



Ushirika wa Maendeleo ya Elimu Barani Afrika  
الرابطة لأجل تطوير التربية في إفريقيا  
Association for the Development of Education in Africa  
Association pour le développement de l'éducation en Afrique  
Associação para o Desenvolvimento da Educação em África



## **TRAINING ON DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY BRIEFS**

**20th – 24th April, 2015, Harare, Zimbabwe**



**Funded by USAID**

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## **I.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In April of 2015, the ADEA Working Group on Education Management and Policy Support (WGEMPS) facilitated its first ever training on the development of policy briefs. This session was hosted at the Harare secretariat from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> of April. The participants of this training included officials from the ICQN on Peace Education and the ICQN on Science and Mathematics Education, both housed in Ministries of Education and Training in Kenya. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Zimbabwe also fielded two participants. Also participating were an African Union representative, an officer from the ILO and two representatives of youth organisations based in Zimbabwe. A total of 20 participants took part in the workshop including the facilitators.

The methodology of the training involved delivery of content from facilitators, questions and answers, discussions, group work and homework. Some of the key focus areas taught were; using social media, rules of the English Language grammar and persuasive writing. The use of ICT's was widespread and in groups formed around a particular learning area, one of the key deliverables of the training workshop was to be a high standard policy brief. Some of these will eventually be published and distributed to decision makers.

The overall findings of the evaluation seem to indicate that the participants appreciated the training. One went as far as to note *"It was an eye opener to aspects that I have always took for granted when writing policy documents. Immense learning has taken place."* Writing policy documents is an everyday occurrence in some offices but a skill which is nevertheless taken for granted. It becomes increasingly important that as decision makers are bombarded with vast amounts of information, this information is given to them by their advisors in a responsible, objective and effective manner.

Several participants expressed the hope that there would be follow up sessions of a similar nature and commended ADEA WGEMPS for the initiative. The funding for this project was provided by USAID.

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

Knowledge workers in Ministries of education and training often find themselves reading, compiling and presenting vast amounts of information to policy makers on various topics. Ideally, this information should be succinct to allow those making decisions to clearly and immediately grasp the salient issues. This skill grows more critical as accessibility to information improves and policy makers, who are inundated by data, have to make decisions in this fast paced world.

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 government policy makers and others who are interested in formulating or influencing policy" (FAO). It explains and conveys the urgency of a topical issue, presenting evidence-supported policy recommendations or implications around the issue.

For researchers, policy briefs present important research findings in a short and appealing way, making it easy to engage in rich and fruitful repeat consultations with policy actors. They, thus, help to bridge the gap between research and policy (academic specialists and stakeholders with less knowledge). According to Talbot & Talbot (2014), policy actors use existing relationships with academics half of the time when commencing to research an issue. A well-written policy brief is evidence of a deep awareness of the impact of research – an increasingly important aspect of fund mobilization. Policy briefs also have a snowball effect: they have the potential to reach large audiences through different networks because of their condensed format.

In realization of this, the Association for the Development of Education in Africa's (ADEA) Working Group on Education Policy Support extended its in house training on policy brief development to representatives of Ministries of Education and Training in Kenya and Zimbabwe as well as the ADEA Inter-Country Quality Nodes (ICQNs) on Peace Education and Mathematics and Science Education. Inter-Country Quality Nodes represent a typical example of ADEA's interest in catalyzing country and African owned solutions to the challenges faced by the education system on the continent. They are hosted and staffed by Ministries working in Education and Training creating a symbiotic relationship where interventions are likely to have a multiplier effect. Hence, the choice of two ICQN's to receive training during this flagship program. Other participants included representatives from the African Union, members of youth organisations in civil society and the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

A total of 20 participants took part in the training which covered a broad range of subjects. These included but are not limited to; using social media, the rules of grammar and persuasive writing. In house facilitators covered many of the topics on hand, while an external and competent language teacher was brought in to teach some very important yet often overlooked aspects of English language writing. The host organisation, ADEA WGEMPS housed the training session in its Harare secretariat conference room. While funding for the project was provided by USAID. Given the positive feedback received at the close of the training and the growing use of policy briefs as instruments to educate, it is the hope of ADEA WGEMPS to continue to offer this service to many more Ministries of Education in the future.

