

PROMOTION OF EVIDENCE-BASED POLICYMAKING IN NEPAL: THE POLICY LAB FRAMEWORK

A study conducted as a part of the Daayitwa Nepal Public Policy Fellowship 2024, together with
the Office of Prime Minister and Council of Ministers

Researcher:

Aaryaa Subedi

Daayitwa Nepal Public Policy Fellow 2024

Government Supervisor:

Dr. Kiran Rupakhetee,

Joint Secretary,

Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers

Mentor: Dr. Shikha Silwal, Ph.D

Associate Professor of Economics, Washington and Lee University, USA



Abstract

This report explores the feasibility of establishing a policy lab framework within the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers (OPMCM) in Nepal to promote evidence-based policymaking. Policy labs, which foster collaboration among academic, governmental, and private stakeholders, have demonstrated success in various countries. The study analyzes Nepal's current policymaking landscape, identifying challenges such as lack of coordination, resource constraints, and data quality issues. Through a needs and feasibility analysis, coupled with global case studies (e.g., NITI Aayog in India, a2i in Bangladesh, NESDC in Thailand), the report evaluates best practices and structural models. Interviews with stakeholders reveal broad support for the concept while highlighting concerns over resource allocation, coordination, and accountability. Recommendations include piloting a collaborative program involving government, academia, and private entities to establish a policy lab that may eventually integrate with or replace existing institutions like the National Planning Commission and Policy Research Institute.

Keywords: Evidence-based policymaking, Policy labs, Nepal policy making framework, Collaboration in policy design, Data-driven governance, Stakeholder engagement, Policy innovation, Public-private partnerships

CONTENTS

Abstract.....	2
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	5
1.1. Background of the Study.....	5
1.2. Problem Statement.....	6
1.3. Research Objectives.....	8
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	9
2.1. Empirical Analysis.....	9
2.1.1. Structure of Policy Labs.....	9
2.1.2. Purpose of Policy Labs.....	9
2.1.3. Budget and Funding of Policy Labs.....	10
2.1.4. Innovation in Policy Labs.....	10
2.2. Conceptual Framework.....	11
2.2.1. Stakeholder Identification.....	11
2.2.2. Potential Collaborative Structure.....	13
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY.....	14
3.1. Research Design.....	14
3.1.1. Method of the Study.....	14
3.1.2. Study Setting.....	14
3.2. Data Collection.....	14
3.3. Measurement.....	15
3.3.1. Variables for Needs and Feasibility Analysis.....	15
3.3.2. Variables for Case Studies.....	16
CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS.....	18
4.1. Needs Analysis.....	18
4.1.1. Current Expertise.....	18
4.1.2. Current Challenges.....	19
4.1.3. Current Opportunities.....	21
4.2. Feasibility Analysis.....	23
4.2.1. Perception towards Policy Lab.....	23
4.2.2. Challenges of Policy Lab.....	24
4.2.3. Potential Solutions.....	24
4.3. Case Studies.....	26
4.3.1. NITI Aayog – India.....	26
4.3.2. a2i – Bangladesh.....	28

4.3.3. Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) – Thailand.....	29
CHAPTER V: RESULTS.....	30
CHAPTER VI: RECOMMENDATIONS.....	32
CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION.....	34
7.1. Brief Summary of Learnings.....	34
7.2. Limitations of the Study.....	35
References.....	36
APPENDIX.....	43

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

In 2020, when COVID-19 spread, it wreaked havoc across the world, causing deaths of millions (Casella et al., 2023), shutting down major economies and limiting people to the boundary of their home and hospital beds (Naseer et al., 2023). The vaccination and drugs for the virus took almost a year after the virus was first identified to be developed as it went through a series of clinical trials and experimentation (Kim, 2022). If we are to look at the field of Science and Technology, this is quite common. Tests and experimentation are essential, mandatory even, given their direct impact on human lives. Such trials provide the evidence that solidifies the grounds of theory or existing knowledge or even create new knowledge (Franklin, 2007), thus, giving users the confidence on the impact of the resultant products.

The field of policymaking is also somewhat similar in a sense that policies also have a direct impact on people's lives and, thus, running untested projects may have massive repercussions. Hence, just like S&T, shouldn't policies also be tested and experimented in a systematic way before being introduced to the public?

The concept of policy labs is relatively new, introduced somewhat in the early 2000s when the boundary between think tanks and other knowledge-based research organizations started getting blurred (Wellstead & Howlett, 2021). The idea started with the term "think-and-do-tanks" coined by Stone (2001), however, even after almost two and a half decades, the purposes and structures that define and differentiate a policy lab from other research institutes is still unclear (Lember et al., 2015). Many-a-times, policy labs have been used interchangeably with 'innovation lab', 'public innovation lab', 'government innovation lab', 'design lab', 'policy innovation lab', 'public policy lab', 'social innovation lab', 'organizational innovation lab' or even 'systems change lab' (Hinrichs-Krapels et al., 2020). Nonetheless, almost all these 'labs' are usually characterized by their innovative and collaborative approach towards solving policy issues.

Hence, the most streamlined definition of policy labs would be collaborative spaces where a wide range of stakeholders come together to discuss and experiment policy solutions (Veenstra & Kotterink, 2017). These stakeholders usually belong to academic institutions, public sector and civil communities who innovate ideas to tackle complex challenges and bring about reformation in the government policies (Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 2018).

Many of these experiment-focused organizations evolved from generic research organizations due to a need to restructure government agencies to form quasi-independent entities given the decreasing reputation of bureaucratic agencies, a need for agencies solely dedicated to tackle complex and systemic challenges or simply, additional funding from private entities (McGann et al., 2018).

MindLab in Denmark is one of the earliest known policy labs established in 2002 which is a cross-governmental lab involving Ministries of Business and Growth, Taxation and Employment and citizens and private sector experimenting and creating innovative solutions to societal issues (Vibeke Carstensen et al., 2012). However, there are many other organizations who were established much earlier with a different purpose or structure and later developed into policy labs. A popular example of this is SITRA in Finland originally established in 1967 under the Bank of Finland to shape the future of Finland but later moved to operate directly under the Parliament in the late 1990s (SITRA, n.d.).

Currently there are around 146 policy labs worldwide with around 15 policy labs in Asia, 65 in Europe and 44 in North America (Olejniczak et al., 2020). Of these, 42 have been working on a national level, 41 on a regional level, 35 on a local level and 28 are uncategorized.

1.2. Problem Statement

Nepal is proceeding towards graduating from its Least Developed Country (LDC) status in November of 2026 insinuating that Nepal is on a good growth trajectory. However, it is necessary to understand that Nepal has simply met the minimum threshold for graduation:

qualifying for two out of three criteria stated (The United Nations Office at Geneva, 2023). We somewhat lagged in the one criterion, perhaps the most important one: the Per Capita Income (PCI), the one that will be hit the most by the graduation which was only \$1,027 to the threshold of \$1,222 (Shrestha, 2023). This puts Nepal in a very difficult position, especially due to the challenges that will come with the LDC graduation. Hence, the need for proper policy provision has become immediate.

