



Creating impact on policy: writing a policy brief

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What are policy briefs?



A policy brief is a concise summary of a particular issue, the policy options to deal with it, and some recommendations on the best option.



It is aimed at policymakers and others who are interested in formulating or influencing policy.



Policy briefs can take different formats.

Who is a
policymaker?



Who is a policymaker?

Government
ministers

MPs

Civil servants

Local
councils

Policy
community

Pressure
groups

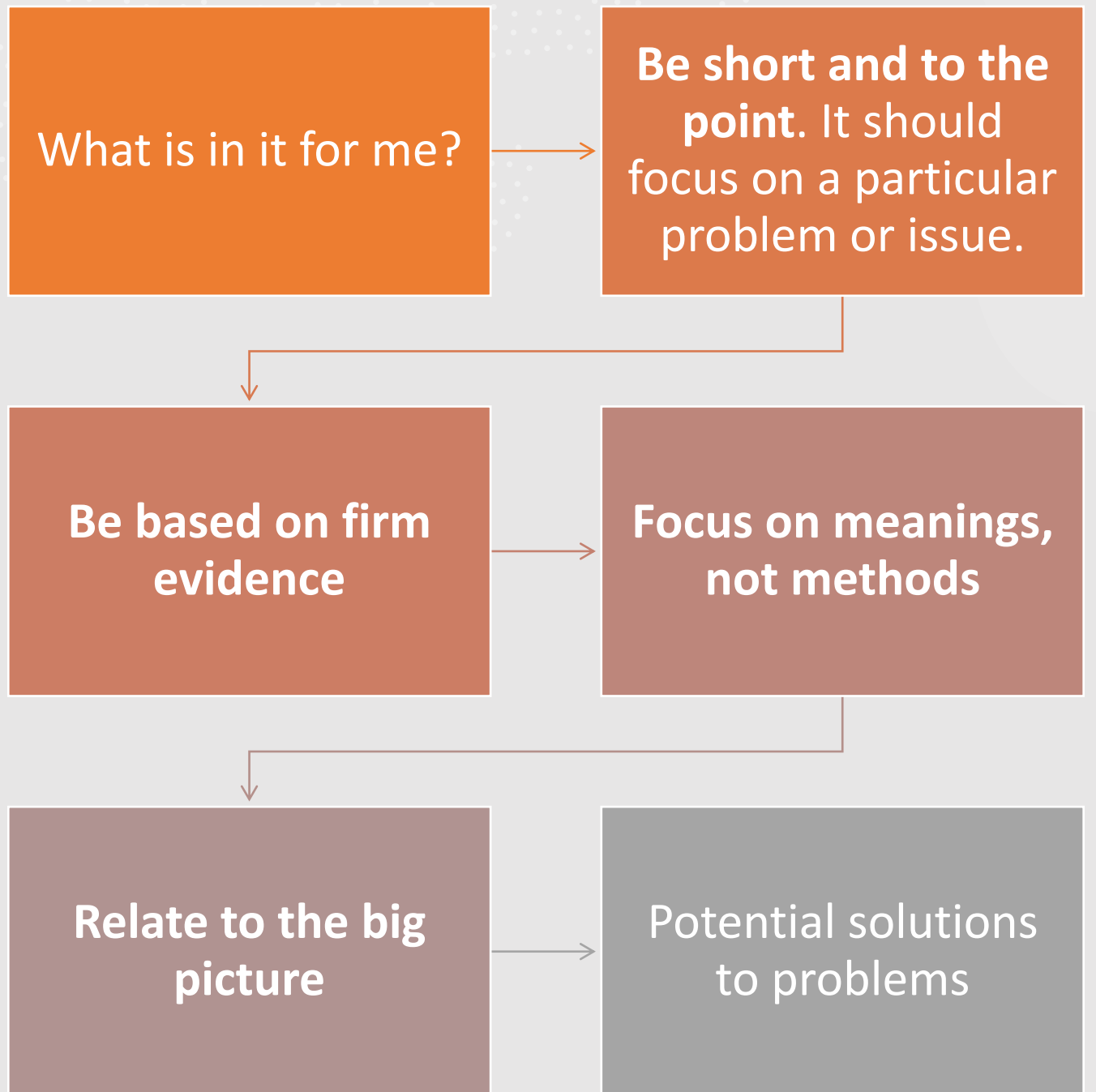
Charities

Community
organisations

Trade unions

The media

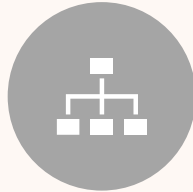
What do they want?