## 2.1 Overview of project and its objectives

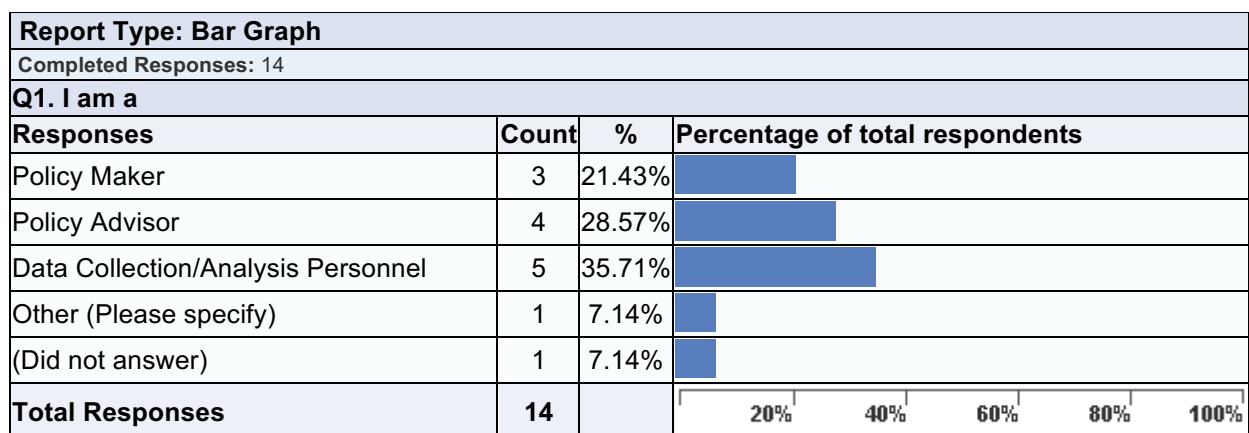
The purpose of the project was to train participants in advocacy and in particular the skill of writing policy briefs on key education issues related to their areas of work.

The specific objectives of the training were;

1. To develop participants understanding of how to take a key education issue and develop a coherent analysis and argument that advocates a set of actions or recommendations – the basis of a policy brief.
2. To improve participants persuasive writing skills, including grammatical standards, developing a coherent story line, and their ability to synthesize research to support the advocated position.
3. To use social media as an advocacy and information sharing tool.

## 2.2 Key stakeholders

The policy brief development training was designed those in the education sector, particularly Ministry of Education and ICQN officials. The African Union, to whom ADEA acts as a technical partner also sent a representative from its youth wing. Similarly, two youth organisations in Zimbabwe as well as an ILO Zimbabwe country representative were present.



Note : Two completed responses were handed in late and were not included in the analysis but did not vary significantly from the other responses.

## 2.3 Methodology of training

The course covered five full day sessions with a high degree of participation from the trainees. Facilitators delivered materials using Information and Communication Technology aids such as power point presentations, and exercises in Word Perfect. These brief sessions were punctuated by questions and answers as well as interactive exercises and group work. The participants were also given 'homework' to complete overnight.

### 2.3.1 Training content

**Social media:** Participants were taught how to use social media to promote events, activities and ideas. Each participant set up a Twitter account and was encouraged to use the hashtag #policybriefseminar for the duration of the workshop to tweet comments on the proceedings. Additionally, participants were shown how to create a facebook page for an event. They were also introduced to LinkedIn.

**Basic writing rules and guidelines:** In addition to going over some of the most basic but commonly forgotten rules of writing, an exercise to test participants writing skills was conducted. Participants were also given a short quiz and homework.

**Persuasive writing:** Notes on how to use persuasive writing were given followed by a practice session on analyzing the tools used in persuasive language.

