



Sustainable Mekong Research Network (SUMERNET)



SUMERNET 4 All

How to write policy briefings

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Bangkok, Thailand

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Component 3: Communications

How to write policy briefings

Summary

- Policy engagement: Many different ways to engage with policymakers and arenas
- Many ways to communicate your research: products and tools
- Why do we write policy briefings in SEI and S4A
- Elements of a policy briefing
- How to write the different elements
- Samples from previous SUMERNET projects

Policy engagement

Many different **ways** to engage with policymakers and arenas

- At different levels – community, local agency/body, Line agency, to subdistrict and provincial to watershed, national, regional and international
- Direct and formal – meetings, field visits
- Indirect or informal – through media, civil society and policy influencers, workshops and conferences
- Specific interventions: policy workshops, policy dialogue forums, etc.
- Timely or topical policy interventions and activities: during national development planning, before key ministerial meetings, ...





Many different **products and tools** for information and engagement

- Enhance **visibility** of your project (website, branding, newsletters, social media, ...)
- Improve **media outreach** skills (S4A media grants), op-eds, blogs
- **Multimedia**: Short videos, podcasts, infographics

Communicating your research

(different products depending on your audience)

- **Briefings**: **policy briefing** (shorter), discussion/synthesis brief, working ppr (longer, more in-depth)
- **Translation** to local languages

Why do we write policy briefs in S4A research projects?

Policy-makers are a key audience for S4A.

Here's what we know about them:

They are busy and have little time.

They don't know our subjects in-depth or understand our jargon.

They're focused on what *they* can do.

What they want most is *information they can act on*.

= > We need to provide a **concise, compelling and actionable** summary of our work.



