



r4d Skills Webinar: How to write a policy brief

Sarah Cummings, July/October 2019
Updated version of slides, February 2021



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC



Swiss Programme for Research
on Global Issues for Development



SWISS NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

Call for policy briefs

An r4d programme initiative for r4d projects to communicate research results to policy makers

- Submission dates for r4d Policy Briefs: Anytime in 2021 and 2022
- Review based on:
 - Proof and persuasion
 - User-friendliness
 - Accessible language
- Support: Resources (guideline, webinar slides, template) and individual coaching by Sarah Cummings

r4d Policy Briefs are published on www.k4d.ch



Knowledge for Development



2030 Agenda-SDGs



Regions & Countries



Formats



k4d for you

EN

Knowledge for Development

Welcome to the Knowledge for Development online platform. All content published here emerges from research for development projects and processes funded by the Swiss Agency and Development Cooperation (SDC) and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) through its joint Swiss Programme for Research on Global Issues for Development (r4d programme).

Research magazine

k4d.ch is a platform that portrays evidence-based research information tailor-made for an interested public and professionals in the field of sustainable development cooperation. The platform is constantly growing.

Filters and search

Filters in the top bar allow you to filter content with your own interests. Use the search bar to find content with your own interests.

Search here...

Videoclips and Films

Policy Briefs

Photo Galleries

Scientific publications

Articles

VIDEOCLIPS AND FILMS



28. October 2019

Official Trailer: Inequality and Conflict - Beyond us and them

ARTICLES



26. October 2019

Wie bekömmlich ist Superfood für die Produzierenden?

POLICY BRIEFS



8. October 2019

Boosting Growth and Transformation in Laos' Industry


<https://www.k4d.ch/category/formats/policy-briefs/>

PHOTO GALLERIES

ARTICLES

PHOTO GALLERIES

Layout by professional graphic designer



r4d
programme

Policy Brief
no. 1 | 2019

How horizontal inequalities lead to conflict in migration countries

KEY MESSAGES

- Political violence between natives and immigrants has been observed in many countries. However, the mechanisms underpinning the link between migration and political violence remain poorly understood.
- Horizontal inequalities, between natives and migrants, are key factors in understanding when and where violence against migrants breaks out.
- In order to prevent the outbreak of nativist violence, we recommend that policy-makers take steps to promote the political and economic inclusion of indigenous groups, specifically in the context of high-migrations.

The picture above was taken at Grand-Berebi on the south-east coast in Côte d'Ivoire. It shows a village where most males are fishermen. Their boats carry flags of different countries for decorative purposes and as a reminder of their places of origin or dreams. © Abbas Makke

Policy Brief | no. 1 | 2019 page 1 of 4



r4d
programme

Policy Brief
no. 2 | 2019

Boosting Growth and Transformation in Laos' Industry

KEY MESSAGES

- Supporting knowledge transfer could reduce the differences between leader and lagged companies.
- Further assessing the slow rates of transformation in small companies as well as the overall decline in productivity is worthwhile because both entail risks and foregone opportunities.
- Given that not all Vocational Skills Development (VSD) programmes contribute to meeting skills needs, greater input from employers, in both design and implementation of such programmes, are needed.

Two thirds of Laos' manufacturing industry has experienced growth and transformation over the last half decade. There are noteworthy differences between small and large companies: whilst both grew quickly, larger ones have achieved more rapid change in products, technology and organisation. However, a dimension of growth and transformation where large companies in Laos are lagging behind is labour productivity.

Policy Brief | no. 2 | 2019 page 1 of 4

Guideline for Policy Briefs: How to Write Policy Briefs

Home / Formats / Policy Briefs / Guideline for Policy Briefs: How...

Reading Time: 1 minute



Search

Search here...

