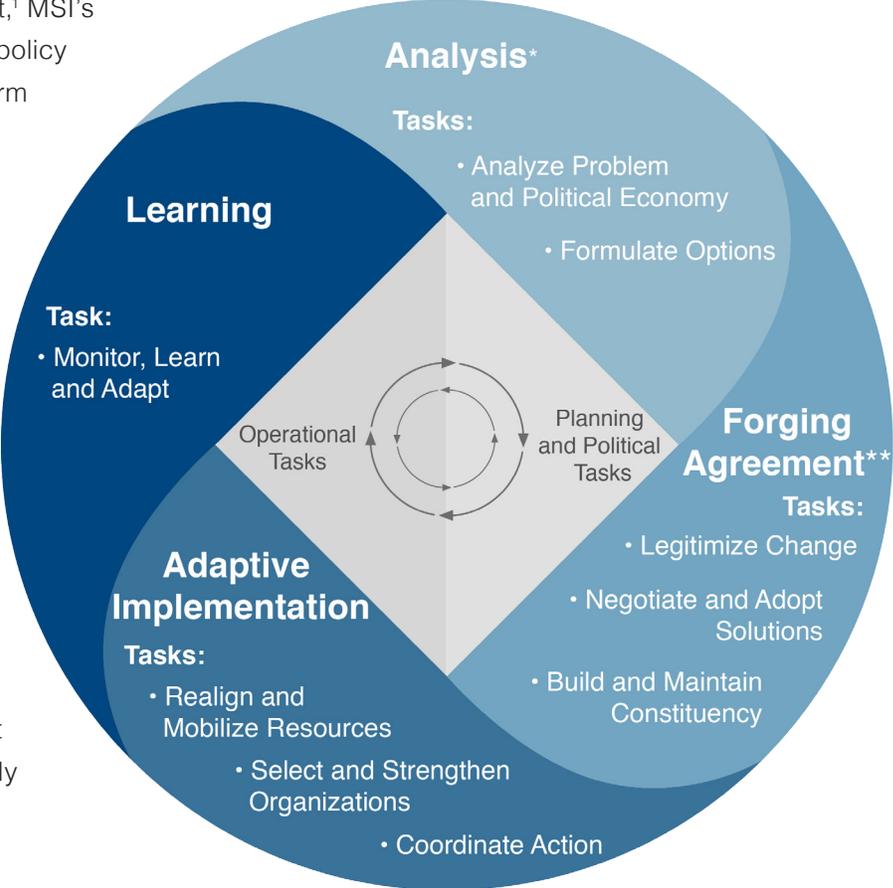# MSI's Advancing Policy and Institutional Change (APIC) Framework

MSI's political economy-oriented approach to advancing policy and institutional change (APIC) provides a roadmap for strategic management of policy and institutional change organized around nine interdependent tasks, each supported by practical tools. Based on learning from more than two decades of practical experience helping governments and advocacy groups shape and manage complex reform efforts in the context of the USAID-funded Implementing Policy Change (IPC) Project,[1] MSI's APIC approach broadens the focus from policy implementation to include policy and reform design, recognizing that these may be absent in many contexts.

The APIC framework reflects current research on effective institutional reform and systems thinking and addresses a perceived "hole" in the praxis of "thinking and acting politically:" increased emphasis has been placed on political economy analysis (PEA) as an element of program design, but it has proved difficult in practice to sustain an emphasis on political economy factors over the course of implementation. PEAs are also not "silver bullets;" deciding what to do next to confront powerful actors likely to block reform can be challenging. APIC takes an flexible and adaptive approach

to reform design and implementation, emphasizes the ongoing interaction of political and operational tasks during implementation, and promotes the empowerment of local systems that foster locally driven and inclusive development. The framework and tools have been kept deliberately simple so that they can be readily adopted both by development practitioners and local stakeholders committed to pursuing reforms or seeking to address a compelling problem.[2]