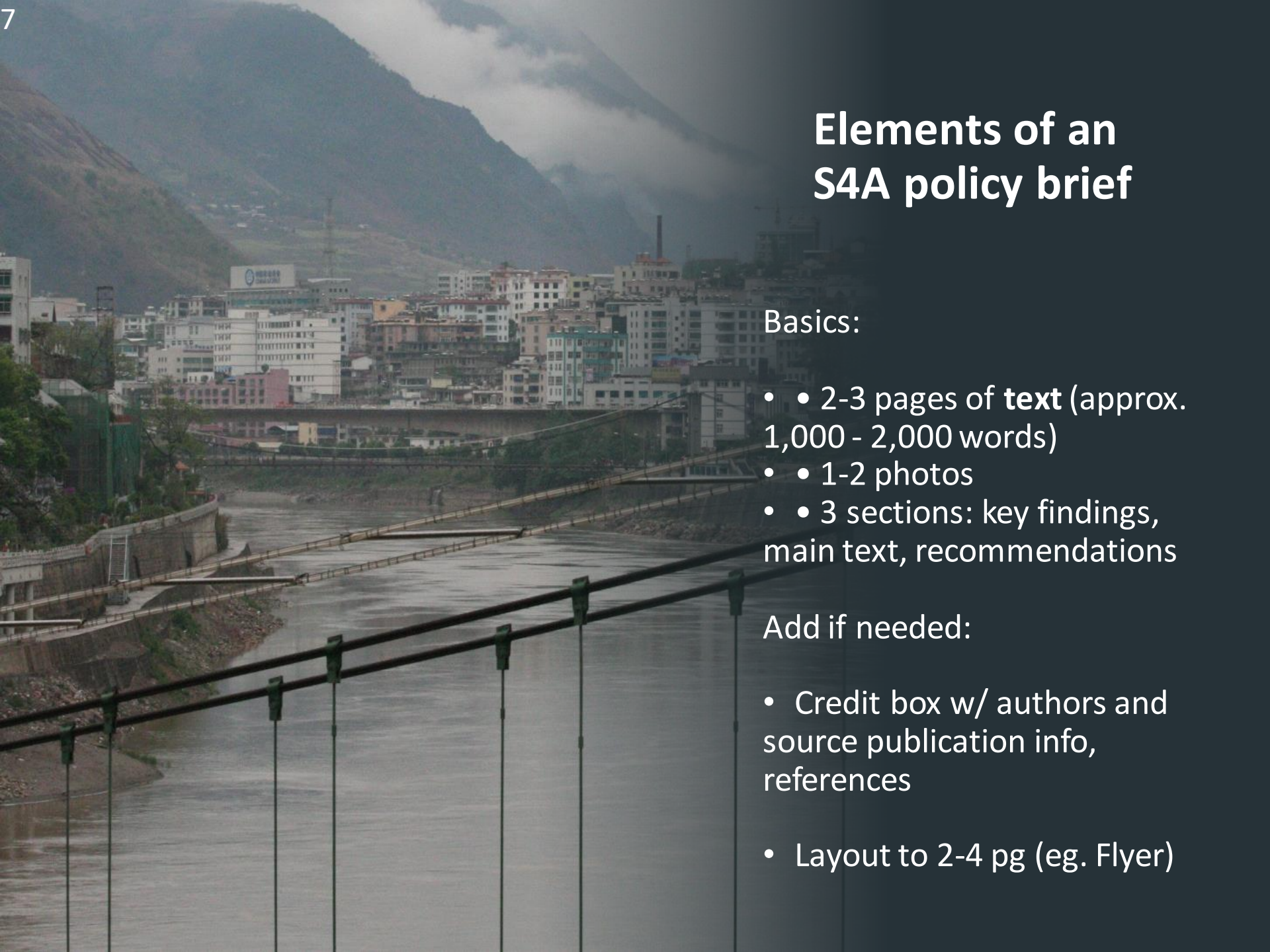


Choosing your topic

- **Policy briefs** can summarize a full report, highlight a specific aspect, or present new material, or synthesize our knowledge.

3 questions to ask:

- Who is your key **audience**?
- How much of your work can you present in a **meaningful** way?
- What is the most compelling and **actionable** information that you can offer?



Elements of an S4A policy brief

Basics:

- • 2-3 pages of **text** (approx. 1,000 - 2,000 words)
- • 1-2 photos
- • 3 sections: key findings, main text, recommendations

Add if needed:

- Credit box w/ authors and source publication info, references
- Layout to 2-4 pg (eg. Flyer)

Improving local awareness of climate change risks in Samut Sakhon Province, Thailand

Key findings

- Samut Sakhon province in central Thailand is already experiencing a multitude of impacts from climate change such as intense tropical storms and floods.
- The Tha Chin and Kalong subdistricts in Samut Sakhon province are unprepared for climate disasters such as floods. The most vulnerable groups are women, older people and those with physical difficulties.
- Improved climate change communication strategies should be developed to equip local communities with appropriate knowledge to make decisions for adaptation when climate-related disasters occur in the future.

Introduction

Climate change is already having a multitude of impacts on the tropical cyclone-driven climate of Samut Sakhon province, one of the central provinces of Thailand. Storm events in the last few years such as tropical cyclones NOCK-TEN and NALGAE, caused heavy rainfall and floods, and affected many areas in Samut Sakhon. The floods affected or damaged 102,352 households, roads, 30 bridges, 3 hospitals and 12 schools had seriously been damaged (Bureau of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation in Samut Sakhon, 2012).

Furthermore, the disastrous floods in Bangkok in October–November 2011 raised the water level in the Tha Chin River as huge water flows drained from the northern areas of Thailand and severely impacted the Tha Chin and Kalong subdistricts in Samut Sakhon.

It is estimated that by 2050, local mean temperatures will rise by 1–2°C and mean precipitation will rise by 2–3 percent around Bangkok Metropolitan Region that includes Samut Sakhon; the sea level in the Gulf of Thailand will rise by up to 0.29 metres (JBIC, 2008). Tropical cyclones occur regularly in Samut Sakhon and are expected to increase and become more frequent in the future. These disasters will pose significant challenges in agricultural production, rice, fruit and salt production. The Thai government should take action to help affected people, especially vulnerable groups.



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Elements in a S4A policy brief

SUMERNET

Policy Briefings

Assessing climate change risks in Samut Sakhon

At present, most of the affected inhabitants from the Tha Chin and Kalong subdistricts in Samut Sakhon live in small and compact housing areas with most people's living standards below the poverty line. Housing tends to be single floor houses, so flood impacts are significant. During the last floods, one-third of the total affected people experienced more than a half-meter inundation for at least three days. The economic damage from flooding mainly impacted the agricultural sectors in these two subdistricts mostly due to the crop and aquaculture losses and halting of business activities.