Latest



Official Trailer:
Inequality and Conflict -
Beyond us and them
26. October 2019



Wie bekömmlich ist
Superfood für die
Produzierenden?
26. October 2019



Boosting Growth and
Transformation in Laos'
Industry
8. October 2019



How Horizontal
Inequalities Lead to
Conflict in Migration
Countries
2. October 2019

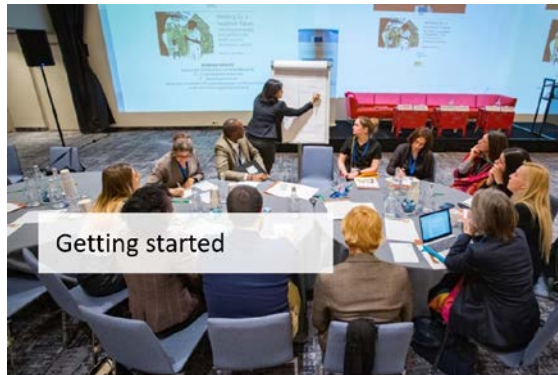


Through Farmers' Eyes:
A Day with Nepali

<https://www.k4d.ch/guideline-for-policy-briefs-how-to-write-policy-briefs/>

Structure of the webinar «How to write a policy brief»

1



2



3



4





Getting started

What is a policy brief?

- A short document that presents findings and recommendations of a research project
- Lessons learned from the research
- A vehicle for providing policy advice
- Addressed to (non-)specialized audience
- A stand alone document
- Focused on a single topic
- No more than 4 pages (1,500 words)

Improving Livelihoods Through Better Road and Water Integration and Planning

Poorly planned roads can negatively affect rural dwellers by damaging land-based assets, through water logging and erosion. However, by modifying the flows of water and the quantity of surface and groundwater available, roads can also have positive impacts on the lives and livelihoods of affected populations. Research undertaken in Tigray, Ethiopia shows that these effects are unequally distributed, and depend on several factors including topographical conditions, the quality of roads, and people's collective and individual assets. Multifunctional roads can improve livelihoods by meeting needs, resources and knowledge into road projects, and improve people's livelihoods and wellbeing.

Roads and water: the missing link
In sub-Saharan Africa, road construction that better encompasses the hydrology would result in more durable roads and lower maintenance costs. Water-related damage currently accounts for respectively, 35 and 60 per cent of the defects in paved roads and unpaved roads (World Bank 2006). Yet despite the effects of roads on livelihoods being deemed globally positive there is surprisingly little evidence on the impact of roads on water flows and livelihoods. With countries like Ethiopia, a country with one of the lowest road density in the world, investing in large-scale public investment programmes such as the Road Sector Development Programme (RSDP) it is critical that more is done to understand how these investments can be targeted effectively to ensure positive impacts on the livelihoods and wellbeing of the country's citizens.

Water from roads: goods and harms
Road water from road run-offs can seriously harm people's assets and productive capacity with short- and long-term consequences on their livelihoods and wellbeing. In Tigray negative impacts included flooding, waterlogging, silt and erosion of fields and houses, subsidence of the soil, erosion of house walls and the collapse of houses. It also decreased people's mobility and increased the risk of contaminating groundwater. People had to cope with the damage generated by the run-off re-plough and re-sow what had been washed away, clear off the silt, and as a last resort abandon their fields and

to be severely degraded. The area became greener and more forested through the more availability of wood, food for household consumption.

Working together for health

The World Health Report 2006

Policy briefs

World Health Organization Geneva 2006



Policy Brief

DECEMBER 2015

www.oecd.org

Policy paths for tackling climate change STRONGER ACTION NEEDED TO MEET MITIGATION GOALS

- ▶ More needs to be done to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions if the global rise in temperatures is to be kept to below 2°C.
- ▶ Stronger action at the global, national and local levels is needed, backed by robust reviews to monitor progress and highlight shortcomings.
- ▶ Carbon markets need continued reforms to make them work more effectively.
- ▶ Investment and other policy approaches can do more to promote innovative technologies.
- ▶ Non-energy emissions must also be increasingly targeted, for example in agriculture, forestry and waste.

What's the issue?

The world is now almost certainly facing a rise in global temperatures due to human activities. To limit this increase to 2°C or less, stronger action is needed to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions if the global rise in temperatures is to be kept to below 2°C.

Why is this important?

There are reasons to be concerned about progress so far in cutting emissions. On the plus side, some progress has been made in delinking economic activity and GHG emissions – each unit of GDP now produces fewer emissions than before. This proves that economic growth and lower emissions are not irreconcilable. Some progress has also been made in lowering carbon emissions in energy production, although coal still accounts for around 45% of electricity production across OECD and partner economies.

However, aggregate emissions of GHGs have been rising since the 1990s. At current rates, the world will use up its carbon "budget" by around 2040, making it highly unlikely to limit the rise in temperatures to 2°C or less. So, while progress is being made, it is still not enough.

What should policy makers do?

