Stakeholder analysis

Stakeholder analysis is one of the best-known methodologies for assessing the relative position of all actors towards an intervention. Together with policy dialogue, it facilitates early development of an appropriate engagement and communication strategy towards the partner — which in turn ensures counterpart ownership of the intervention.

It is a complex analysis, as it can rarely be based only on formal (visible) elements, and general involve a high number of actors. Those may be grouped into categories to facilitate analysis; however, the criteria adopted must be transparent and excessive simplification avoided: not all departments of a ministry - or ministries in a government - may have the same perception of an intervention. Not all stakeholders consulted will be counterparts in subsequent phases, so it is also important to avoid creating undue expectations.

Consultation with civil society is an important part of the stakeholder analysis since it is vital to identify final beneficiaries and neglected issues and to reach out to marginalized and vulnerable groups, ensuring a more inclusive approach.

In conflict and/or fragile situations, the stakeholder analysis should consider the feasibility of stakeholder consultations from the onset (e.g. with peace actors, marginalised groups, women) in order to strengthen societal resilience and conflict prevention. The capacity of key stakeholders to ensure conflict sensitivity and resilience mainstreaming should be systematically assessed and supported.

While major analytical steps of a stakeholder analysis can be identified, in practice these are often undertaken simultaneously, and analysis iterations are common.

- Stakeholder identification. The context analysis and public policy analysis identified several stakeholders: individuals, institutions, groups of people, private companies or even an entire sector which may have a direct interest in the success (or failure) of the intervention. Stakeholder identification will help complete the list, performing a more complete scan of the environment. This means, in particular, including the 'voiceless', i. e. those who do not have an easily discernible representation mechanism, as well as those likely to be adversely affected by an intervention (e.g. through damage to the environment or to their livelihoods). They are systematically considered as duty bearers or rights holders.   Several methodologies (e.g. participatory appraisal or ad hoc survey)have been identified to include the voiceless into the design phase and thereby comply with the leave no one behind principle.
- Stakeholder assessment. Once identified, stakeholders can be assessed according to defined criteria in relation to different interventions. The most frequently used criteria are 'power' and 'interest', but others can be considered. These can be represented in a matrix.
- Stakeholder mapping. This step helps in visualising the relationship of different stakeholders towards the intervention and to each other; this is a critical insight when building consensus around an intervention. Mapping may be used to assess institutions as well as the overall governance structure and links in a given sector.
- Stakeholder communication and engagement strategy. Appropriate communication modalities can be developed. These are essential in framing subsequent policy dialogue and initiating the development of appropriate stakeholder engagement strategies. The entire process will help reinforce a sense of ownership on the part of the stakeholder and raise our awareness of a broad range of (behavioural) risks.

Methodological fiche(s):

Stakeholder analysis