Most people in the Tha Chin and Kalong subdistricts were unprepared for these climate disasters and experienced significant negative impacts especially the vulnerable groups such as women, old people and those with physical difficulties. This suggests that improved climate change communication strategies should be developed to equip local communities with appropriate knowledge to make decisions for adaptation when climate-related disasters occur in the future.

To address these issues, the SUMERNET project titled "Communicating Water-Related Climate Change Risks to Improve Local Adaptation in the Deltas of the Mekong Region" conducted research in three countries in the Mekong region simultaneously: Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand.

In Thailand, the main objective of this project was to understand how different stakeholders in Tha Chin and Kalong subdistricts in Samut Sakhon province perceived the different types, levels and sources of water-related climate change risks and uncertainties. The development of effective communication models on water-related climate change risks with the participation of local stakeholders was conducted to promote shared learning and to strengthen local adaptation capacity.

The field survey undertaken by the project investigated how different stakeholders perceived the climate change risks such as floods and saline intrusion. The local people's knowledge and awareness about climate risks was also examined.

Communication models of climate change risks

Communication models developed by the SUMERNET research teams in Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand aimed to encourage the local community to take short- and long-term measures to adapt to climate change. These measures included:

- Short-term: Strengthen houses structures, stock up on food, clean water and medicine, and improve security.

- Long-term: Take part in strengthening the dyke system, change crop types and cropping timing, use recycled energy such as biogas, solar cells.

Three risk communication models were developed and disseminated to local communities: video clip, SMS, and "talking farmers", a series of posters using a "farmer" to explain climate change issues. The communication models developed under this project were tested to determine the most useful and effective tool for people to learn about climate change risks and to design adaptation strategies. The communication models are found to be really suitable in these two subdistricts based on the local context and situations in terms of floods. Moreover, the research team also went door-to-door to discuss climate change risks with households.

Policy recommendations

- In the future, climate change risks are expected to intensify every year while local people are still mostly unprepared in terms of adaptation measures and strategies. Thailand's government agencies should undertake measures to build greater awareness about the climate risks among the vulnerable populations especially in coastal and low-lying areas.
- The SUMERNET project's communication models should be replicated for use in other communities or subdistricts within the country facing similar climate change risks.
- Thailand's government institutions such as the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, Ministry of Water Resource and Meteorology, Ministry of Environment and other concerned local authorities including the involved NGOs can redesign these two communicating models to match their local contexts.

Notes

Asian Development Bank (2009). "The Economics of Climate Change in Southeast Asia: A Regional Review". Manila: Asian Development Bank.
Bureau of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation in Samut Sakhon (2012). "The schemes to face the floods in Samut Sakhon in 2012", Division of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation in Samut Sakhon, Samut Sakhon, Thailand.
Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) (2008). "Interim Report, Study on Climate Impact Adaptation and Mitigation in Asian Coastal Mega Cities" prepared by the Integrated Research System for Sustainability Science, University of Tokyo.
World Bank, ADB and JICA (2010). "Climate Risks and Adaptation in Asian Coastal Megacities", Washington, D.C.: World Bank, Asian Development Bank and Japan International Cooperation Agency.

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POLICY BRIEF

Improving local awareness to climate change risks in Prey Veng Province, Cambodia

Key findings

- In the past, the annual floods in Cambodia after the monsoonal rains were viewed as predictable in timing and non-destructive in nature, bringing benefits such as sediment for crops and increased fish catches.
- More recently, the annual floods are more destructive, damaging rice farms livestock and infrastructure as well as resulting in disease outbreaks.
- In Prey Veng province, floods inundated more than 80 percent of the land area in the last three years. In 2000, floods affected approximately 30 percent of the population; more than 7,000 houses and almost 350,000 hectares of rice fields were lost.

