaviours: This is an even deeper analysis of the causes. The analysis here focuses on why such behaviours appear in communities. To give a simple example, some people are stealing, but why? What factors have made them take to stealing? Regarding contaminated water, we could ask why people behave in a way that causes contamination e.g., lack of awareness of the relationship of their own behaviour to the contamination, lack of potable water supply because of nearby mines/factories, etc. Thus, this analysis goes even deeper to look for the 'causes of the cause'. However, this part of the analysis is 'invisible'. In a real-life situation, you have to discuss the causes in depth with the affected people.

In the example of a problem tree given in Figure 2.3 there are four **root** causes and one **trunk**, which are the causes of the problem – all of which are related to policy. You can carry out advocacy for changes in policy and practices in these areas.

Identification of Options for Policy Change

The problem tree presents the root causes of the problem, i.e., causes which are far away from what has been perceived as the cause of the problem that has been observed on the surface. Such continuous 'digging' often leads to policy or policy implementation causes, which in turn helps to formulate advocacy strategies.

Up to this stage, you will identify the problem and its causes in different layers. By this level of analysis, you can tentatively figure out your expectations, the 'vision' of your advocacy. Do not think that you have only one way of changing this policy or practice. There may be several other options. However, each option cannot give you the same degree of impact. This is the challenging part of your analysis (Figure 2.4)
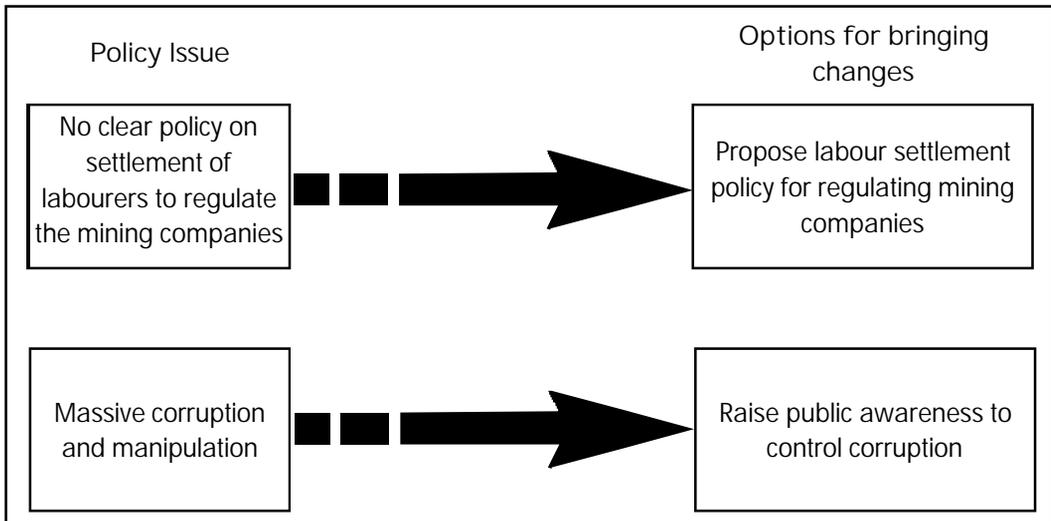
Writing your different options in a matrix format (see Table 2.4) may help you think about the different means available to you for changing policies and practices. You can set your own parameters for measuring difficulties and impacts. In the case of the matrix below, would it be more feasible to choose option 'C' for your advocacy strategy? You can also choose option 'A' but does option 'C' look more achievable and does it create greater empowerment of the people? The selected options can be spelt out in a matrix.

Table 2.4: Options for policy change

Options	Level of difficulty	Level of impact
Option 'A'	50/100	80/100
Option 'B'	90/100	50/100
Option 'C'	40/100	70/100

This kind of analysis opens up many choices to allow you to consider the best option for your policy change mission. Your analysis should also include the following questions.