The Texas Politics Project (n.d.) has defined policymaking as a cyclical process consisting of a constant loop of solutions and feedback. Nepal's policymaking process follows this closely with mechanisms in place to receive feedback from multiple government institutions. Nonetheless, although the feedback given is often taken into account, the quality of the feedback itself becomes questionable as it is prepared amidst an utter lack of resources including field-specific experts and budget (Silwal, 2024). Accordingly, in most cases than not, the original policy draft itself faces these constraints such that policies are mostly formulated and implemented on political whim and sentiments of the ruling party (Pant, 2021).

In November of 2023, the government decided to ban TikTok in Nepal on grounds of the social media platform promoting immoral behaviors (Jha, 2024; "Nepal Decides to Ban TikTok," 2023; Oi, 2023). The decision was met with immediate scrutiny, especially from small business owners who utilized the platform to promote their business at minimal cost (Republica, 2024). Although the government gave a set of arguments for why this decision was important, if you are to do just a simple search, there is no actual study regarding the impact of social media in Nepal yet.

This becomes concerning when new bills are formed on the foundation of a policy as such which does not have any evidence basis. In this case as well, there have been hardly any publicly available studies on the after effects of the ban on TikTok. Nevertheless, immediately after, the government started working on a bill to regulate social media (U. Acharya, 2023). Will this regulation have a positive effect on the economy and the community or a drastically negative one? Well, as of now, there is no certain answer.

The Office of Prime Minister and Council of Ministers has a huge role to play in providing this support as the apex policymaking body in Nepal. OPMCM's role is not only limited to providing feedback and suggestions and signing off on policies but it also acts as the governing body of the data and research related bodies of Nepal like the National Statistics Office (NSO), Policy Research Institute (PRI) and National Planning Commission (NPC). Hence, OPMCM holds the ability to not only introduce and mandate evidence-based policy research but also mobilize the existing resources in the system, thus, making its role significant in transforming the policymaking process in Nepal.

1.3. Research Objectives

- Conduct a needs and feasibility analysis for the possibility of establishing a framework within OPMCM to promote evidence-based policymaking in Nepal
- Analyze and design a feasible structure for the resulting institution based on best practices of comparable organizations around the world

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Empirical Analysis

2.1.1. Structure of Policy Labs

Policy labs can be established within the state structures (e.g., a2i in Bangladesh) (Brock, 2021), as autonomous bodies within the private sector that work in collaboration with the public sector that may be funded by non-profit organizations or the government itself or within universities (e.g., KUSOM policy lab in Nepal) (Blomkamp et al., 2017).

Most policy labs have been found to work in a small team averaging six to seven people with a maximum of around seventeen (Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 2018; Tõnurist et al., 2017). The teams usually consist of a mixture of bureaucrats and experienced designers (Bailey & Lloyd, 2016).

2.1.2. Purpose of Policy Labs

In 2020, Olejniczak et al. critically analysed and compared the mission and values of 20 different policy labs across 5 continents to try and streamline the purposes of policy labs and were able to identify three main specialization patterns. The policy labs were found to be serving either the community, the government or both.

Tõnurist et al. (2017) in their paper “Innovation labs in the public sector: What they are and what they do?” mention that most policy labs were initially created to enable collaboration between the general public and the technical experts. They were further supported by politicians and bureaucrats to capture the initial media and public clout and ride the wave of popularity that came through promoting innovation.

However, they also mention that over the years, the functions of the policy labs have strayed away their initial purpose. Rather than collaborating with the general public, policy labs

are seen to collaborate mostly with government agencies or ministerial department and focus more on internal learning and development of the public sector.

While policy labs like MindLab, UK Policy Lab, GovLab were found to be completely assisting the government with improving their services and policies and providing training to staff, agencies like Seoul Innovation Bureau and Auckland Co-design were found to be working towards solving social problems like domestic violence, poverty, health, housing and helping mostly families and youths (Olejniczak et al., 2020). Social and Behavioural Science Team and Pulse Lab Jakarta, on the other hand, were found to be involved in finding policy solutions for both public sector and community problems.

2.1.3. Budget and Funding of Policy Labs

Most public innovation labs do not have a separate budget allocated for them and usually access the budget of their umbrella organization. In a study conducted by (Tõnurist et al., 2017), where they studied 35 innovation labs, the maximum budget was found to be around €1.5 million, the minimum to be approximately € 0.6 million with an average of € 0.8 million for a financial year.

Policy labs are mostly majorly funded by public, private and not-for-profit sectors (McGann et al., 2018). The labs can fund their projects through sponsorships from one or more departments, contributions from involved stakeholders, recovering costs on a not-for-profit basis from sectors benefiting from the project or providing consultation services with a certain profit margin (Whicher, 2021).

2.1.4. Innovation in Policy Labs

The main characteristics that differentiate policy labs from general think tanks and research organizations is their collaborative approach and experimental design with innovation driving the experimental process. Policy labs aim to introduce novel methods and approaches in formulating, implementing and evaluating policies like design thinking, ethnography, field-based experimental studies like the use of Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs) (O'Rafferty, 2016),

data-driven policy research (Veenstra & Kotterink, 2017), use of technology like artificial intelligence and big data analysis, cross-disciplinary work and so on (Wellstead et al., 2023).

2.2. Conceptual Framework

2.2.1. Stakeholder Identification

Most policymaking process start when an agenda is introduced. In Nepal, this happens either through policymakers themselves who are a part of the bureaucratic and legislative structure or through other stakeholders outside the system who put forward policy proposal based on existing problems or need (Pant, 2021).

Based on the current process and structure, the stakeholders of an evidence-based policy framework within the OPMCM can be identified as follows:

Office of Prime Minister and Council of Ministers. OPMCM apex policymaking and civil administration body of the country providing secretariat services to the Prime Minister, administrative and technical support to the Council of Ministers as well as playing a major advisory role in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation (OPMCM, n.d.). OPMCM is currently overseeing NSO, PRI and NPC.

Policy Research Institute. PRI is a think tank established by the Government of Nepal to assist various government bodies with reviewing plans, policies and programs and provide various policy recommendations through the use of rigorous research methods and studies and also, act as an interface for knowledge and policy formulation (Policy Research Institute, n.d.).

National Statistics Office. NSO is the central agency for collection, consolidation, publication and dissemination of data which was established with the main purpose of providing data to various government agencies to assist them in making informed decisions while formulating and implementing plans and policies (National Statistics Office, n.d.).

National Planning Commission. NPC is a specialized body working towards formulating national vision, periodic plans and development and sectoral policies for the growth and development of the nation (National Planning Commission, n.d.).

Policy Divisions in Various Ministries. Agenda in Nepal is either built through the political stream or administrative stream. Hence, every Ministry has its own policy division that introduces various agendas and policy drafts affecting their area of interest.