Analysis*

Tasks:
- Analyze Problem and Political Economy
- Formulate Options

Learning

Task:
- Monitor, Learn and Adapt

Operational Tasks

Planning and Political Tasks

Forging Agreement**

Tasks:
- Legitimize Change
- Negotiate and Adopt Solutions
- Build and Maintain Constituency

Adaptive Implementation

Tasks:
- Realign and Mobilize Resources
- Select and Strengthen Organizations
- Coordinate Action

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"Advancing policy and institutional change" implies practical, on-the-ground changes in publicly sanctioned rules, procedures and programs, rooted in the real world of politics, opposing interests, competing values and limited resources. Where suitable policies are already on the books, the framework focuses on advancing the implementation of those policies, whether old or new. Where policies have not been adopted or need to be modified or jettisoned, the framework focuses initially on facilitating the formulation and formal adoption/revision of policies and laws. The approach provides a discipline intended to help reformers better understand and outline their missions, set priorities, conduct effective advocacy and coalition building, and mobilize their constituents. By applying the framework, organizations can more effectively address stakeholder needs, ensure a dynamic linkage of strategic and operational management tasks, and increase ownership of policy and institutional change initiatives.

The framework reflects the view that managing policy and institutional change is different from managing projects and programs. The context is political, the needed resources are rarely in hand, and no one is fully in charge. For these reasons, successful policy and institutional change requires a different style of management – and different management tools – than most public managers are used to. Policy and institutional change is an iterative process that involves learning while doing and maintaining flexibility. Plans are important, but so are the ability and willingness to vary from those plans to respond to unanticipated events, new information and feedback loops.

APIC Experience in Mexico

Context: Mexico has embarked on a comprehensive criminal justice reform highlighted by the adoption in 2010 of an amendment to the Mexican constitution mandating a transition from accusatorial to adversarial jurisprudence. With funding from USAID, MSI has supported the Mexican government at each stage of this reform effort, which requires changes at the federal level, in all of Mexico's 31 states, and in the Federal District by the middle of 2016.

APIC Application: As an organizing basis for this work and as a recurrent element in it, MSI made extensive use of the APIC framework. During the first phase of this effort from 2008 until 2014, this work helped legitimate the change and build constituencies for reform and included six national forums led by the President of Mexico, presidential debates focused on criminal justice reform, the production of an award-winning feature-length movie ("Presumed Guilty"), and development of an extensive NGO network in support of the reform.

More recent efforts undertaken in support of SETEC, the national body coordinating implementation of the reform, include APIC workshops involving more than 400 federal, state and NGO officials that generated actions for each of the 31 states and identified technical assistance in support of the action plans. The workshops helped negotiate solutions, mobilize resources, strengthen organizations and coordinate action.

Results: Mexican officials have publicly credited the APIC methodology with helping to ensure implementation of the ambitious reform effort by the mid-2016 deadline.

Because policy and institutional change typically reconfigures roles, structures and incentives – thus changing an array of costs and benefits to implementers, citizens and politicians – effective change strategies are rarely just technical. Developing country officials and international donor agencies have traditionally focused on policy content, often ignoring or downplaying the reform process, and have encountered many obstacles that could have been avoided.

Using APIC, MSI provides hands-on technical assistance, training, and process consulting to government offices, civil society groups, the private sector and public-private partnerships. Our support includes assessing political and organizational assets and obstacles for implementing policies, analyzing stakeholder interests and concerns, and engaging citizens and resolving conflicts through the design of innovative structures and processes.

The AIPC framework emphasizes the use of political economy analytic approaches to understand the interests, values and influence of key stakeholders. The focus is not on individual organizations or isolated activities but the contributions of multiple and interconnected actors within local systems. Tasks associated with this perspective include consensus-building, conflict resolution, compromise, contingency planning and adaptation. The style and the tools are those of political mobilization, effective communications and strategic management, simultaneously focused on understanding and managing the external environment; re-orienting the internal operations of government agencies, NGOs and coalitions; and anticipating future changes.