There is no single solution to cutting emissions, although many of the current and potential policy approaches can be grouped under just a few headings. The first is the need for action at the global, national and local levels, backed by the setting – and robust monitoring – of targets and goals. The second is carbon pricing, with the aim of ensuring the price of fossil fuels fully reflects their environmental impact. And the third is the development of cleaner energy sources and energy efficient technologies as well as greater efforts to regulate emissions from sectors like agriculture and waste.

Take action globally, nationally and locally: In advance of the COP21 climate change conference at the end of 2015, more than 150 countries submitted their targets and goals for reducing GHG emissions. Regrettably, many are not on course to meet their targets when compared with historical rates of

Your audience

- For whom am I writing this brief?
- How knowledgeable are they about the topic?
- How open are they to the messages?
- What questions need answers?
- What are their interests, concerns?
- What does it take to reach specific readers such as media, decision-makers?

The power of persuasion

- Write a convincing, coherent story or narrative
- Emphasize the urgency of the situation
- Speak in terms of benefits and advantages





Writing your policy brief

What is your focus?

- Focus on a single topic
- Define your purpose
- Identify salient points that support the aim
- Distil points to essential info
- Limit yourself to 1,500 words

Basic policy brief structure

- Executive Summary
- Introduction
- Approach and results
- Conclusions, implications and recommendations

Executive summary

- Distil the essence of the brief
- Provide an overview for busy readers
- Entice readers to go further
- To be written last



Photo: Michael B. Dwyer

The formalization fix? Land titling and land concessions in Cambodia

Issuing land titles to smallholder farmers has long been embraced as a way to promote lending and land markets, but is increasingly being reframed as a way to protect smallholders from irresponsible agricultural investment. This brief examines the case of Cambodia, where over the last decade extensive land titling efforts have occurred alongside a wave of large-scale land concessions. The problem, however, is that titling has failed to live up to the rhetoric of systematic coverage, and has often focused on areas where tenure was already relatively secure. Areas outside the titling zone, in contrast, have become formalized de facto through the process of granting land concessions to investors. This under-

KEY MESSAGES

- Formal land titling is often called upon to enhance smallholder tenure. But in practice it frequently emphasizes other priorities, such as credit access, land tax collection, and creation and regulation of land markets. It is essential that titling projects acknowledge

Policy Brief
Capitalizing on pastoralism to feed people and achieve livestock sector sustainability

SUMMARY
The Global Agenda of Action towards sustainable livestock sector development* (GAA) has embraced the concept of improving "natural resource use efficiency"¹ (NRUE) by means of new technologies to meet the world's growing demand for livestock products while also reducing the environmental costs of the sector. This policy brief proposes an alternative approach to increasing livestock sector output without adding to environmental externalities: enhanced and more efficient use of the biomass in arid and remote areas by means of strengthened and modernized pastoralist production systems. Such an approach would not only diminish the environmental costs, but also enhance countries' self-sufficiency and contribute to national poverty alleviation, sustainable rural development and reduce rural-urban migration. Here we collate arguments in favour of according pastoralism a more prominent role in achieving future food security and present recommendations for strengthening and modernizing such decentralised approaches to livestock production

The GAA: Increasing livestock production in the context of finite resources
The Global Agenda of Action towards a sustainable livestock sector (GAA) is a multi-stakeholder initiative initiated by the FAO, the World Bank and the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI). It is based on two premises: (1) the demand for livestock products will continue to grow and is predicted to almost double by 2050, and (2) this growth will have to be achieved without harm to the environment and to the climate, while also contributing to society's social, economic and health objectives. To achieve the latter goal, the GAA proposes improved "natural resource use efficiency" (NRUE) – defined as the ratio between the amount of animal feed and other resources that are needed to produce a certain amount of a product, such as 1 kg of meat or 1 litre of milk. Research and action is to focus on the following issues:
(1) "Closing the efficiency gap". Basically this means that the less efficient livestock systems are to



- r4d Policy Brief template for executive summary = Page 1

- Picture
- Title
- Lead
- Key messages

Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs) in Agro-industrial and Smallholder Farming Systems in Kenya

Farms in the global South show heavy use of pesticides such as herbicides, insecticides and fungicides. Some of these substances are banned in Switzerland and the European Union but are often produced and exported from there. Our messages draw on research findings from Kenya. They make the link to international conventions, highlight alternatives to pesticide-intensive agricultural practices, and call for phasing out “highly hazardous” substances in line with human rights and the precautionary principle.