Nepal Rastra Bank. NRB is the Central Bank of Nepal established with the objectives of formulating monetary and foreign exchange policies, increase financial access as well as build financial confidence of the public in general in bank and other financial institutions and finally, promote efficient payment system in Nepal

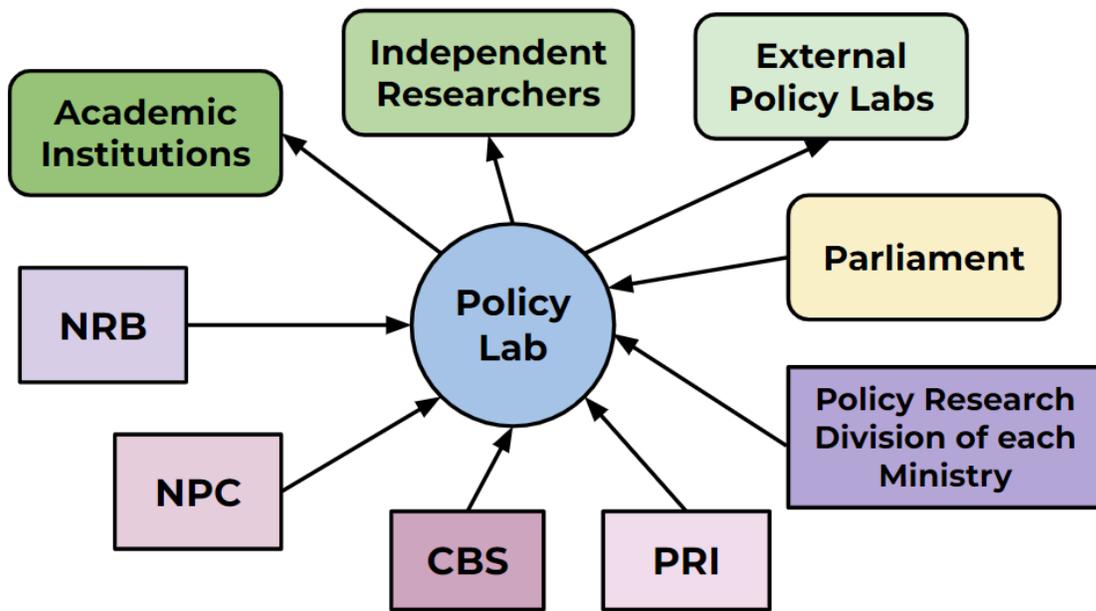
Parliament. Nepal has a bicameral federal parliament consisting of the National Assembly and House of Representatives that ensure functions such as policy and law formulation and maintaining balance of administrative power within the country (House of Representatives, 2024; National Assembly, 2024).

Academic Institutions. Nepal has 11 universities, 4 medical academies and 1432 higher education institutions, each with their own research departments or associates, all adding academic as well as practical value to the society and the country as a whole (M. Acharya et al., 2022).

Non-governmental Policy Labs and Think Tanks. Nepal has a substantial number of policy labs and think tanks that have been directly or indirectly assisting with the policy making process. Some of these institutions are Governance Lab, Institute of Government and Public Affairs (IGPA), Innovative Circle Pvt. Ltd., KUSOM Policy Lab etc.

Independent Researchers. Nepal has a fair share of independent researcher with plausible academic as well as professional experience who have been contributing to the academic space for years.

2.2.2. Potential Collaborative Structure



CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

3.1.1. Method of the Study

The study will be conducted in two phases: needs analysis and case studies. Needs analysis will be based on semi-structured interviews (See Appendix I) with 1-3 members of each of the identified stakeholders of the policy lab.

The case studies will be of various policy labs within government organizations globally. For the study, 1 policy lab each will be selected from 3 countries from South and South East Asia. Extensive criteria will be used to select these policy labs to capture a holistic view of how a policy lab needs to be designed, specifically to address governance-related challenges. To ensure comparability, policy labs situated in countries with similar economic situations to Nepal will be selected (E.g., a2i in Bangladesh – to be graduated from LDC status in 2026; NITI Aayog in India – neighboring country).

3.1.2. Study Setting

The first phase will be based on primary data whereas the second phase will be mostly based on secondary data. The research will require minimal interference from the researcher as data will be collected based on survey questionnaires and semi-structured interviews designed in line with the research framework.

3.2. Data Collection

Face-to-face interviews were conducted (both in-person and online) to understand the current policy making scenario in Nepal, the opportunities and challenges in the field and the feasibility of forming a collaborative policy lab under the OPMCM. The interviews were conducted with the identified stakeholders for a pilot program to understand their position as well as their enthusiasm in this decision. A total of 11 interviews were conducted for the same.

The data for the case studies was collected from the websites of the policy labs and existing literature who have previously conducted research using primary data from these organizations.

3.3. Measurement

3.3.1. Variables for Needs and Feasibility Analysis

Needs analysis is used to understand the views, opinions and experience of the stakeholders involved (Thiruvengadam, 2013) and can be used as a foundation to planning, designing and implementing any new concept (Richards, 1990). With this in mind, a semi-structured questionnaire was prepared covering the following main categories:

Role. This will capture the current role of the stakeholders in the policymaking process and the role they have the ability and capacity to play in the process. It will also cover the interviewees experience and involvement in policy formulation, feedback, implementation and monitoring to define their expertise in the subject matter.

Strength. This will cover the expertise of each stakeholder and what they can contribute towards making the current practices better.

Opportunities. This section will discuss what each stakeholder can improve on and the support they require from the government and OPMCM on making these improvements. This section will mainly define the gaps in the current policy research and implementation process.

Challenges. This will capture the current issues the stakeholders are facing as part of the policymaking process and the barriers they are facing towards working at their full potential or simply entering the policy making space. It will also cover suggestions on the changes that need to be made in the current system to provide ease of access and better working situations to the stakeholders.

Collaborations. This will cover the current as well as the potential collaborations in the current policy making space, the challenges faced and the required solutions.

3.3.2. Variables for Case Studies

Referring to and modifying and consolidating the frameworks used by Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (2018), Lee & Ma (2020) and Fuller & Lochard (2016), the quantitative analysis (case studies) will be defined by the following variables:

Origin. This will capture the idea and motive behind the establishment of the policy lab.

Status within the government. This will mainly capture the level at which the policy lab is operating within the government.

Area of interest. This will capture whether the lab works on all sectors or has a specialized area of work.

Current Structure. This will cover how the policy lab is structured including the members, power hierarchy, responsibilities and task delegations.

Involvement in policy design. This will measure at what point the policy lab gets involved in the policymaking process – early, late or involved in the entire process.

Influence of political involvement. This will measure any outside involvement in the entity that is not directly related to the entity under whose umbrella the policy lab is working.

Budget. As financing is a major concern, this section will cover the estimated and used budget of establishing and running these policy labs along with the sources of their financing.

Independence. This will capture the autonomy of the policy lab, i.e., the freedom and independence to choose their own research areas.

Collaborations with other entities. This will cover whether organizations outside the public sector are included in the research and implementation process.

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS

4.1. Needs Analysis

The following are the excerpts from the interviews that highlight a need for either an evidence-based approach or a collaborative approach:

4.1.1. Current Expertise

Policy Research

“I see its potential in research regarding policies related to social sciences.”

“..... we are trying to build expertise in policy research”

Networking

“But where its other potential is in its ability to network extensively in the form of collaborations with Universities, research entities within and outside the country.”

Data Collection

“Our main role is to provide evidence for evidence-based policy making.”

“Although we do not have that big a role in monitoring mid-term evaluations and the like, we provide benchmark data, and also assist national and international agencies with goal-setting, goal-target indicators, evaluating whether target has been achieved and so on.”

“NSO has been producing data as per our needs and requests as per the requirements of the plans and policies being formulated. We ask them for specific data sets based on which they produce data.”

4.1.2. Current Challenges

Nepotism

“And there is this thick-layer which is very challenging to pierce. Our bureaucracy is very armoured and it is a trust-less society.”