Key findings

- 3-5 bullet points, ~ 250 words, 50-80 w. per item
- Summary of main text, focus on YOUR findings
- No recommendations, 'just the facts'

POLICY BRIEF

Improving local awareness of climate change risks in Samut Sakhon Province, Thailand

Key findings

- Samut Sakhon province in central Thailand is already experiencing a multitude of impacts from climate change such as intense tropical storms and floods.
- The Tha Chin and Kalong subdistricts in Samut Sakhon province are unprepared for climate disasters such as floods. The most vulnerable groups are women, older people and those with physical difficulties.
- Improved climate change communication strategies should be developed to equip local communities with appropriate knowledge to make decisions on adaptation when climate-related disasters occur in the future.

REGIONAL POLICY BRIEF

Preserving the transboundary fish trade as a rural job source in Lao PDR, Cambodia and Thailand

Key findings

- In the Mekong region, over 20,000 people rely directly on fish trading for employment along just one trade route through Cambodia, Lao PDR and Thailand.
- The fish trade is on par with rice farming in terms of generating income. The fish trade sector provides up to 70 percent of household income for fisher households in Lao PDR.
- Depletion of fish populations in the Mekong River will cause many people to lose a major source of income.
- Many people employed by the fish trade sector are poor, rural villagers who have no other job opportunities.
- The size of the fish trade between Stung Treng, Cambodia; Champassak, Lao PDR; and, Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand has grown significantly in recent years.

Body text

- ~1000-1,500 words, plus graphics
- Include introduction with context & project info; conclusion is also nice, but optional.
- **GOOD:** concrete examples, clear & concise data; simple, clear, direct language
- **BAD:** jargon, alphabet soups, undefined terms, assumptions (“surely everyone knows “RDS” and NBS?”)

POLICY BRIEF

Towards a green pathway in Chiang Mai Municipality, Thailand

Key findings

- The transportation sector in Chiang Mai Municipality (CMM) contributes to significant Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions.
- Non-Motorized Transport (NMT) is an option to not only reduce emissions from transport but also provide income opportunities for the poor.
- Developing NMT zones in the city center of CMM will offset around 230 to 570 tons of equivalent CO₂ per year in CMM.

Introduction

A Greenhouse Gas (GHG) inventory study conducted by Chiang Mai Municipality (CMM) on tourism related activities showed that the transportation sector contributes to significant emissions. Stakeholders of the tourism sector related activities then identified Non-Motorized Transport (NMT) in CMM as one option that can not only reduce emissions from transport, but also provide income generating opportunities for the poor.

The policy brief is based on the research conducted for developing sustainable urban tourism through low carbon initiatives in Hue (Vietnam) and in Chiang Mai (Thailand). This research aimed to explore strategies for reducing carbon emissions while simultaneously alleviating poverty in the urban tourism sector of these cities.

The tourism service providers were estimated to emit about 0.44 million tons of CO₂ equivalent in Chiang Mai in the year 2011. The recommended mitigation option to reduce GHG emission and to create clean and decent jobs to the local people included NMT in Chiang Mai.



The policy brief presents the background and issue related to the promotion of Non-Motorized Transport (NMT), and discusses how Chiang Mai Municipality (CMM) can promote low carbon tourism through introduction of NMT in the city.

Understanding the problem

Traditionally, NMT was one of the major modal shares in developing countries. For example, in Beijing and Delhi, walking and cycling together contribute to about 53 percent and 33 percent of the modal share respectively. However, with increasing motorization and decreasing inclination to use non-motorized methods, interest in designing measures and incentives for non-motorized traffic is given increased attention in small and medium cities.

NMT is mostly used for short-distance trips, with cycling particularly relevant up to 7.5 kms, and walking up to 2.5 kms. As up to 70 percent of cars trips cover less than 5 kms, NMT has a large potential to replace car travel. Facilitating NMT, particularly walking and cycling, will directly lead to the reduction of the CO₂ emissions.

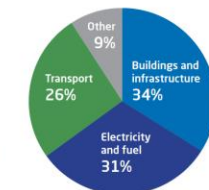
Cycling and walking are also access modes for public transport, and thus their promotion could lead to increased public transport use. Promotion of NMT also delivers important co-benefits, such as noise and pollution reduction, better health, and a greener environment.

Non-motorized transport for Chiang Mai municipality

Being important contributors of GHG emissions, cities also have an excellent opportunity to undertake emission reduction and reap important benefits. The small- to medium-scale cities like Chiang Mai could introduce NMT through the introduction of appropriate policies, and move towards a lower carbon development path.

