**CASE STUDY**

**C470**

* The first question to answer is: what is the aim of our policy priority?

The aim of a policy brief can range from changing policy to raising awareness of an issue. The aim will determine who the correct policy actors to target are.

* The second question to address is: what does a policy decision-maker want from a policy statement?

Decision-makers want relevant solutions to policy problems. A policy statement should clearly lay out evidence informed solutions to a problem that the specific actor is interested in. These solutions should be realistic, feasible within the current political climate and cost- effective. Understanding what a given policy actor wants, by putting yourself

in their shoes, will help you write a more attractive policy brief.

A good aim for any policy brief is to pass the *breakfast test.*

A policy statement should be read and understood in the length of time it takes to drink a coffee over breakfast.

Before starting to write a policy brief it is crucial to appreciate political realities, and any competing policy narratives, to ensure the best chance of achieving influence.

Work through the 3 stage grid on the following page from left to right, to help you decide upon specific policy actors to target and the best way to navigate your chosen policy area.

* **Writing a Policy Statement**

A policy brief must be easy to read. Structure is important to get right. **Ensure that everything the reader really needs to know is on the first page.**

The length of a policy statement can vary depending on the discipline and content. A policy brief should be 1, 2 or 4 pages but no longer.

**The format of a policy brief should be logical and easy to follow. It should include:**

**A)** Title- keeps it snappy, short and informative.

**B)** Executive Summary- two to three sentences summing up the entire brief. Use recognizable buzzwords and emphasize the relevance of the research to policy to draw the policy actor’s attention to read on.

**C)** Introduction/Summary of the Problem- explains the policy issue and why it is particularly important or current. Put the research into context.

**D)** Methods, Approaches and Results/Body- present the research/project findings in an accessible way for a non-specialist. Explain the methodology used to reach the results, such as a synthesis of existing research/literature or new research data. A policy actor wants to see robust results that are repeatable or corroborated by others.

**E)** Conclusions- reinforces the key message to take away from the policy brief. Remember the executive summary is where typical conclusion content is, do not simply repeat it.

**F)** Policy Recommendations- tries and makes only one feasible policy recommendation. If you are making more than one recommendation, differentiate them clearly e.g. in bullet points and keep it to three maximum.

**G)** References and Suggested Sources- use references sparingly and suggest a few additional sources at the end to give either background or more detail to the policy issue.

**H)** Acknowledgements, Author Details and Disclaimers- detail any funding used for the research, note down the author’s current positions and contact details, if the policy brief is being produced by an institution a disclaimer may be needed.

**Tips on language use and framing your message:**

* Be concise and very clear
* Use active not passive language
* Highlight the benefits that your recommendations will have, to the policy system, to those affected by the policy and more generally e.g. economically or environmentally.
* Anticipate questions that the reader may have throughout the brief.

**Tips for styling a policy brief:**

* Make sure the masthead is bold and eye-catching.
* Write a policy brief soon after research has been published to capitalize on momentum and the novelty of the research. Policy briefs can even be written after initial ndings are corroborated, to prime policy actors.
* Do not present evidence in a manner that is confrontational to the beliefs of the chosen policy actors, information will be acted upon if it is salient to the policy actors’ viewpoint. Distinguish between personal opinion and evidence-based opinion.