

How to monitor progress towards policy influencing using Levels of Influence

Step 1: Set clear objectives

Develop an advocacy plan with clear policy influencing objectives, for example 'integration of provisions for children with disabilities into the Education Sector Plan in Kenya'. A vague objective such as 'support the rights of children with disabilities' is a helpful start, but to be measurable, policy influencing objectives need to be detailed and context specific, to explain *how* progress will be made, in this example, how the rights of children with disabilities will be supported, and which issues will be addressed. The advocacy plan should also include political context analysis, identifying the current policies in place, as well as the budget, timeframe and specific activities planned to advance the policy influencing objective with each relevant stakeholder. Setting out these details in an advocacy plan forms the foundation for any monitoring approach.

Step 2: Break down the policy influencing process into levels

To monitor progress, we need to define the objectives at each level of change. Sightsavers' Levels of Influence framework is based on the idea that progress towards policy influencing objectives, although context specific, will loosely follow the same six stages:

Level 1. Planning: Identification and presentation of clear policy influencing objectives through the development of an advocacy plan

Level 2. Understanding: Government stakeholders understand our policy influencing objectives

Level 3. Engagement and acceptance: Government stakeholders demonstrate a willingness to engage with us and with the issues in which we are advocating change

Level 4. Commitment: Government stakeholders commit to implementing the changes which we have been advocating for

Level 5. Delivery: Government stakeholders deliver the policies and make the changes that they have committed to

Level 6. Reflection: Assessment of the successes, challenges encountered, and relevant lessons learned for future projects through a review.

Define your policy influencing objectives at each level of influence. For example, at Level 2, the objective in the example above may be for staff at the Ministry of Education in Kenya have access to resources explaining the needs of children with disabilities to build their understanding. At Level 3, the objective may be that the Federation of Organisations for People with Disabilities reviews and submits recommendations on the current Education Sector Plan.

Step 3: Set out a means of verification for each objective

Once you have clear objectives for each level of change, it is useful to add a means of verification to indicate what evidence will be collected, to show how it will be verified that each level has been reached. For example, at Level 2, the publication of a briefing note on inclusive education and a report from a dissemination event could be the means of verification to show that staff at the Ministry of Education in Kenya understand the educational needs of children with disabilities. In some instances, a means of verification may be available which was not set out in the original framework, and this is equally valid. You can also add a timeline (either a month, quarter or year), by which you aim to reach each level.

Step 4: Integrate the levels of influence into your logframes

The Level of Influence reached can then be used as an indicator in your project logframes. The name of the indicator can simply be 'Level of influence reached', with a target level to be reported on annually. If the activities or even the objective at a specific level need to be changed, for example due to a change in the political context, it will be necessary to also update the means of verification, but the indicator can stay the same. It is useful to determine the baseline level of influence at the start of the project, which may be Level 1 if it is a new project, but could also be a higher level if it is a project extension, as well as a target level for each year.

Step 5: Use the data collected for your reporting and learning processes

Once the Levels of Influence process has been systematised, you can use the data generated to report on the progress made towards your policy influencing objectives to donors as well as for your internal reporting purposes. The quantitative data can be used to track differences in the progress made towards influencing objectives in different countries, regions or thematic areas, while the qualitative data can be used to assess and understand the reasons for these differences. It is useful to conduct an annual review process, to assess the progress made towards policy influencing objectives, check that objectives and means of verification remain relevant, and make any necessary changes to the Levels of Influence framework in line with the political context.

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