**Developing an argument for a policy brief:** This session introduced the key facets of what should be found in a policy brief. Participants were placed in groups and asked to identify a theme and develop their arguments on it. These were then presented.

**Executive summaries:** The group was taught how to develop and write an executive summary. This included a practice session and notes on what criteria to use for assessing their summaries.

**Policy brief development:** Participants had been asked to carry material related to the work that they do. These materials were then used to develop policy briefs. One of the deliverables of the workshop was to have each participant produce a policy brief. These drafts were critiqued using the principles already taught.

## 3.0 EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The evaluation framework here was to determine whether the training met its objectives as outlined in 2.1.

### 3.1 Purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of this particular evaluation is to determine whether the policy development training workshop met its objectives. This evaluation will also identify areas in which future policy brief training workshops can be improved.

### 3.2 Evaluation method

In order to arrive at an evaluation, a brief questionnaire was distributed to participants at the end of the week which was filled in independently and submitted. The questionnaire consisted of 14 questions all requiring qualitative responses ranked on a scale of 'Very poor' to 'Excellent' or 'Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree'. A copy of the evaluation form and the evaluation form findings can be found in the annex section.

### 3.3 Key evaluation questions

There were a total of 14 questions which can be grouped into five central themes as well general administrative questions. The first set related to whether the training **met set and individual expectations**. Theme number two queried whether the concepts learnt during the training would be **applicable in future**. The third theme was related to the **content of the training i.e. instructions, materials, facilitators and working environment** and how participants viewed these. Participants were asked to rate whether the training allowed for **participation** and whether it was allocated enough **time**.




Finally, participants were asked to **rate** the training as well as offer comments on what aspects could be improved.

#### 4.0 EVALUATION FINDINGS

Participation was split almost equitably between policy makers, policy advisors and data collection/analysis personnel.




- Key Evaluation Theme 1: **Met set and individual expectations**

Fifty seven per cent of those present felt that the training identified and followed its objectives. Similarly, a slight majority of participants strongly agreed that the training met their individual expectations while the remainder agreed.

Q2. The training met my expectations			
Responses	Count	%	Percentage of total respondents
Strongly Agree	8	57.14%	
Agree	6	42.86%	
Neutral	0	0%	
Disagree	0	0%	
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	
(Did not answer)	0	0%	
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>14</b>		




- Key Evaluation Theme 2: **Applicable in future**




Most of the participants at the workshop came away from it with a strong sense that they could apply what they had learnt in the future. The remaining 35.7 per cent of participants agreed with this notion.


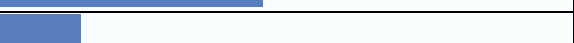
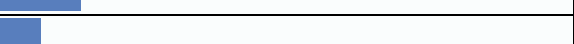

Q3. I will be able to apply the knowledge learned.			
Responses	Count	%	Percentage of total respondents
Strongly Agree	9	64.29%	
Agree	5	35.71%	
Neutral	0	0%	
Disagree	0	0%	
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	
(Did not answer)	0	0%	
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>14</b>		


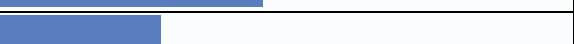
- Key Evaluation Theme 3: **Content of the training i.e. instructions, materials, facilitators and working environment**

The overall impression of the content of the training workshop seems to be very positive as 64, 85.7, 78.6, 71.4 and 57 per cent strongly agreed that the content was well organized, the materials provided were useful and pertinent, the trainers were knowledgeable, the instructions were good and the conditions for work were conducive respectively. It is important to note though that, the conditions of work, as shown above were rated the least favourably. Also, seven per cent of participants were neutral in their assessment of the caliber of instructors suggesting the need to improve that area.