“But once you have pierced the outermost layer, people are nice. It’s just that, in the beginning, if people are different than you, it is difficult to trust them”

Views and Opinions

“.....bureaucrats have not done as much research as we have.”

“We, as people in research, with our scientific thinking tend to be very idealistic.”

“Academia and Bureaucracy do not really get along.”

Lack of Coordination

“We have not established coordination with PRI yet. We look at things they publish and refer to their work while doing our work but we have not collaborated with them directly. We haven’t received or provided them with any support yet.”

“The personal relationship is good; however, the institutional relationship is weak.”

“The main challenge of the division is coordination with provincial and local governments.”

Data Constraints

“Our main concern is the quality of data, its representativeness and coverage.”

“Also, there is this thing in Statistics called User-Producer engagement. We are producers. And there are varieties of users..... There are multiple demands but we have constraints which are creating issues.”

“The principles of Statistics call for uniqueness. The data should come from the same source and should be the same. We are putting in the effort to make this possible. We have the Statistics Act as well but we do not have the capacity..... In some places, we have duplication as well.”

Resource Constraints

“When the government requires it, it might not get delivered. In some situations, there might not be enough manpower; in some cases, there might be resource constraints: research requires its own resources as well. Due to this, it might not be ready in the requested time frame.”

“But data producers also have their own set of problems. There is a lack of manpower, budget, we are still working under the same traditional model.”

“Right now, the main challenge would be the lack of human resources.”

Transfers and Volatility

“It's just the Administration team that seems volatile as they can go anywhere and thus, they have a choice due to higher mobility.”

Lack of Participation

“The participation of relevant stakeholders seems to be a little less.”

Lack of Proper Practices

“We just create policies based on existing information but fail to study what impact it will have in the future.”

“.....some policies are formulated without a foundation; they are made based on people’s feelings.”

4.1.3. Current Opportunities

Structured Mechanism

“Even in the future, if we are to do evidence-based policymaking, then, in the formative stage itself, this process of taking feedback needs to be strengthened.”

“One thing that needs to be introduced is that every ministry or agency that introduces a policy draft needs to follow a set format, there has to be a set of criteria that these agencies need to fulfil while making this draft.”

“..... check how it affects different stakeholders as the same can have benefits for one group whereas losses for others”

“..... you should not miss out the monitoring aspect: evaluation of the policy and regular feedback”

“That’s why, you need to look into how a certain policy affects another sector and in which capacity and look at the inter-relation.”

“So, this cycle of policy formulation, our work has not been done staying within this cycle. If we are to follow this cycle, we can increase policy efficiency.....”

Evidence-based Policy Making

“The main is evidence-based policy making.”

Coordination and Collaboration

“.....the solution is basically a coordinated approach.”

“..... excellency needs to be built in a collaborative way.”

“OPMCM should give subject matter to PRI to conduct research together with its human resources.”

“So, there are enough experts who are willing to work for the country but we are unable to utilise them.”

“For most people, they reach out to collaborate with me rather than the institute itself due to the trust built.”

“Very recently, we had a discussion with the members of the upper house. And what they have said is, they have actually created a committee to increase the scope for policy making.”

“Like Alexander said, bring together the ruler and scholar. [redacted] You need to come together and discuss and share your limitations with each other rather than simply complaining about it with others and work jointly.”

“It plays the main role. And within that, collaboration with better understanding is required.”

“Specifically with university research departments and research units (government, non-governmental or other). I would seek international collaboration as well because policy learning also is an important thing.”

“So the general understanding here and worldwide is that, although the salary and benefits are less in government-related organisations, the social value is high and all organisations would want to work with or keep connected with an institute like ours.”

“I have a lot of friends who say that money is not required, the policy in Nepal needs to be good, money is not a constraint and we are happy to work and support in the process.”

Data Quality

“There needs to be improvement in the data ecosystem itself.”

“The more detailed the information, the more detailed is the identification of problems and accordingly, solutions.”

“So, the data needed to complete all kinds of research, if it is made easily available given this is a government agency. So, I feel like perks of that kind, the privilege should be there.”

Resources and Infrastructure

“There was this discussion here to create a Macroeconomic lab which could act as a depository of knowledge which would act as an access to required statistics and data and also supports political and private functions. So, we need that kind of infrastructure as well.”

4.2. Feasibility Analysis

The following are the excerpts from the interviews that highlight the general perception towards forming a policy lab, the potential challenges to forming a policy lab and any ways to mitigate them:

4.2.1. Perception towards Policy Lab

In Favor

“I think this is extremely necessary.....”

“Why does it go forward? Because it is scientific and they know it will work. People will also trust the policy to some extent.”

“You need to proceed through an approach and a policy lab is required for exactly that.”

“So, in general, I am in favour of establishing this policy lab.”

“This lab is needed; however, I don’t think it will be run by just OPMCM running it but would require involvement of some stakeholders as well.”

Not in Favor

“I am not very much in favour of this as we already have many bodies that are involved in policy making. You are talking about a policy lab, there is already a planning commission. We actually already have two organisations, now, the policy lab is another structure that we are just building. We actually have to make one body responsible rather than establishing a new institution. What we need is results. No matter how many policies we get, the implementation is pretty much the same.”

4.2.2. Challenges of Policy Lab

Time Constraints

“Another problem I have observed is that like in academic research or research in innovation that may take over 5 years’ of time, when it comes to policy research, we do not have that much time. Here, in the short-term, within the given timeframe, you have to give the results.”

Other Risks

“The risk is there, yes, but it can be mitigated.”

4.2.3. Potential Solutions

Definitive Structure

“What needs to be there though, for accountability, what work the lab is going to do, what publications could be there, make small teams based on that which will be individually accountable.”

“Example, what criteria should the research paper meet; what kind of research is to be done by whom; what should the brief do; what should immediate response do; from citations to methodology; the empirical things; how the team should be formed; who is to be accountable; what are the repercussions of lack of accountability; these kinds of things need to be defined if the lab is to work for real.”

Working Modality

“So, another important aspect is the working modality. Now, to research entities, you can simply provide grants and they will divide that grant and disburse it at their discretion.”

Timely Coordination

“If they deliver their needs, research requirements and other resources that we require well, then, we can give them all the things they require on time.”

“..... So, they need to do timely facilitation.”

Collaborations Outside of the Public Sector

“So, if the manpower within bureaucracy is not enough, hiring external efforts and using a mix of resources within the lab can be beneficial. If it is run totally by bureaucrats, it might just be filled with generalists who bring in a wide range of experiences rather than specialisation. That’s why the lab will require a mix of both bureaucrats and external experts.”

“If a policy lab is indeed formed under the OPMCM, it has to look at inter-agency coordination and intra government coordination. By facilitating such coordination, it should formulate policies that provide value to everyone.”