- Which of the policy options is likely to have the largest and most lasting impact in this community?
- What will be the worst outcome if you do not do anything?
- Which option is likely to be achievable in terms of time, cost, and risk?
- Which option is likely to get support from other organisations?
- Which option do you think more people are opposed to?
- Do you have the necessary expertise for the selected option?
- In which option do you have a comparative advantage?
- Do you have enough know-how, readiness, and an appropriate management structure for risk mitigation?

Policy Issue		Options for bringing changes
No clear policy on settlement of labourers to regulate the mining companies	▪ ▪ ▪➤	Propose labour settlement policy for regulating mining companies
Massive corruption and manipulation	▪ ▪ ▪➤	Raise public awareness to control corruption

Figure 2.4: Variations in policy options

Preconditions for an Advocacy Initiative

At this stage, you have to decide whether you will take up a particular issue for advocacy or not. For example, you might decide (in collaboration with the people who are affected) that the time is not suitable for advocacy for policy change on the issue selected. Or you could come to the conclusion that although the time is appropriate to initiate an advocacy initiative, you do not have enough funding to cover the cost to complete the mission. Likewise, you could conclude that you do not have the necessary expertise to take up the best option. A cost-benefit analysis can also be carried out before formulating advocacy strategies, as follows.

- It is possible that your advocacy mission may bring risk to your organisation, your partners, and project participants. For example, the concerned authority can ask your organisation to leave the place. What will you do then?
- As an advocate, your opposition group may arrest you, or may blacklist you as an individual. What will your organisation do if this happens?
- Although it is different from party politics, advocacy is a political activity. Can you manage this process as a development agency? Is it acceptable to your organisation or the board of governors of your organisation?
- Sometimes, the involvement of a particular group or organisation in the policy debate may actually make the situation even worse because of some other extraneous reasons. What do you think about this? Are you sure that your organisation's involvement will, at least, not worsen the problem?
- Remember that the solution to all problems is not only advocacy. There may be other programmes or programmatic approaches to get easy, less time-consuming, and less expensive solutions to the problem. Have you thought about these options?

- Generally, advocacy for policy change is a time-consuming process. You cannot plan exactly when you will be successful. If the problem needs immediate action, advocacy may not be feasible. For example, if people are dying of hunger, your advocacy for a poverty alleviation policy may not immediately help those who are suffering. Have you analysed the situation of the affected people properly?

While reading the above questions, many people may be hesitant to even explore the option of advocacy. The intention of these questions is not to 'frighten' the advocate. However, this is a very complex decision that you are about to take. Therefore, the questions are a reminder of the absolute need to think critically and pay extra attention to the risk factors of advocacy. Ultimately you will not lose anything if you discuss all these points critically. Forewarned is often forearmed.

As an advocate, you may be extra capable. However, the kind of decision making required here is beyond a single person's capacity as it impacts on large numbers of people including your own co-workers and the people themselves. Therefore, you have to discuss all of these questions in your group or management team. Using the information in this chapter, you can prepare a set of criteria to be used as and when required for selecting advocacy options.

Summary worksheet for policy analysis

Steps	Some questions to explore	Your note
1. Identification of policy issues	• What are the problems you are dealing with? Whom do these problems affect? • What are the main policy issues in relation to selected problems — i.e., absence of policy, inadequate policy, or improper enforcement of policy?	
2. Identification of key actors and institutions	• Who are the direct decision makers? • Who influences the decision makers? • Are policy makers and interest groups showing interest in bringing about change? What position and opinion do they have? What resources do they have?	
3. Analysis of policy environment	• Can people participate in policy decisions? What channels exist for them? • What is the location of key decisions? Who controls the decisions? • Are the selected issues becoming of interest to people? Are the various channels of the media highlighting the issues? • What is the priority of the current government? What is the history of these issues? • What changes are occurring in the political arena? Is the election coming closer?	
4. Summary of policy findings	• What are the direct causes of the problems you have selected? • What are the positions and opinions of policy makers? • What is the attitude of policy makers?	
5. Identification of options for policy change	• What are the impacts you desire from policy change? • What are your best options for policy change? • What will happen if nothing is done? • What options are likely to get public support? • Who will lead the advocacy process for which policy options?	