

3 STEPS TO ISSUE IDENTIFICATION AND DEFINITION

The first stage of the policy cycle focuses on understanding the issue.



1 IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM OR OPPORTUNITY THAT NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED

- What is the issue?
- How did it come to your attention?
- Why does it need to be addressed?
- Can it be addressed by public policy or is it outside the scope of government?
- Is this a negative issue requiring a remedial response or is this an opportunity?

2 DIAGNOSE THE ISSUE

CLARIFY HOW THE ISSUE/PROBLEM MIGHT PREVENT THE ACHIEVEMENT OF BROADER OBJECTIVES

- What are the opportunities/benefits that addressing this issue can bring:
 - ◆ to the country?
 - ◆ to communities receiving migrants?
 - ◆ to migrants themselves?
- How does not addressing the issue impact these same target groups and prevent achieving broader national objectives?
- What are the risks and challenges related to this issue?
- Who has identified the issue, and why?
- Is the issue seen differently by groups with different values?

CONSIDER IF IT IS POSSIBLE TO ESTABLISH, WITHOUT FURTHER IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS, IF POLICY ACTION IS REALLY NEEDED

- Is this really an issue that requires policy action?
- Or is the policy in place and this is a matter of an implementation or communication issue?

IDENTIFY GAPS IN UNDERSTANDING TO INFORM NEXT STEPS

- What do you know about the issue? Is the issue fully understood?
- What are the causal relationships that may be necessary to provide a full picture?
- What data or research is needed to better understand the issue and potential options?

MAP STAKEHOLDERS AND CONSIDER HOW AND WHEN THEY WILL BE ENGAGED

- To what extent does this issue impact other policy domains and sectors?
- Is this issue an enabler of other national policy objectives? For instance, can it support objectives of economic development? Or is it rather an issue that demands responses from other policy sectors? What targeted consultative processes for the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches exist or can be established to accompany the policy process right from the start?
- How can the problem be more clearly unpacked/understood at this early stage? Can the stakeholders that brought the issue to the attention of government or the public be brought in now?

3

DEFINE A CLEAR, STRAIGHTFORWARD ISSUE / PROBLEM STATEMENT

- Write an issue statement that is clear, straightforward and not too long (ideally three sentences). Define the statement to reflect:
 - ◆ the broader objectives of the government;
 - ◆ how the issue is understood to achieve or prevent these broader objectives and why it matters;
 - ◆ the anticipated result or purpose of a new policy.
- Also consider as the policymaking process proceeds, whether the issue statement needs to be revised to reflect findings from subsequent stages.

DRIVERS TRIGGERING NEW POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Drivers can be proactive or reactive. Reactive refers to issues that arise spontaneously, in some cases they are politically influenced. Some examples include:

- Crisis or mishandled situations
- Formal enquiry
- Economic, business or industry demand
- Public and stakeholder advocacy
- Migration strategy
- New political direction
- New international or regional agreements



IMPORTANCE OF DEFINING A CLEAR PROBLEM/ISSUE STATEMENT

- A clear problem statement helps to identify goals and interventions needed.
- A problem statement will outline the negative points of the current situation and explain why this matters.
- It also serves as a great communication tool, helping to get buy in and support from others.
- Without understanding and defining the problem, policies can have unintentional negative effects.