Each of the nine AIPC tasks makes a critical and distinct contribution to the change management process while remaining closely interconnected with the other tasks. The tasks at the center of the wheel reflect the dynamic and non-linear relationship between political and planning tasks and operational tasks over the course of policy and institutional change initiatives. Planning and political tasks emphasize contextual problem analysis as well as the forging and maintenance of reform agreements and constituencies. Operational tasks include adaptive implementation and learning. The circular arrows uniting these tasks denote that they are *not* linear. MSI's practical experience suggests that strategic adjustment and adaptation may be required at any point in the wheel.[3] Furthermore implementing each of the nine tasks in an iterative and adaptive way enables inclusion with local systems to foster locally driven and sustainable development.

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[1] The IPC approach has been applied across a range of sectors in more than 40 countries; extensively documented; and acknowledged by the World Bank and other development actors as a best practice in achieving sustainable policy and institutional change. See http://www.msiworldwide.com/project/implementing-policy-change.

[2] See, for example, Matt Andrews, *The Limits of Institutional Reform in Development: Changing Rules for Realistic Solutions* (New York, NY: Cambridge university Press, 2013); Brian Levy, *Working with the Grain: Integrating Governance and Growth in Development Strategies* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014); Ben Ramalingam, Miguel Laric and John Primrose, "From Best Practice to Best Fit: Understanding and Navigating Wicked Problems in International Development," Overseas Development Institute, July 2014; USAID, "Local Systems: A Framework For Supporting Sustained Development," USAID, April 2014; World Bank, *World Development Report 2015: Mind, Society, and Behavior* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2015).

[3] Numbers assigned to the tasks are for ease of reference and do not necessarily indicate a linear sequence of activities.

Summary Table of APIC Tasks, Strategies and Tools

Task	Strategies	Tools
Analyze Problem and Political Economy	• Identifying a problem and its underlying causes • Identifying the key actors who are likely to support or resist change	• Political Economy Analysis • Stakeholder Analysis Map
Formulate Options	• Framing issues and reform options based on a detailed contextual understanding of what is politically possible • Identifying solutions that are practical to implement and likely to have a significant impact • Adapting or scaling up solutions that have worked elsewhere • Proposing pilots to test innovations • Identifying necessary adaptations to policy.	• Solutions Map • Rapid Results Approach • Reform Complexity Checklist • Scalability Assessment Tool
Legitimate Change	• Raising awareness and questioning the status quo • Identifying policy reform champions • Creating new forums for policy discussion.	• Messaging Refinement Tool
Negotiate and Adopt Solutions	• Getting the proposed change on the agenda of relevant decision-makers • Bargaining and modifying the proposed change as needed to gain approvals;	• Process Mapping • Managing Disputes and Building Consensus • Getting to Yes
Build and Maintain Constituency	• Supporting policy champions • Mobilizing under-organized stakeholders or beneficiaries • Dealing with realities of opposition; Sustaining the pressure for change;	• Stakeholder Analysis Map
Realign and Mobilize Resources	• Identifying and obtaining seed and bridge financing from internal/external sources • Negotiating with Finance and Budget authorities for a larger share of resources • Promoting transparent budget processes and public expenditure reviews • Developing partnerships/exchange with other ministries.	
Select and Strengthen Organizations	• Fitting new missions to old organizations or creating new organizations • Building implementation capacity • Fostering networks and partnerships • Enhancing cooperation and coordination among implementing agencies.	• Institutional/Partner Selection Tool • 4Dimensioal Organizational Development Approach • DRG OCA • Survey-Based Organizational Assessment Tool
Coordinate Action	• Developing concrete plans, performance expectations, and accountability • Streamlining responsibilities; Creating and/or altering incentives • Dealing with resistance and conflict.	• Organizational Responsibility Chart
Monitor, Learn and Adapt	• Creating analytic capacity • Establishing realistic performance standards and milestones • Linking learning and operations • Communicating success stories.	• TIPS: Monitoring the Policy Reform Process • Citizen Report Card Surveys • Community Score Cards • Most Significant Change • Gender Equality Toolkit