KEY MESSAGES

- Highly hazardous pesticides (HHPs) should be withdrawn from the market, starting with WHO Class I substances and organophosphates, in accordance with the precautionary principle.
- Double standards of pesticide regulation among different countries should be eliminated and international conventions implemented.
- Training and incentives for pesticide-free farming should be promoted, such as use of push-pull technology for crop protection.

Picture:
Pesticide application on a horticultural farm near Mount Kenya. © H. Augstburger

Introduction

- Answers the question why
- Explains the significance/urgency of the issue
- Describes the research objective
- Gives overview of findings, conclusions
- Creates curiosity for the rest of brief

Approaches and results

Approaches:

- Provides summary of the facts
- Describes issue and context
- Describes research and analysis
- Should not be overly technical
- Highlights benefits, opportunities

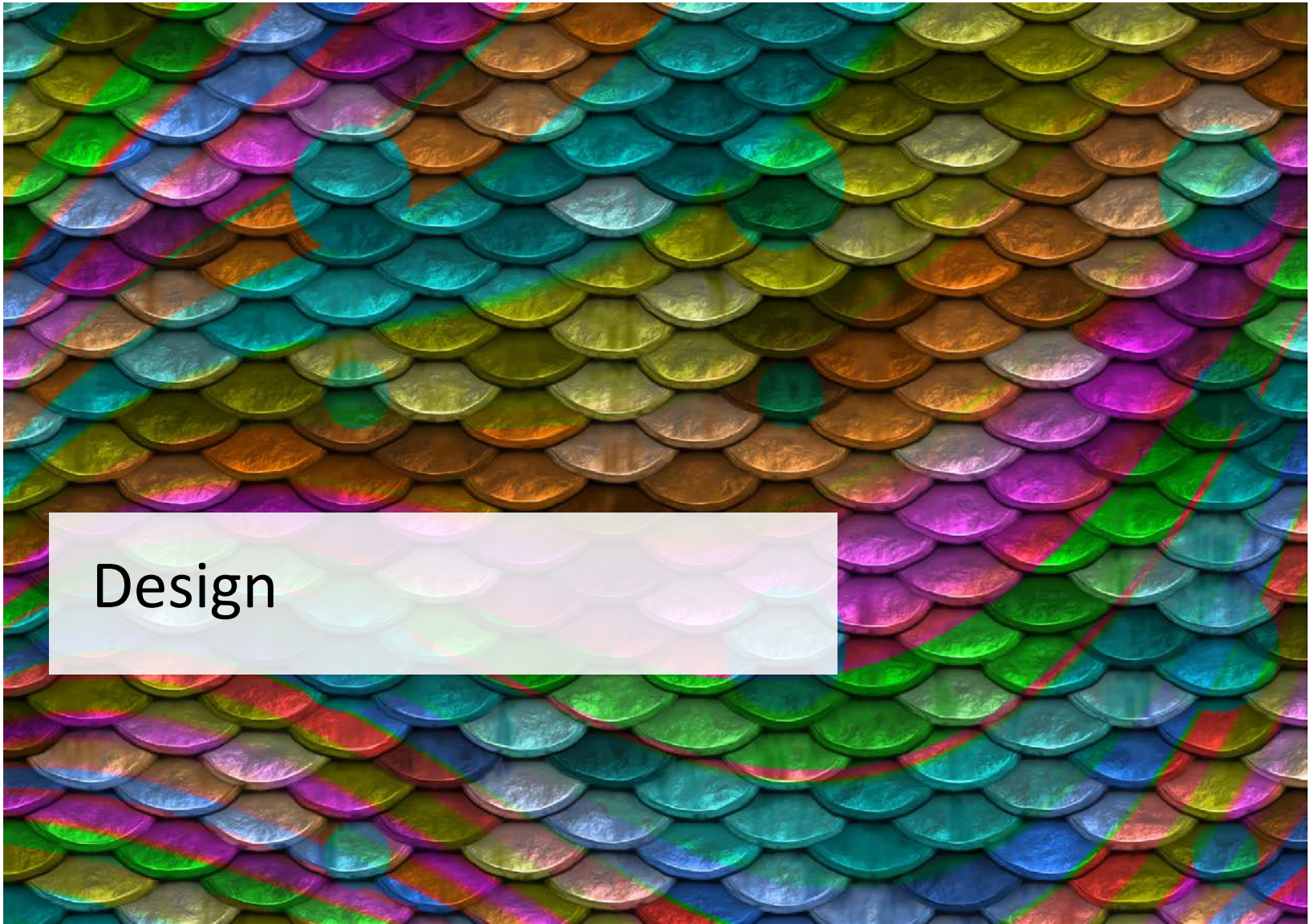
Results:

- Make content easy to follow
- Start by painting a general picture
- Move from general to specific
- Base conclusions on results
- Infographics are useful

Conclusions (or what does it all mean?) implications and recommendations

- Use section to interpret data
- Aim for concrete conclusions
- Express ideas using strong assertions
- Ensure ideas are balanced and defensible
- If hypothesis was abandoned, explain why

Use this part to distil key messages for Executive Summary.



Design

Choosing your title and sub-titles

- Titles: add a little jazz
- Titles are a reference point
- Sub-titles break up text
- Both should entice readers
- Similar to headline writing
- Verb make them more dynamic
- Questions can pique curiosity



Call-outs and side-bars

Callouts

- Sentences or sentence fragments
- Printed in larger fonts
- Boxed or placed in margins

Side-bars

- Extra to main discussion to hook the reader
- Short, descriptive, stimulating, focus
- Focus on action

have been disappointing.

ades old) figure is based.⁴³

Communal land titling: In addition to individual titling, Cambodia's 2001 Land Law allows for communal land titles. But it restricts these to indigenous communities, thus excluding the majority of Cambodians (many of whom practise communal management, e.g. of pasture lands). Moreover, those communities that

Residents and officials living in IS-controlled areas report seeing very little international aid, though this may be because logos are being removed, and because IS representatives are directly involved in – or claiming credit for – aid distributions. One Mosul resident told IRIN:

"They [international agencies] work through local NGO partners. It is hard and difficult for the partners to do it, but they do it very secretly and they are working under cover. These are local groups who have good contacts with the Arab tribal networks and they are sometimes aligned to local Arab tribes".¹²

The head of a local NGO based in the city of Tikrit said:

"We have volunteers working in areas that are under Daesh [the Arabic name for IS] control and Daesh doesn't bother them because they are doing humanitarian work and helping people ... There is not a problem for us to work, the only problem is the labelling of the organisations that send us the aid supplies. We have to have it without labelling for Daesh to accept it. If they saw these labels, they wouldn't let it in and they give our volunteers trouble and they forbid the distribution of those items to the people."¹³

Although IS' rhetoric is clearly anti-Western, it is less clear whether or to what degree it is opposed to

it needs to support communities in its territories if it is to win them over. It is therefore capitalising on its role as a conduit for aid distributions to project the image of a group that is not only engaged in an armed struggle, but also providing for people living under its control.

'People think IS are giving food, but actually they are just distributing items from others.'

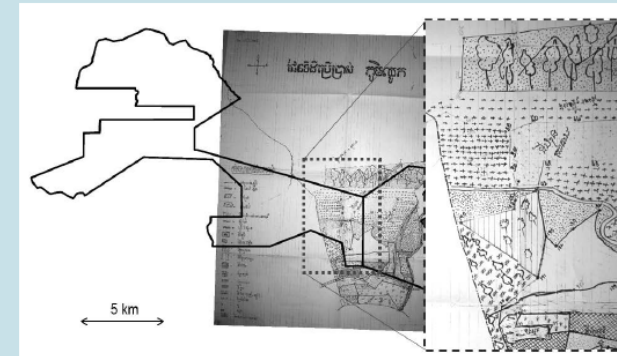
Using its slick media division Al Hayat, IS shares videos depicting distributions of food and other support services, including medical supplies. Food distributions appear to be organised, with registration points and queues for delivery; some bags are branded 'IS Department of Relief'. To counter claims that Mosul is being starved of supplies and its residents are going hungry, IS has posted photographs on Twitter of supermarket shelves filled with food and pictures of cars being fed.¹⁴ However, IRIN was unable to find anyone who had received support from the 'IS Department

to navigate a lengthy business to obtain official classification.¹⁵ As of late 2014, these measures had limited the number of people who could be registered to the single digits.¹⁶