<b>Q5. The content was well organized and easy to follow.</b>			
<b>Responses</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Percentage of total respondents</b>
Strongly Agree	9	64.29%	
Agree	5	35.71%	
Neutral	0	0%	
Disagree	0	0%	
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	
(Did not answer)	0	0%	
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>14</b>		

<b>Q6. The materials distributed were pertinent and useful.</b>			
<b>Responses</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Percentage of total respondents</b>
Strongly Agree	12	85.71%	
Agree	2	14.29%	
Neutral	0	0%	
Disagree	0	0%	
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	
(Did not answer)	0	0%	
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>14</b>		

<b>Q7. The trainers were knowledgeable</b>			
<b>Responses</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Percentage of total respondents</b>
Strongly Agree	11	78.57%	
Agree	2	14.29%	
Neutral	1	7.14%	
Disagree	0	0%	
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	
(Did not answer)	0	0%	
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>14</b>		




<b>Q8. The quality of instructions was good</b>			
<b>Responses</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Percentage of total respondents</b>
Strongly Agree	10	71.43%	
Agree	4	28.57%	
Neutral	0	0%	
Disagree	0	0%	
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	




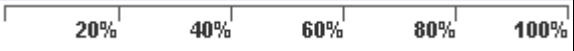



(Did not answer)	0	0%	
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>14</b>		
<b>Q9. The conditions of the work were conducive</b>			
<b>Responses</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Percentage of total respondents</b>
Strongly Agree	8	57.14%	
Agree	6	42.86%	
Neutral	0	0%	
Disagree	0	0%	
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	
(Did not answer)	0	0%	
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>14</b>		


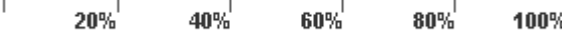
- Key Evaluation Theme 4: **Participation and Time**

Close to 86 per cent of participants strongly agreed when asked if class participation and interaction were encouraged but only 35.7 per cent felt the same way about adequate time being allocated for questions and interaction. A further 50 per cent agreed that time for questions and interactions was adequate while 14 per cent were neutral on this score item.

<b>Q10. Class participation and interaction were encouraged</b>			
<b>Responses</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Percentage of total respondents</b>
Strongly Agree	12	85.71%	
Agree	2	14.29%	
Neutral	0	0%	
Disagree	0	0%	
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	
(Did not answer)	0	0%	
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>14</b>		

<b>Q11. Adequate time was provided for questions and discussions</b>			
<b>Responses</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Percentage of total respondents</b>
Strongly Agree	5	35.71%	
Agree	7	50.00%	
Neutral	2	14.29%	
Disagree	0	0%	
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	
(Did not answer)	0	0%	
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>14</b>		

<b>Q12. How would you rate the training overall?</b>			
<b>Responses</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Percentage of total respondents</b>
Excellent	6	42.86%	

Good	8	57.14%	
Average	0	0%	
Poor	0	0%	
Very Poor	0	0%	
(Did not answer)	0	0%	
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>14</b>		

- Key Evaluation Theme 5: **Areas for improvement**

The comments on areas for improvement picked up three key issues. Eight participants noted that more time was needed to do exercises and learn and another two singled out the selection of materials on which to write policy briefs as an area for revision. One person felt that the workshop could have benefitted from having a broader mix of participants from different countries.

Q13. In your view, what aspects of the training can ADEA WGEMPS improve?		
Sr. No.	Response No.	Response Text
1	1	N/A
2	2	Time management was not that good especially on the first day on the session on social media
3	3	If Funds allow it would have been good to have participants from other countries. It would improve the discussions and information for the policy briefs
4	4	The seminar required more time particularly for starter in preparing policy briefs
5	5	More time was needed but avoid extended sessions due to adult learners
6	6	Time allocated for the preparation of the drafts
7	7	The training needs more time
8	8	Policy briefs are very technical. More time only each section of the policy brief would have been useful
9	9	Material selection to consider in the policy brief
10	10	Presentation, Pre-organization, Material distribution
11	11	N/A
12	12	Avoid extended sitting hours where possible. Move time need for group discussion to help improve outputs