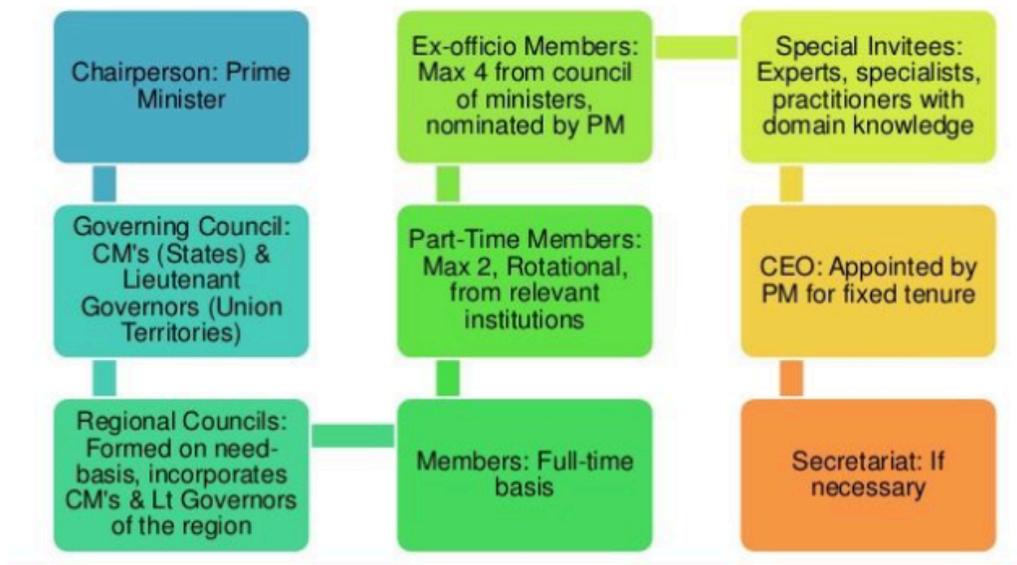
“Then, in this joint collaboration, how many policy issues are present, in these issues, people from PRI, people from bureaucracy, people from external organisations, experts will come together, do detailed discussions and then share and work and present the outcomes within time.”

4.3. Case Studies

4.3.1. NITI Aayog – India

The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) is the think tank of the Government of India that was established in 2015 with the purpose of leading visionary policy making (Hans, 2023). The institution replaced the existing Planning Commission as the country moved away from centralized planning such that the government now would be serving as an enabler rather than a provider.

NITI Aayog was formed by an executive resolution of Government of India and thus, is neither a Constitutional nor a Statutory Body (NEXT IAS Team, 2024). The organisation is composed of the chairman, a position served by the Prime Minister of India; a Governing Council consisting of the Chief Ministers of all the states and Union Territories with Legislatures and Lt. Governors of Union territories without legislatures; Regional Councils formed by the Chairperson if and when needed and Special Invitees to the council.



The main aim of NITI Aayog is to offer the central and state governments with valuable strategic and technical guidance on key policy issues. This includes addressing both domestic and international economic matters, sharing best practices from India and countries, introducing fresh policy ideas, and providing targeted recommendations based on various specific concerns (PMINDIA, n.d.).

NITI Aayog works in multiple sectors through many verticals that are each responsible for a specialised area. Some of these verticals are Agriculture, Education, Economics and Finance, Data Management and Frontier Technologies, Energy, Industry, Governance and Research, InfraStructure, Integrated Finance, Managing Urbanisation, Public Finance and Policy Analysis, Rural Development, Science and Technology, Skill Development, Labour and Employment, Social Justice, Sustainable Development Goals, Women and Child Development, Water and Land Resources, Tourism and Culture and so on (Niti Aayog, n.d.).

In addition to the verticals, NITI Aayog also has collaborations with three attached and autonomous bodies. The first body is Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) which is a key initiative of the Indian government aimed at fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship nationwide. Its goal is to develop policies and programs that encourage innovation, create collaboration opportunities, and oversee the country's innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem (AIM, n.d.)

Similarly, the second body is the Developing, Monitoring, and Evaluation Office (DMEO). The office was established in September of 2015 by merging the former Program Evaluation Office (PEO) and Independent Evaluation Office (IEO). It aims to carry out the monitoring and evaluation mandate and strengthen India's M&E ecosystem (DMEO, n.d.)

The third body is the Institute of Labour Economics Research and Development (NILERD) which was formerly known as the Institute of Applied Manpower Research. NILERD is an autonomous institution established in 1962 and renamed in 2014. The institute focuses on human capital development through research, education, and consultancy. It conducts research in

human resource planning and development, while also providing academic training for both national and international participants (NILERD, n.d.)

For 2023-24, the budget for NITI Aayog is estimated at INR 824.39 crores bringing the per capita budget to approximately INR 6. This is a reduction from the revised 2022-23 budget of INR 1,031.53 crores which was also a slight reduction from the actual 2021-22 budget of INR 1,064.81 crores (NITI Aayog, 2024).

4.3.2. a2i – Bangladesh

Aspire to Innovate (a2i) is an initiative of the Government of Bangladesh that was launched in 2007 with support from UNDP, the Gates Foundation, and USAID (Khan & Jahan, 2018). Established as an international transformational catalyst that enhances public service delivery through digital innovation, it became the National Innovation Agency in 2023. Its international division now aids Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (a2i, n.d.-a).

The company has employed 527 members (RocketReach, n.d.) across 21 teams (a2i, n.d.-b). The main teams providing direct services to the public include Digital Service team, Envision team, Disability Innovation Lab. Digital Financial Service & Digital Access team, a2i Innovation Fund & Lab, Agriculture team, Health Accelerator, Commercialisation team, Data team, Future of Work & South South Cooperation team, Future of Education team, ekShop, Technology team, Project Management team and Research team.

a2i has been a key player in fostering social movements that address social issues and improve public services through social networks in Bangladesh (Alam et al., n.d.). Among many programs that a2i runs, a key element is the Service Innovation Fund, managed by the Innovation Team, which offers up to Tk. 2.5 million in seed funding for innovators to pilot new products or services. If deemed suitable, some of these projects are adopted by the government and integrated into relevant ministries, while others require innovators to commercialise them independently (Khan & Jahan, 2018).

4.3.3. Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) – Thailand

The Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) is the state planning unit of Thailand working as a think tank that conducts research on future possibilities to shape the country's long-term vision (Theparat, 2019). Originally known as the National Economic Council (NEC), it was established on February 15, 1950 by the then Prime Minister Field Marshal Plaek Pibulsongkram with the purpose of playing an advisory role to the government with regards to national economic issues. The council was then restructured in 1959 by Prime Minister Field Marshal Sarit Dhanarajata and named the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) which launched its first economic plan in 1961 (NESDC, 2022). A change to the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) was then proposed by Thosaporn Sirisamphand in 2018 which transformed the state planning unit into a proper think tank (Therapat, 2018).

The organisation currently employs more than 200 employees (Development Aid, 2024) working towards providing their suggestions to the Thai cabinet on economic and social development of the country (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, n.d.-a). The council is currently led by the Secretary-General Dhanicha Pichayanan along with three Deputy Secretary General (Wichayayuth Boonchit, Wanchat Suwankitti and Worawan Plikhamin) and six senior advisors (Phavina Assawamaneekul, Sasithorn Palattadej, Napaschon Thongsom, Jinna Tansaraviput, Surarat Niamklang and Vitphiphon Tivatansakul) (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, n.d.-b).

The estimated annual budget of the council is 609.7 million baht converting to a per capita budget of 8.55 baht (Bureau of the Budget, 2024).

