

Political Economy Analysis Everyday Tool

Description: The tool has been replicated from the [Development Leadership Programme](#) (University of Birmingham). It is a ‘stripped-back political analysis framework’, and aims to help frontline staff understand the changing political context and make politically informed decisions on a day-to-day basis. The tool provides a condensed checklist to help conduct quick political analysis and make this an accessible part of ordinary business practice.

Facilitation guidance:

When would you use it: to respond to all the small, everyday issues that need evaluating during the course of our normal work (e.g. the announcement that the health minister is stepping down, or an invitation to join a multi-stakeholder initiative). The tool is designed to be used flexibly; it could be used on your own in your office, or it could be used as the basis for group discussions. You may be able to draw from previous Country Strategy, Sector Strategy, or Tactical Tools; and similarly, the Everyday Tool may signal the need for more detailed analysis at higher levels.

How to use it: For each step there are six questions and a series of discussion points to help answer the questions (or to guide conversation, if being done as a group exercise). As you answer questions, be clear about the assumptions you are making and aim for the explanation with the fewest assumptions.

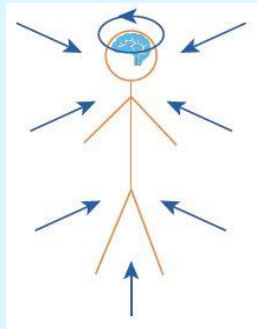
Sometimes, just Step 1 will be sufficient. For example, upon hearing of a politician’s decision to block a new reform, you may wish to try and assess where they are coming from and whether there may be a way of countering the decision or at least navigating around it to find a ‘win-win’.

On other occasions you will wish to run through both Step 1 and Step 2. For example, upon hearing of a community’s intention to challenge a land grab, you may wish to assess the opportunities and constraints they face, and whether and how it is possible to support them.

Keep it (as) simple (as possible): The main aim of this tool is to allow staff to make quick, politically-informed decisions and work flexibly and adaptively. Political analysis can always be made more complicated than it needs to be. The decision-making we face is rarely simple because the work we are doing involves many complexities. However, **focusing on the simplest explanations** provides a useful starting point.

Everyday PEA

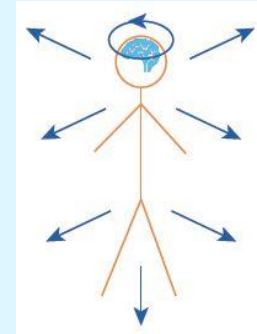
Step 1



Understanding interests

- (a) Is it clear **who** we want to influence or work with?
- (b) Is **what they want** clear?
- (b) Are they acting in line with their **core beliefs**?
- (c) Do you understand the **constraints** that they face?
- (d) Is it clear who and what the **key influences** on them are?
- (e) Is their behaviour being shaped by **social norms** about what is appropriate?

Step 2



Understanding change

- (a) Is it clear **what change** we want to bring about?
- (b) Are they the key **decision maker**?
- (b) Do they have potential **coalition** partners?
- (c) Are their **key decision** points clear?
- (d) Is their **framing** of the issue likely to be successful?
- (e) Are they trying to achieve **multiple objectives** at the same time?

Core questions and discussion points

1. Understanding interests: What makes people tick?

- a) Is it clear **who** we want to influence or work with?
- Is it an organisation or a specific individual within an organisation?
 - If an organisation, are there differences of opinion within the organisation?
 - Do we have an existing relationship with them?
- b) Is **what they want** clear?
- Is it to secure a source of income? To secure power? To repay a favour? To make the world a better place?
 - Is the person pursuing short- or longer-term goals?
 - Are they focused on achieving one thing or lots of things? Are their goals aligned or in tension?
 - Is the objective to block change or a reform?
 - And how confident are they in their position?
- c) Are they acting in line with their **core beliefs**?
- People's past behaviour are important clues to this. Does it seem likely that their apparent objectives are in line with their beliefs? Is what they say sincerely held or convenient rhetoric?
- d) Do you understand the **constraints** that they face?
- Are their decisions inevitable?
 - Is it clear what they are capable of delivering (e.g. a line in a speech, a meeting with an official)?
 - Is there evidence that suggests that they view their position as constrained? Or could they be using constraints as an excuse for inaction?
 - Are these constraints formal, legal rules or policies?
 - What about less visible informal or unwritten rules?
- e) Is it clear who and what the **key influences** on them are?
- Does their behaviour reflect the interests of others?
 - Bearing in mind who they have to work with and report to, who are the other key stakeholders that they currently work with or are trying to work with?
 - How are these other individuals or organisations influencing them: through sources of money, access to or security of employment, or other resources?
 - Do others wield authority (traditional, political, religious or expertise) over them?
 - Have you considered both local (e.g. social movements) and international actors (e.g. donors)?
 - Do you as a player within this network have any influence over outcomes? Are you skewing incentives?
- f) Is their behaviour being shaped by **social norms** about what is appropriate?
- Which norms? Are they customs, cultural, ethnic, gendered, or religious?
 - Do the norms valorise or limit behaviour?
 - How powerful and legitimate is the norm?
 - Is it specific to their situation or a general societal norm?

2. Understanding change: What space and capacity do people have to bring about change?

- a) Is it clear **what change** we want to bring about?
 - What are our own ideas and interests?
 - Do we have a specific change we'd like to bring about?
 - How does this change link to our strategic or tactical approach?
 - Are there any risks associated with this change?

- b) Are they the key **decision maker**?
 - Who gets to decide, vote, sign off, fund, chair the process? This is not just about the formal decision-making chain but those people/organisations that hold informal power over a decision.
 - Who could veto it? Can they influence these people?
 - Do these other people influence them?
 - What changes are they capable of delivering?

- c) Do they have potential **coalition** partners?
 - Are they trying to go it alone?
 - Are there like-minded individuals or groups?
 - Can they work beyond the usual suspects (e.g. private sector, the military, faith leaders)?
 - What's the glue that could hold the coalition together?
 - Do you know if there's been a deal?
 - Are interests aligned around an objective or values?
 - Are they key brokers or 'kingmakers' that hold different parts together?

- d) Are their key **decision points** clear?
 - What is the known timeline?
 - Are there windows of opportunity?
 - How many decision points need to be passed for them to achieve their objectives?
 - Which decision points present the most risk to them achieving their objectives, and why?

- e) Is their **framing** of the issue likely to be successful?
 - Will they convince other powerful stakeholders that the change is in their interests?
 - Does it resonate with local social and political norms? If it doesn't, is it likely to provoke antagonism and backlash? Are they doing so on purpose?
 - Do we need to change our messaging or framing of the issue to bring about change?

- f) Are they trying to achieve **multiple objectives** at the same time?
 - If so, how do these relate to your reform?
 - Successful mobilisation and influence means that individuals often have to play two or more games at once – pursuing one strategy with constituents and another with their colleagues in their political party or external players such as donors.