Strong policy briefs



Policymakers are busy people.
Keep it brief.



Well structured, clear layout



Language for non-academic
readers



Front-loaded



Need to show why current policy
should change



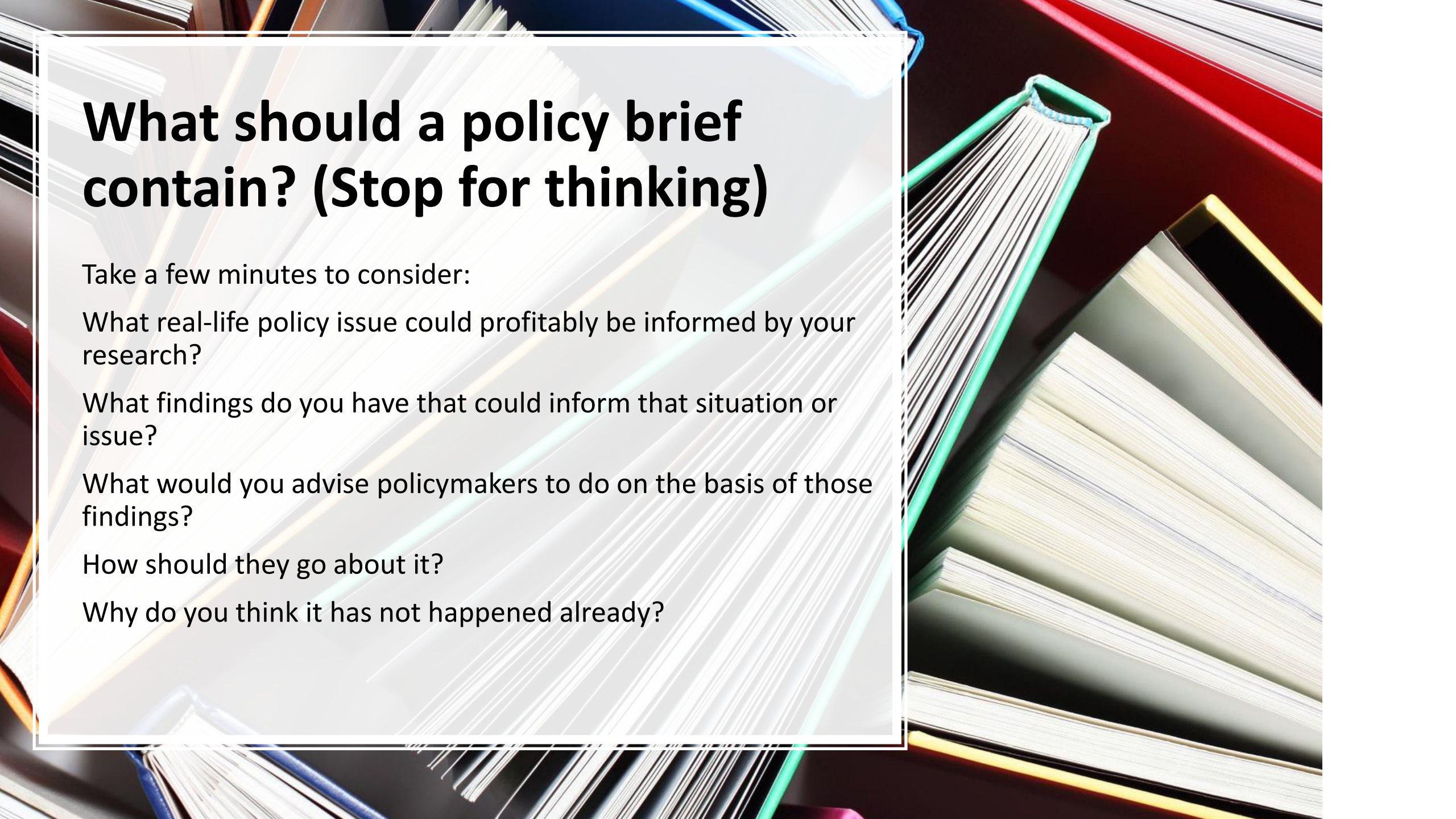
Need to include
recommendations



Practical ideas on how to make
recommendations work



Use Illustrations
where useful

The background of the slide is a close-up, slightly angled view of a stack of books. The spines of the books are visible, showing