CHAPTER V: RESULTS

Nepal's policy making space has a lot of expertise in different sectors ranging from planning, formulating to monitoring and evaluation. While some agencies are already working in their areas of expertise and contributing significantly to policy making in Nepal, they mostly work autonomously with little to no collaborations with each other leaving most of the potential untapped. Example, despite NSO's ability to collect data on a micro-level in various sectors, the think tank of Government of Nepal, PRI itself is struggling to gain access to the data required to complete their research. The barriers are even more when it comes to privately owned think tanks who are specifically trained in research skills and methods.

Every policymaking body has been struggling with several constraints, whether it be budget, time, system, or expertise. One major challenge identified is the frequent transfer within government organizations which brings ongoing work to a halt or simply shifts the focus to another project leaving a lot of ideas and plans incomplete. Hence, there is a need for accountability in the policymaking space or simply a knowledge base that remains constant through changes in government and bureaucracy to ensure the policymaking process is systematic and seen through to the end. One way of doing this would be ensuring proper collaboration and communication among the various government institutions and experts in the field.

The stakeholders also raised their concerns over the inherent lack of coordination among the various agencies within the policymaking space. Most collaborations between the many policy making agencies within the government are based on personal connections rather than institutional ones, thus, lacking official records and a systemized and documented process of commencing and concluding work. As a result, miscommunication and simply a lack of network is rampant in the space.

Academic institutions and privately-held policy labs and think tanks have their own range of struggles resulting from limited access to resources like data and information. Additionally, most of the studies these organizations complete, though have been adding academic value, a

lack of transfer of knowledge towards the practical space has been observed. Hence, most institutions are more than willing to be a part of a government initiative to ensure that their work will add practical value towards the development of the country.

12 of 13 respondents were in favour of the formation of a policy lab with the remaining 1 showing concern over the saturation of government entities with goals set but not delivered. As such, it was found that there is a serious need for evidence-based and collaborative approach to policy making in Nepal. However, there are major concerns over whether the entity will indeed fulfil the purpose it is set up for.

Many countries have been running such policy labs all around the world with their own innovative approaches towards evidence-based policy making. Some examples of these labs are NITI Aayog in India, a2i in Bangladesh, and NESDC in Thailand. These policy labs have been working as a part of the government, usually under the leadership of the Prime Minister and mainly focusing on the data-driven research to shape policies. In India, NITI Aayog went on to replace the National Planning Commission taking over all the policy-related work within the Indian Government. However, in Bangladesh and Thailand, the policy labs were found to be more specialized with a2i working for digital transformation whereas NESDC worked primarily with economic policies and reforms.

CHAPTER VI: RECOMMENDATIONS

Formation of a policy lab. A policy lab that will be overseen by a policy committee needs to be formed within the government. The committee will consist of 1-2 members from each of the identified stakeholders including autonomous government organizations and private organizations like academic institutions, government-based policy labs and think tanks, privately held policy labs, and think tanks and experts and independent researchers.

Working modality. Each agenda/policy draft/policy review to be introduced by any of the stakeholders will first be presented in the committee to the diverse expertise. Based on the area of the policy being discussed, the stakeholders with expertise in the subject matter will take on individual tasks or responsibilities as required. These tasks could range from anything from a preliminary study to experiment design. The involvement of each stakeholder will depend on aspects such as policy subject, time constraint, budget constraint, expected result and need for an extensive study.

Pilot program. The pilot program will consist of a collaboration between OPMCM, NSO, PRI, NPC, Kathmandu University (academic institution) and Governance Lab (privately-held policy lab). KU and GL will be providing necessary assistance to the government bodies which includes academic and applied research, mostly on policies and plans being worked on by the NPC.

The pilot program would be an experimentation on whether a public-private collaboration would work in the policy space and bring out efficient and effective results when compared to the current mechanism. It will also help understand the available resources in the current system and estimate the resources required to make the entire program a success, including monetary support. If successful, the program can then be extended to accommodate other stakeholders such as NRB, policy divisions in other ministries and other academic institutions and policy labs. A successful pilot program would also help the organisation gain trust and support from other entities making the collaborations much easier.

Long-term vision. Given most respondents showed concern over oversaturation of government entities within the policy ecosystem with very minimal work to show for it, if the structure of the policy lab works, it could go on to replace or merge with the current policy-related organisations under the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers. This can also be observed in the case of NITI Aayog in India which replaced the National Planning Commission. In Nepal, the policy lab could either replace or merge with the National Planning Commission and Policy Research Institute which are currently two separate entities working in the field of planning and policy research.

CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION

7.1. Brief Summary of Learnings

This study identifies significant gaps in Nepal's policy making processes, such as the absence of systematic coordination between governmental bodies, limited use of evidence-based approaches, and persistent challenges in data quality, resource allocation, and stakeholder participation. The findings indicate that many policies in Nepal are formulated based on political sentiments rather than empirical evidence, which undermines their long-term effectiveness and public trust. Despite these challenges, the study highlights the potential for transformative change through the establishment of a collaborative policy lab.

Stakeholder interviews reveal a strong demand for an institutional mechanism that integrates data-driven research with policy design, implementation, and evaluation. The study also emphasizes the importance of creating a knowledge base that persists despite administrative turnover, ensuring policy continuity and institutional memory. Lessons from global examples like NITI Aayog in India and a2i in Bangladesh underscore the value of fostering innovation, collaboration, and accountability within a policy lab framework tailored to local needs.

By bringing together expertise from academia, the private sector, and government entities, Nepal has the opportunity to strengthen its policy ecosystem. A pilot initiative involving key stakeholders, such as OPMCM, National Statistics Office, and private policy labs, can serve as a testbed for scalable, evidence-based policymaking. The ultimate goal is to create a system that not only enhances policy efficiency but also builds public trust by demonstrating transparency, rigor, and measurable impact.

Through these learnings, the study underscores the urgency of adopting a structured, collaborative approach to policymaking while being mindful of resource constraints and political realities. The proposed policy lab represents a critical step toward fostering innovation and ensuring Nepal's policies are aligned with its developmental ambitions and challenges.

7.2. Limitations of the Study

Limited Sample Size. The study relies on interviews with a small group of stakeholders, which may not fully represent the diversity of perspectives across all sectors involved in policymaking.

Data Availability. Challenges in accessing comprehensive and up-to-date data impacted the depth of the needs and feasibility analysis.

Comparative Framework. While international case studies offer valuable insights, differences in socio-economic and political contexts may limit their applicability to Nepal.

Time Constraints. The dynamic nature of policymaking processes means some findings may become outdated before implementation.

Budgetary Assumptions. The financial feasibility of establishing and sustaining a policy lab has not been fully analyzed, particularly in Nepal's constrained fiscal environment.