Land concessions: Also introduced under the Land Law, these provide a way for granting land to land-poor families "to establish themselves and/or to develop agriculture".¹⁷ But as a result of these titles, results have been a mix of bureaucracy and corruption. After seven years of operation, an advisor close to the project reported that "99% of the distributed land has been handed over in long-term leases to national and international investors to the detriment of the poor, who got only a 1%

Box 1. Koh Kong sugar concessions

One of Cambodia's most infamous land concessions is a pair of sugar plantations located west of the titling zone in southern Koh Kong province. Developed by an influential Cambodian businessman with Thai and Taiwanese associates, these concessions – producing sugar for export to Europe under the EU's "Everything But Arms" trade provision – have attracted attention because of their detrimental impact on local communities. While claimed legally as state land, significant parts of the plantation areas had been used by local communities. Their use had been carefully documented via the Commune Land Use Planning process (see below). While CLUP was not intended to allocate property rights, the evidence it provided – overlaid with the black polygons of the sugar project's concession area – vividly illustrates how "state" land is often not empty.²⁶



Source: CLUP map: Chi Kha Leu Commune, 'Village Scale' Commune Land Use Planning map' (2006).²⁷ Concession polygons extracted from the data set shown in Figure 1.

Global and continental level

During the period 2007-2014, 5 programmes have been implemented at global or continental level with a total allocation of some €67 million. These programmes have been designed as umbrella initiatives to support and complement regional and local interventions.

The Strengthening Institutional Capacity to Enhance Governance of the Fisheries Sector in Africa (FISH-GOV) Programme aims to enhance the contribution of the fishery sector to food security and economic growth in Africa through an improved institutional and policy environment. With a budget of some €11 million, FISH-GOV will support the implementation of the African Union's Policy Framework and reform strategy for fisheries and aquaculture in Africa. This project is implemented by the AU Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) in cooperation with the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Among other things, FISH-GOV will contribute to raising awareness on fisheries and aquaculture issues in Africa, improving cooperation between regional fisheries bodies

in the framework of EU support to coastal fisheries. The EU has supported several research projects implemented by the WorldFish Centre to improve the nutritional status of poor populations through better management of aquatic agricultural systems and increase aquaculture production and consumption of nutrient-dense small fish.

Regional programmes

A large proportion of the EU fisheries programmes are regional programmes, amounting to a total of €75 million. This is justified by the fact that many problems linked to fisheries are transboundary ones that need to be addressed at regional level. Regional programmes aim at improving the management of shared stocks, through data collection, scientific advice, the development of management plans, and support to regional fisheries bodies. Control and surveillance is also a major problem that can be addressed at regional level through improved cooperation between coastal states, information sharing and joint control operations. Facilitation of regional trade and SPS issues are also important elements of regional programmes. In the period from 2007 to 2014, 13 initiatives have been funded at regional and sub-regional level.

Increasing fish production and incomes of indigenous people in Bangladesh

The project helped me to construct a pond. In 2008, I harvested 120 kg carpfish worth €274, doubling the income of my family. To be able to eat a proper meal every day is the most important achievement of my fish farming for my family. (Shaukha Hossain, Durgapur, Myerailgiri)

This €112 million programme supports fish production, improves nutrition and provides income and alternative employment for vulnerable Adivasi people in Bangladesh.

Fisheries – WorldFish Centre, Caritas and the Bangladesh Fisheries Research Forum

Relevant 2007-2009



Figures and illustrations

- Pie charts/bar graphs are better than tables
- Graphics simplify understanding
- Maps are useful to show location and interlinkages
- Use captions to explain content
- Infographics
 - piktochart.com
 - canva.com
 - [Infogram.com](https://infogram.com)