various colors like red, green, and blue. The pages are thick and white, creating a textured, layered effect. A white rectangular box with a thin black border is positioned on the left side of the image, containing the main text.

What should a policy brief contain? (Stop for thinking)

Take a few minutes to consider:

What real-life policy issue could profitably be informed by your research?

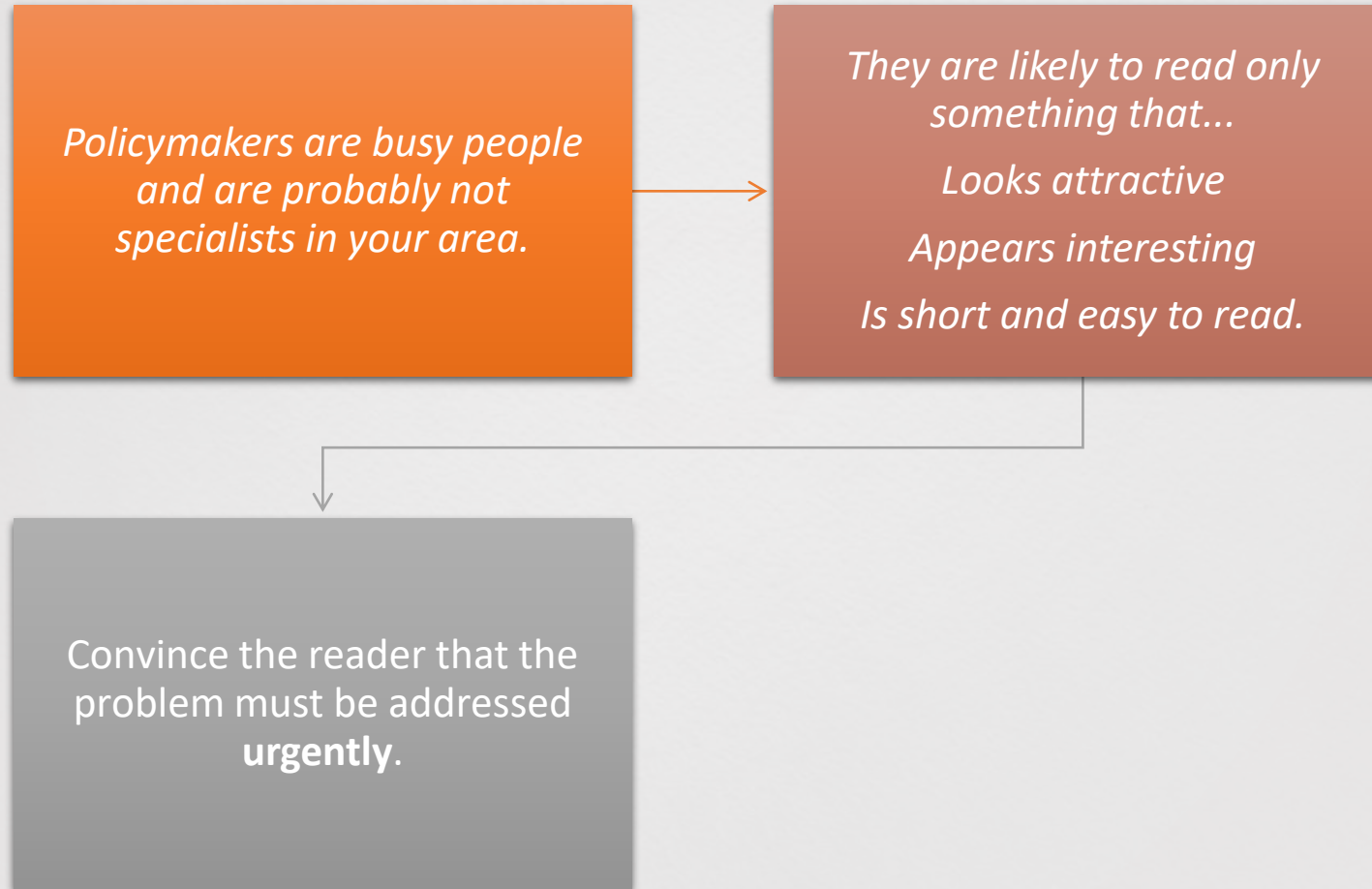
What findings do you have that could inform that situation or issue?