References

- a2i. (n.d.-a). *About Us*. A2i. Retrieved September 29, 2024, from <https://a2i.gov.bd/about-us/>
- a2i. (n.d.-b). *Teams Behind a2i*. A2i. Retrieved September 29, 2024, from <https://a2i.gov.bd/all-teams/>
- Acharya, M., Prasad Acharya, K., & Gyawali, K. (2022). Higher Education Status in Nepal: Possibilities and Prospects. *The Educator Journal*, 10(1).
<https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/tej/article/download/46733/34929/137614>
- Acharya, U. (2023, December 23). Regulating social media platforms. *The Kathmandu Post*.
- AIM. (n.d.). *About AIM*. Government of India. Retrieved September 27, 2024, from <https://aim.gov.in/>
- Alam, N. Z., Kabir, G. M. N., Saifuzzaman, G. M., Mahmud, M., & Khan, M. M. R. (n.d.). *Visualizing Social Movements through Social Media: The Case of a2i Programme in Bangladesh*. Retrieved September 30, 2024, from https://publicadministration.un.org/unpsa/Portals/0/UNPSA_Submitted_Docs/2018/C0A1DCB6-B686-40B1-B29A-E1E0E05A9BAF/Visualizing-Social-Movements-through-Social-Media.pdf?ver=1439-06-10-235639-777
- Bailey, J., & Lloyd, P. (2016, June 25). *The introduction of design to policymaking: Policy Lab and the UK government*. <https://doi.org/10.21606/drs.2016.314>
- Blomkamp, E., Lewis, J., & Howlett, M. (2017, June 28). The Rise of Policy Labs. *Policy Design, Policy Analysis, Expertise and Evaluation*.
<https://www.ippapublicpolicy.org/panel/pdfPanel.php?panel=87&conference=7>
- Brock, K. L. (2021). Policy labs, partners and policy effectiveness in Canada. *Policy Design and Practice*, 4(2), 228–241. <https://doi.org/10.1080/25741292.2021.1880063>

Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. (2018). *Innovative Policy Labs in the Public Administration*.

<http://blogs.ec.europa.eu/eupolicylab/files/2016/10/Mapping-policy-labs-in-EU-MS.pdf>

Bureau of the Budget. (2024). *Thailand's Budget in Brief Fiscal Year 2019*.

<https://www.bb.go.th/en/topic-detail.php?id=8322&mid=456&catID=0>

Cascella, M., Rajnik, M., Aleem, A., Dulebohn, S. C., & Di Napoli, R. (2023). Evaluation, and Treatment of Coronavirus (COVID-19). In *StatPearls*. StatPearls Publishing LLC.

Development Aid. (2024). *NESDC - National Economic and Social Development Council*. Development Aid.

<https://www.developmentaid.org/organizations/view/544226/nescd-national-economic-and-social-development-council>

DMEO. (n.d.). *About us*. DMEO. Retrieved September 29, 2024, from <https://dmeo.gov.in/>

Franklin, A. (2007). The Role of Experiments in the Natural Sciences: Examples from Physics and Biology. In T. A. F. Kuipers (Ed.), *General Philosophy of Science* (pp. 219–274).

North-Holland. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-044451548-3/50006-9>

Fuller, M., & Lochard, A. (2016). *Public policy labs in European Union Member States*. Publications Office.

Hans, V. B. (2023). *Niti Aayog*. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4653934>

Hinrichs-Krapels, S., Bailey, J., Boulding, H., Duffy, B., Hesketh, R., Kinloch, E., Pollitt, A., Rawlings, S., van Rij, A., Wilkinson, B., Pow, R., & Grant, J. (2020). Using Policy Labs as a process to bring evidence closer to public policymaking: a guide to one approach.

Palgrave Communications, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-020-0453-0>

House of Representatives, N. (2024). *House of Representatives*. Federal Parliament Secretariat.

<https://hr.parliament.gov.np/en>

- Jha, H. B. (2024, January 8). *Why TikTok was banned in Nepal?* Observer Research Foundation.
- Khan, A. T. M. J., & Jahan, N. (2018). Scaling up the Service Innovation Fund Projects of Access to Information (A2i) Program of Bangladesh: The Way Forward for Private Innovators. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research: Interdisciplinary*, 18(1).
- Kim, S. (2022). COVID-19 Drug Development. *Journal of Microbiology and Biotechnology*, 32(1), 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.4014/jmb.2110.10029>
- Lember, V., Tonurist, P., & Kattel, R. (2015). *Discovering Innovation Labs in the Public Sector* (61; Working Papers in Technology Governance and Economic Dynamics). <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280021789>
- McGann, M., Blomkamp, E., & Lewis, J. M. (2018). The rise of public sector innovation labs: Experiments in design thinking for policy. *Policy Sciences*, 51(3), 249–267. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-018-9315-7>
- Naseer, S., Khalid, S., Parveen, S., Abbass, K., Song, H., & Achim, M. V. (2023). *COVID-19 outbreak: Impact on global economy*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.1009393>
- National Assembly, N. (2024). *National Assembly, Nepal*. Federal Parliament Secretariat. <https://na.parliament.gov.np/en>
- National Planning Commission. (n.d.). *Introduction & History*. Government of Nepal. Retrieved August 19, 2024, from https://npc.gov.np/en/page/introduction_history
- National Statistics Office. (n.d.). *Introduction*. Government of Nepal. Retrieved August 19, 2024, from <https://nsonepal.gov.np/pages/76831566/>
- Nepal decides to ban TikTok. (2023, November 13). *The Kathmandu Post*.
- NESDC. (2022). *National Economic and Social Development Council (Thailand)*. Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/lcwaN0038085/>

NEXT IAS Team. (2024). *NITI Aayog (National Institution for Transforming India)*. NEXT IAS.
https://www.nextias.com/blog/niti-aayog/#Establishment_of_NITI_Aayog

NILERD. (n.d.). *About Us*. National Institute of Labour Economics Research and Development.
Retrieved September 29, 2024, from <https://www.nilerd.ac.in/UserView/index?mid=1321>

Niti Aayog. (n.d.). *Vertical*. Niti Aayog. Retrieved September 26, 2024, from
<https://www.niti.gov.in/vertical>

NITI Aayog. (2024). *Budget allocated to Ministry of Planning*.
<https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2023-07/Budget-allocated-to-Ministry-of-Planning.pdf>

Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council. (n.d.-a). *History and Role of NESDC*. Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council. Retrieved November 15, 2024, from https://www.nesdc.go.th/nesdb_en/ewt_news.php?nid=4258

Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council. (n.d.-b). *NESDC Executives*. Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council. Retrieved November 15, 2024, from https://www.nesdc.go.th/nesdb_en/main.php?filename=management

Oi, M. (2023, November 14). Nepal bans TikTok citing disruption to social harmony. *BBC*.

Olejniczak, K., Borkowska-Waszak, S., Domaradzka-Widła, A., & Park, Y. (2020). Policy labs: The next frontier of policy design and evaluation? *Policy and Politics*, 48(1), 89–110.
<https://doi.org/10.1332/030557319X15579230420108>

OPMCM. (n.d.). *About OPMCM*. Government of Nepal. Retrieved August 19, 2024, from
<https://www.opmcm.gov.np/>

O’Rafferty, S. (2016, March 29). *Labs, iTeams, Designers*. Co-Creating Ireland.
<https://cocreatingireland.wordpress.com/2016/03/29/policy-labs/>

- Pant, S. (2021). Evidence-based policymaking in Nepal. In *NEFport* (Issue 47). Nepal Economic Forum.
- PMINDIA. (n.d.). *NITI Aayog: Transforming India's Development Agenda*. PMINDIA. Retrieved September 25, 2024, from https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/major_initiatives/niti-aayog-transforming-indias-development-agenda/
- Policy Research Institute. (n.d.). *Policy Research Institute*. Government of Nepal. Retrieved August 19, 2024, from <https://pri.gov.np/introduction/>
- Republica. (2024, June 13). 'Govt can lift TikTok ban if it complies with Nepali law.' *MyRepublica*.
- Richards, J. C. (1990). The Language Teaching Matrix. In *Cambridge Language Teaching Library*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511667152>
- RocketReach. (n.d.). *a2i Information*. RocketReach. Retrieved September 29, 2024, from https://rocketreach.co/a2i-profile_b45c4739fc6e862d
- Shrestha, P. M. (2023, March 12). Prospects and pitfalls of end of Nepal's LDC status. *The Kathmandu Post*. <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2023/03/12/prospects-and-pitfalls-of-end-of-nepal-s-ldc-status>
- Silwal, R. (2024, April 25). Evidence-Based Policy Making in Nepal: Challenges and the Way Forward. *MyRepublica*.
- SITRA. (n.d.). *History*. SITRA. Retrieved June 17, 2024, from <https://www.sitra.fi/en/topics/history/>
- Stone, D. (2001). Think Tanks, Global Lesson-Drawing and Networking Social Policy Ideas. *Global Social Policy*, 1(3), 338–360.