DEVCO Eurobarometer 2016



What Europeans have to say

82%

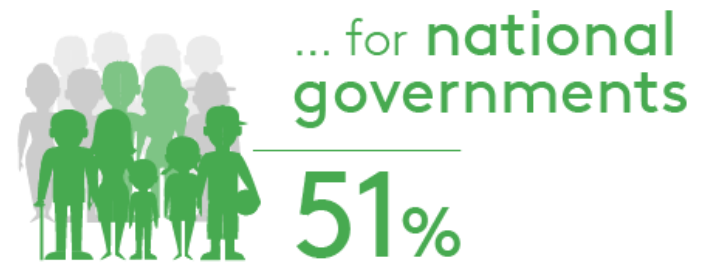
+2 pts
since
2015



think development
is in the EU's
own interest

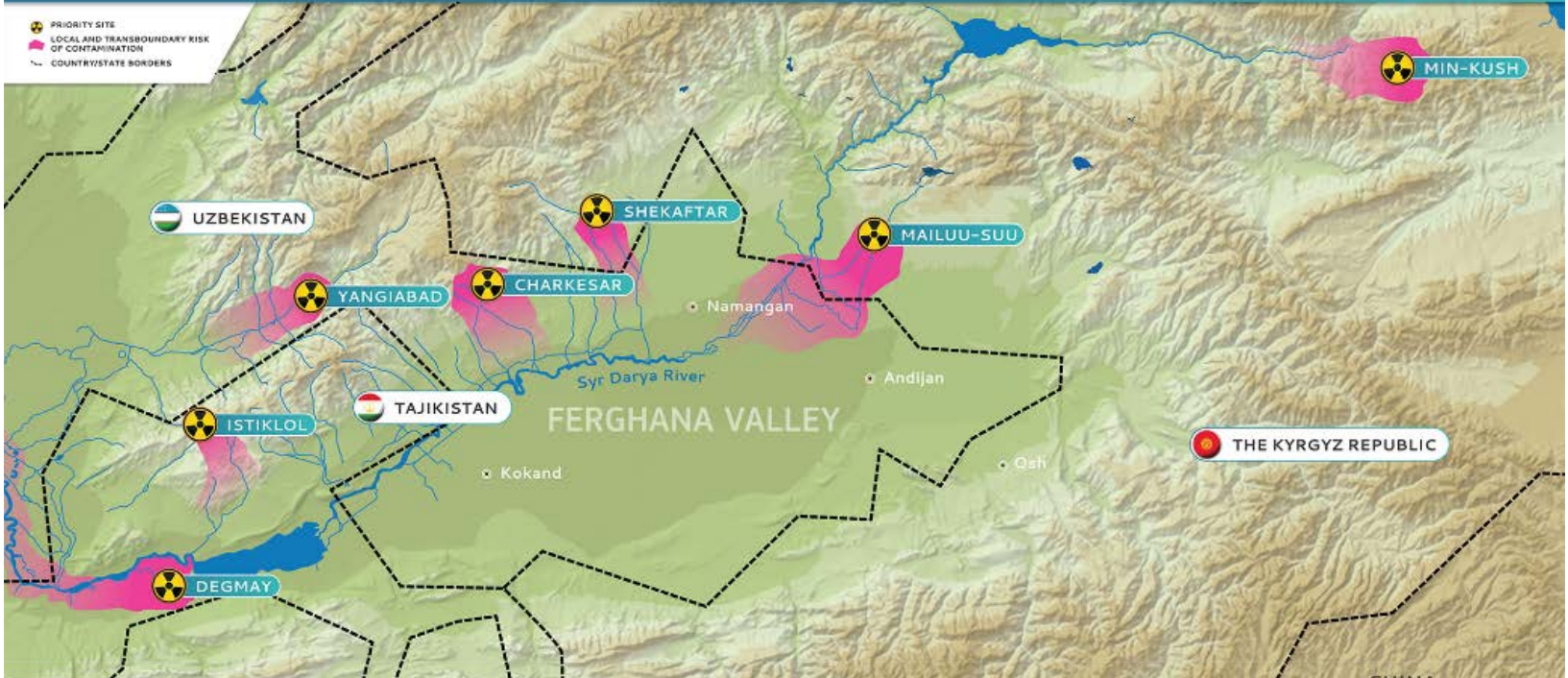
... ABOUT **DEVELOPMENT**

“Development should be **one of the main priorities...**”



Environmental Remediation in Central Asia

Priority sites



6 reasons to support

- 1 Supporting the Sustainable Development Goals
- 2 Maintaining peace, stability and prosperity in the region
- 3 Enhancing regional cooperation
- 4 Improving human health
- 5 Cleaning the environment
- 6 Creating jobs and improving skills development in the region



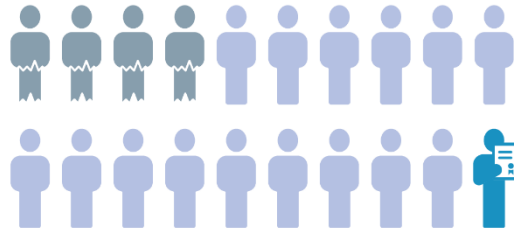
There are
1.8 billion young
people aged 15-29
in the world today