Preliminary estimates of GHG inventory by the tourism sector in CMM showed that transportation was the major source of GHG emissions, equivalent to more than 4.2 million tons of CO₂ in 2014. Developing NMT zones in the city center of CMM will offset around 230 to 570 tons of equivalent CO₂ per year in CMM. NMT areas will not only help CMM to reduce its carbon emissions, but also provide wider economic and health benefits.

Being one of the most popular tourist destinations in Thailand, CMM could designate NMT in crucial tourist locations to both enhance recreational opportunities by reducing congestion and reduce emissions to overall benefit the local communities. The restricted motorized transport will provide



CO₂ emission of major tourism sub-sectors in Chiang Mai Municipality

Policy recommendations

- 2-5 lines optimal length; flexible on title
- Focus on *actionable* points & be specific: *who* should do *what*, *how* & *why*?
- Place name of research project and your contact info at end

Policy recommendations

Research results suggest that local governments should implement policies and programs that will cater to the specific needs of households and small-scale farmers to cope with climate risks since farmers' responses may not be effective enough to reduce the risks or prevent the recurrence of adverse impacts.

In Tarlac, where projected climate change could cause yield to decline by as much as 80 percent in 2080, there is a need to institute policies and programs that could ensure food security and people's livelihood such as regulating the conversion of prime agricultural lands to non-agriculture use and construction of suitable drainage and water storage facilities to collect and store excessive water during rainy months. For Pangasinan, the strategy should be to explore the opportunities that projected climate change is expected to bring. These include programs such as expansion of rice production area; food to further boost food security and livelihoods, and pro support services (e.g. providing reliable seasonal climate for insurance products, etc.) to enable small-scale farmers to take potential benefits that projected climate change will bring.

The LGUs of both provinces should also provide intervention, education and communication campaigns to raise awareness about climate change and climate variability, and appropriate options and encourage community participation in climate change programs. LGUs should also assist the upland households in the slopes who are highly exposed to natural disasters like typhoons.

Research institutions should develop technologies such as resilient to extreme wet and dry conditions in Tarlac and other provinces.

Policy recommendations

These recommendations are intended for the local government offices at the provincial and district levels:

1. Develop a policy framework and program of action for DRM and CCA to rationalize national and local programs, projects and related efforts and their financing.
2. Emphasize climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction and management in local development plans.
3. Create an office or sub-unit that will focus on capacity building, training and education of farmers and communities on climate risks management and adaptation options, and coordinate with different government offices to develop location-specific adaptation and mitigation strategies.
4. Provide training and seminars to raise farmers' awareness on climate change phenomenon and adaptation options to enhance their adaptive capacity.
5. Implement projects to provide alternative livelihoods to augment farmers' income for periods when they cannot rely on farming.

Policy recommendations

- The government needs to recognise the need for more education and awareness-raising about climate change among vulnerable communities in the Mekong Delta.
- The government agencies need to be aware that successful risk communication does not guarantee people's behavioural change and adoption of good practices in responding to climate change. But the absence of effective risk communication diminishes the chances of success in any climate change adaptation effort in the Mekong Region.
- Communication models such as the "Talking Farmer" could be improved by tailoring content to specific audience interests depending on livelihoods, vulnerabilities, gender, household activity, and so on.

TEMPLATE: for writing policy briefings

Suggested length for policy briefings: **Approx. 500-700 words** (1-1.5 pages of A4).

If you need our help to review your draft, please provide us your draft in word doc (please remove all layout or formatting or pictures before sending to make it easier for our review).

Insert the needed logos at top

Title

Eg. Rural women's adaptation to climate change in Cambodia

Key Findings

- 3-5 bullet points of 6 findings.



↓ Get the Publication

Author(s)

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Type

Tool

Published

Template available
“Writing policy briefings” (under Strategies and Tools)

Support

- S4A comms can provide editing and review support. (If already budgeted, we can also provide design and lay out.)

Writing policy briefs is hard (especially if you're drafting in English).
But you'll get better with practice.

If you need advice, please do contact us for help!



Thank you!

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