The Texas Politics Project. (n.d.). *A diagram of the policy making process*. University of Texas at Austin.

The United Nations Office at Geneva. (2023, March 9). *The LDC graduation pathway must not disrupt overall sustainable development, says UN deputy chief*. United Nations.
<https://www.ungeneva.org/en/news-media/news/2023/03/78826/ldc-graduation-pathway-must-not-disrupt-overall-sustainable>

Theparat, C. (2019). NESDC's new "driver" details approach to progress . *Bangkok Post*.
<https://www.bangkokpost.com/business/1721251/nedcs-new-driver-details-approach-to-progress>

Therapat, C. (2018). Steering the NESDB through transition. *Bangkok Post*.
<https://www.bangkokpost.com/business/general/1521214/steering-the-nesdb-through-transition>

Thiruvengadam, P. (2013). A need for needs analysis. *International Journal of Applied Research & Studies*, 2(1). <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234119175>

Tönurist, P., Kattel, R., & Lember, V. (2017). Innovation labs in the public sector: what they are and what they do? *Public Management Review*, 19(10), 1455–1479.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2017.1287939>

Veenstra, A., & Kotterink, B. (2017). *Data-Driven Policy Making: The Policy Lab Approach*. 100–111. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-64322-9_9i

Vibeke Carstensen, H., Bason Helle Vibeke Carstensen Director, C., & Christian Bason, D. (2012). Powering Collaborative Policy Innovation: Can Innovation Labs Help? In *The Innovation Journal: The Public Sector Innovation Journal* (Vol. 17, Issue 1).

Wellstead, A., & Howlett, M. (2021). Re-Thinking Think Tanks: Differentiating Knowledge-Based Policy Influence Organizations. *2021 Canadian PPN Virtual Conference*, 1–23.

Wellstead, A., Ottenhof, N., Evans, B., & Gofen, A. (2023). What's going on in there? Canadian government policy labs and public value management. *Canadian Public Administration*, 66(4), 514–532. <https://doi.org/10.1111/capa.12548>

Whicher, A. (2021). Evolution of policy labs and use of design for policy in UK government. *Policy Design and Practice*, 4(2), 252–270. <https://doi.org/10.1080/25741292.2021.1883834>

APPENDIX

Consent Form

Description of the Study and Participant's Role: This study will be conducted through in-depth, one-on-one interviews, lasting approximately 30 minutes. Topics include questions about the role of your department, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and collaborations.

The interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Participation is voluntary. You can stop participating at any time, for any reason. If you decide to discontinue at any point, you may ask for the recorded information to be destroyed immediately.

Purpose of the Study: This research project is conducted by Aaryaa Subedi as part of the Daayitwa Nepal Public Policy Fellowship in collaboration with the Office of Prime Minister and Council of Ministers. The project focuses on developing a framework for the possibility of establishing a structure within the Prime Minister's office to support the policy making process and promote evidence-based policy research in Nepal.

The interview is being conducted to identify existing gaps in current policy research and implementation procedures, if any and any opportunities for improvements. The questionnaire will also be used to determine the need and feasibility of introducing any additional framework to the current structure of policymaking.

Risks: The risks associated in this study are minimal at the best, and are not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life. If the questions or answers in the interviews bring up unpleasant experiences for you and you feel it's better not to include them, you can inform the researcher to exclude these aspects. All this information and recordings will be deleted.

Confidentiality: All the information you provide will be kept private and used only for study purposes. You can choose to not have your name appear in any report or publication. The information will be collected through audio devices and handwritten notes. Your information will be safely stored in a password-protected computer, and only the researcher will have access to it.

The audio files will be deleted as soon as it is transcribed. The final report will be made available upon request.

Questions about research: If you have any questions or concerns about the research or your role in this study, please feel free to contact the researcher, Aaryaa Subedi by phone at +977 9863472077 or email at aaryaa.subedi@daayitwa.org . You may also contact the organization, Daayitwa Abhiyaan, by phone at +977-1-5544914 or email at contact@daayitwa.org.

I agree to have this interview recorded:

Yes

No

I consent to participate in this study conducted by Aaryaa Subedi. I understand the nature of this research and wish to participate. The signature below indicates my consent.

Signature Date: _____

Name of the Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Researcher Signature: _____

General Information

1. Name of Respondent:
2. Organization/ Division/ Department: Enterprise and Management Development Center
3. Total number of employees in organization/ division/ department:
4. Position: Assistant professor
5. Length of time in this position:2015 - 2019
6. Phone Number:
7. Email Address:

Role:

1. How would you define the role of your department/division/organization?
2. Is your organization/division/organization involved in the policy making process?
3. Are you involved in the policy making process?

If yes,

4. What role does your department play in the policymaking process?
5. Would you categorize your role as a direct involvement or an indirect one?
6. In which stage of the policymaking process is your department involved?

If no,

7. Do you believe that you have the ability / prospects to contribute to the policymaking process?

Strength:

1. What do you think is the department's main expertise that supports / could support the policy making process?

Opportunities:

1. What are the areas you can improve in as a department?
2. What kind of support do you need from the Office of Prime Minister and Council of Ministers or other organizations to make this improvement?
3. What innovation do you think is required in the current policy making process in general?
4. What would an ideal policymaking process look like for you or your department?

Challenges:

1. What are the main challenges that you are facing as a part of the current policy making practices / current department practices?
2. What kind of support do you need to overcome these challenges?
3. What role can OPMCM play to overcome these challenges?

Collaboration:

1. As a department, are you required to collaborate with any other departments or organizations as part of the policy making process?
2. Do you collaborate with other departments or organizations during policy-related work or research?

If yes,

3. What departments and organizations do you collaborate with during the policy making process?
4. How do you determine which organizations to collaborate with? Are there any objective processes?
5. How regular is your contact with these organizations?
6. At what level do you collaborate with these organizations? Do you share the work or is one of you just limited to an advisory role?
7. What major challenges do you face during collaboration with other organizations? Are there any particular things you wish were improved in the working process of these organizations?

If no,

8. Would you want to collaborate with other departments? Why? Why not?

If yes,

9. What do you think would be different if you had a strong collaboration with other policymaking bodies?

Suggestions on Policy Lab

1. What are your thoughts on establishing a central structure like a policy lab within the OPMCM? This policy lab will mainly mobilize existing data and research-based organizations like PRI, NPC and NSO and promote evidence-based policy research.