Young people in Africa and
Asia and the Pacific will comprise
77% of the world's
youth labour force by 2030



600 million new jobs
are needed over the next
15 years to maintain current
employment rates



19 out of 20 young workers in developing
countries are in informal employment
Nearly 1 in 5 live below the extreme poverty rate



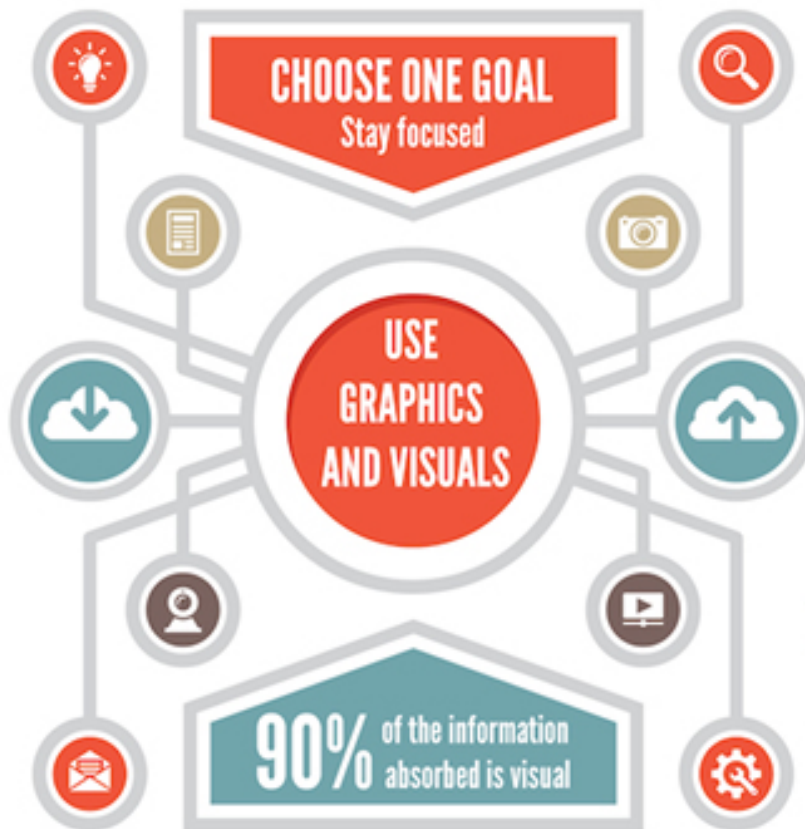
A young person is
3 times more likely
than an adult to be
unemployed



Only 5% of youth
entrepreneurs actually
succeed

5 TIPS FOR CREATING

INFOGRAPHICS



KEEP IT SHORT AND SWEET



Dissemination

[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)

Communication and dissemination

- Where to publish next to www.k4d.ch?
- Policy audiences, including face-to-face
- Social media: Twitter, Facebook etc.
- LinkedIn groups
- Other ideas?

Relevant LinkedIn groups

Group	Link	Subscribers
International Development	https://www.linkedin.com/groups/65094	94,201
Sustainable International Development & Sustainability	https://www.linkedin.com/groups/146958	44,053
Devex - International Development	https://www.linkedin.com/groups/72869	83,411
Society for International Development	https://www.linkedin.com/groups/788017	18,311
Information and Knowledge Management Executive network	https://www.linkedin.com/groups/111072	7098
Knowledge Management Education Hub	https://www.linkedin.com/groups/2544907	1858
Knowledge Management	https://www.linkedin.com/groups/77700	24,721
Knowledge Management Association	https://www.linkedin.com/groups/4130788	2666
KM Practitioners Group	https://www.linkedin.com/groups/4130788	4733
Knowledge management Institute	https://www.linkedin.com/groups/2724881	5264
KM4Dev	https://www.linkedin.com/groups/128044	1104
Non-profit network	https://www.linkedin.com/groups/148346/profile	245,899
Global Development Professionals - the Guardian	https://www.linkedin.com/groups/4729258/profile	2568
International Development Professionals	https://www.linkedin.com/groups/46277/profile	20324
Total		512,158



Coaching for producing r4d Policy Briefs

Sarah Cummings, sarahcummingswork@gmail.com