- Key Evaluation Theme 6: **Overall Assessment**

Q14. Do you have any overall comments?		
Sr. No.	Response No.	Response Text
1	1	Such seminars need to be done more often as we really benefited a lot
2	2	The training was very good and ADEA should keep up the good work
3	3	The workshop was good and i would want to have a second round of such training. The logistical arrangements were good.
4	4	I am thrilled to have been part of seminar current learning experience. I would welcome any other training organized by ADEA WGEMPS
5	5	I am very grateful to you for organizing this training. I just realize that my knowledge on preparation of policy briefs was indeed limited. Probable a second session to further the skills would be appropriate
6	6	Great programme which can be developed further

7	7	N/a
8	8	Great instructors, good meals, and a collegial environment
9	9	Workshop was worthwhile and a follow on workshop is encouraged to solidify what we have learnt
10	10	N/A
11	11	N/A
12	12	It was an eye opener to aspects that I have always took for granted when writing policy documents. Immense learning taken place.
13	13	very valuable
14	14	Excellent workshop and I hope we do this again

The overall comments mirrored the suggestions made earlier as seven participants mooted more workshops of a similar nature.

## 5.0 OUTCOMES

- Topical policy briefs in line with each participants field of work
- Improved basic and persuasive writing skills of each participant.
- Ability of each participant to use social media as an advocacy and information sharing tool.

### 5.1 List of Policy briefs produced

Topic of Brief	Name of Organization
• Countering Violent Extremism through education	ICQN on Peace Education
• Data Revolution	WGEMPS
• Performance Lagged Assessment Practices in Schools	Ministry of Education, Zimbabwe
• Enhancing Efficacy and Efficiency for Youth Development Programming in Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe Youth Council
• Building Youth Employment Skills through Informal Apprenticeship	WGEMPS
• Capacity building of mathematics and science teachers in Africa: Innovative home grown approaches to funding.	ICQN on Science and Mathematics Education
• The Value of the AU Volunteer Scheme	African Union HRST

## **6.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The workshop brought together two Ministries of Education and Training, several youth groups an African Union representative and an officer of the ILO. Despite their varied origins, all the participants enjoyed the training workshop while many encouraged ADEA WGEMPS to hold more like it.

This reaction supports ADEA WGEMPS position on the need to transfer such high level skills in the areas where they are needed most. It is particularly important in organisations such as ICQN's which are still trying to find their footing.

The key recommendations coming out of this evaluation seem to be;

1. More time on the task of developing the brief; The planners of these workshops can address this challenge by sending materials and the program to participants in advance. This will allow them to familiarise themselves with the content and prepare. They will also be able to make a mental note of the time lines and schedules.
2. Working conditions; A great deal of time was spent seated. This could be alternated with more group work as well as physical activity to break the monotony.

### **Agreed Calendar of Events**

- All participants submit their policy briefs to WGEMPS by 10<sup>th</sup> June
- Angela and Shem review and send back by 16<sup>th</sup> June
- Participants return them by the 25<sup>th</sup> June.
- Karen Pitt edited the content.
- Finalised by end of June
- For those who have followed the timelines submitted to layout for publishing.
- Final copies sent back to participants to disseminate to their network of stakeholders.

**7.0 APPENDICES**

**EVALUATION FORM**

Instructions:

**○ – please mark with an X or a ✓ in the appropriate circle.**

I am a: ○ Policy Maker                      ○ Policy Advisor                      ○ Data collection/analysis personnel

○ Other (please specify) .....

Please indicate your impressions of the items listed below.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The training met my expectations.	○	○	○	○	○
2. I will be able to apply the knowledge learned.	○	○	○	○	○
3. The training objective was identified and followed.	○	○	○	○	○
4. The content was well organized and easy to follow.	○	○	○	○	○
5. The materials distributed were pertinent and useful.	○	○	○	○	○
6. The trainers were knowledgeable.	○	○	○	○	○
7. The quality of instructions was good.	○	○	○	○	○
8. The conditions of the work were conducive.	○	○	○	○	○
9. Class participation and interaction were encouraged.	○	○	○	○	○
10. Adequate time was provided for questions and discussions.	○	○	○	○	○

11. How would you rate the training overall?

Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor
○	○	○	○	○

12. In your view, what aspects of the training can ADEA WGEMPS improve?

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13. Do you have any overall comments?

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