What would you advise policymakers to do on the basis of those findings?

How should they go about it?

Why do you think it has not happened already?

Remember that...



Tone and terminology

Use

Use clear language is especially important in policy briefs.



Try

If you find yourself using jargon, try to replace it with more direct language that a non-specialist reader would be more likely to understand.



Explain

When specialized terminology is necessary, explain it quickly and clearly to ensure that your reader doesn't get confused.

Remember that

- Good title which include what you want to say
- Executive summary
- Written in accessible, non-academic language but..



Format of a Policy Brief

- Title
- Executive Summary
- Scope or context of the problem
- Policy alternatives
- Policy recommendations
- Appendices (optional)
- Recommended and consulted sources

How Do You Write a Policy Brief Outline

Title: The policy brief should have a title that quickly communicates its contents in a manner that the reader can understand and remember much easily.

The executive summary: The executive summary of the policy brief is usually one or two paragraphs in length, and it aims to convince the person who reads it that the brief is worth their time. It is important to capture the reader's attention by drafting a great executive summary to help them see the relevance and importance of reading the brief.



Reviewing executive summary

- What is wrong with this executive summary
- What information is missing?
- What information does not belong here?
- How does the language need to change?



How Do You Write a Policy Brief Outline

Scope or context of the problem: This part is usually aimed at convincing the audience that a current and urgent problem exists, which requires them to take the necessary action. The scope and context of the problem is usually the building block of the policy brief.

Policy alternatives: This section highlights the shortcomings of the existing policies or options that have been implemented and outlines the need for change and focuses on the key areas that change needs to occur. It also aims to convince the readers about the desirability of the policy actions you propose in your document.

How Do You Write a Policy Brief Outline

Policy recommendations: The main aim of the policy recommendations section is to provide the reader with a comprehensive proposal of how the failings of the existing policy approach need to change.

Appendices: Even though a policy brief is a short and targeted document, the author may at times decide to support their arguments further hence the reason for appendices.

Recommended and consulted sources: This is a list of all the reliable sources that the author has used in the policy brief to guide their policy decisions and recommendations.

Studying policy briefs

Review and identify the sections.

What is good and what could be improved?



Making an impact with policy briefs

- Take it to your MP's
- Prepare for that meeting. What is what you propose worth looking at?
- Offer to send a more in-depth brief
- Agree action points e.g. that the MP will arrange a meeting with relevant civil servant.



Other ways to get research into Parliament

- Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology
- Commons and Lords Select Committee enquires
- All-party parliament groups
- Commons library responses to MPs questions
- Political researchers
- Common debates packs
- Common research briefings and lords library notes

Reinforce your message

1

Contact relevant charities / pressure groups/ trade unions/journalists.

2

Try and hand over your policy brief in a personal meeting.

3

Any emails need to be compelling – otherwise attachments won't be read

Policy briefs

[The Critical Role of Civil Society in Peacebuilding \(transformativepeace.com\)](https://transformativepeace.com)

[PBS01Akello.pdf \(lse.ac.uk\)](https://lse.ac.uk/PBS01Akello.pdf)

[true_noref_unscr1325_feb_2013_final_0.pdf \(peacewomen.org\)](https://peacewomen.org/true_noref_unscr1325_feb_2013_final_0.pdf)

[A Call to Action: Averting Atrocities in Ethiopia's Tigray War | Crisis Group](#)