MODULE 4
HANDOUTS

SAMPLES OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

EXAMPLE 1:

Excerpt from **'Taxation and Livelihoods: Evidence from Fragile and Conflict Affected Situations',** Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium, October 2013:
www.securelivelihoods.org

Introduction

Despite growing interest in the linkages between taxation, development and governance, surprisingly little attention has been paid to the relationship between taxation and people's livelihoods, particularly in places affected by conflict. Yet, it is in these contexts that people encounter fierce challenges to livelihood recovery, often finding themselves operating in a political economy environment that is at once complex and shifting, as well as brutal and exploitative. People affected by conflict tend to have urgent service-related needs, and violent conflicts can erode trust in governance actors. Drawing on a recent working paper (Lough et al., 2013), this evidence brief provides an overview of the evidence base when exploring the relationship between taxation and livelihoods in conflict affected situations. It discusses the geographical, methodological and thematic nature of the evidence base, summarises key findings, clarifies what the research means for policymakers, and provides links to relevant empirical material.

What is this evidence brief based on?

The working paper on which this evidence brief is based emerged through a selective review of key literature on taxation and livelihoods in low-income rural areas (particularly those affected by conflict) in more than 20 countries. The review involved a search of key journal databases using predetermined search strings and, for retrieved documents, full text searches for key words. The same process was repeated using Google Scholar and the standard Google search in order to capture institutional and non-academic literature on the topic. Snowball sampling was also used, with the starting point determined by references from key documents and existing literature reviews. As the study progressed, the publication records of any authors whose work emerged as particularly relevant were also reviewed, along with the publication databases of organisations involved in similar research. The authors also shared and discussed the project's concept note with academics, researchers and practitioners in relevant fields.

EXAMPLE 2:

Excerpt from blog: **'Pushing the Boundaries in Research and Development among Academics in Africa'**, by Charity Ashimem Angya and Barnabas A. Ikyo:
https://beyond2015.acu.ac.uk/submissions/view?id=135&x[0]=list%3F

Academic research is the foundation for sustainable growth and development of a nation. Universities worldwide play a key role in developing both the citizens and in contributing towards innovations in both policy and technological development. Education is widely accepted as a leading instrument for promoting economic growth [2, 3]. For Africa, where growth is essential if the continent is to climb out of poverty, it is particularly important for key players in the education sector to participate more in research activities. The fact that Africa contributes to less than 3% global publication and less than 1% scientific output underscores the fact that research as whole is yet to take the stage in higher education in Africa[2].

Although previous reports have attributed the reduced research activities to the brain drain, with reports indicating that roughly 30% of the region's university trained professionals live outside Africa, and recent estimate suggesting that up to 50,000 African-trained PhDs are working outside Africa [4], a couple of other reasons for this low research output needs to be addressed.

In Nigeria for example, there is need for researchers and academics to shift focus from publishing for the sake of career advancement to concentrate more on high impact result based research: research that will add value to knowledge. This is often mirrored in publication in internationally high impact peer reviewed journals. Though being the country with the largest population in the whole of Africa's, Nigeria has only 15 scientists and engineers engaged in research and development per one million people [4]. It has also been reported that low levels of investment in research capacity and education may be reasons why the country's non-oil economy has remained consistently sluggish during a decade of international economic expansion [3].

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2. Bloom, D.E., Canning, D. and Chan, K. (2006). Higher education and economic development in Africa. Washington, DC: World Bank.
3. Saint, W., Hartnett T.A. and Strassner, E. (2003). Higher education in Nigeria: A status report, Higher Education Policy 16(3): 259–281.
4. Mohrman, K., Ma, W. and Baker, D. (2008). The research university in transition: The emerging global model, Higher Education Policy 21(1): 5–27.

EXAMPLE 3:

Excerpt from **Bank of Ghana Policy Brief, 'The Housing Industry in Ghana: Prospects and Challenges'**: ***www.bog.gov.gh/privatecontent/Research/PolicyBrief/pbrief-housing-new.pdf***

Issues in brief

Housing is one of the most important basic needs in every society. Improved housing markets also provide positive externalities, as well as direct consumption benefits. For instance, increased housing activities also stimulate economic activities through ancillary industries such as building materials and also benefits professionals such as architects and civil engineers.

Generally, housing constitutes a major component of household wealth, especially for low-income households, and no doubt, housing wealth is increasingly gaining importance in the Ghanaian economy. For many households, it is the most important form of savings as homeownership is considered as a hedge against inflation in the medium term. In other instances, it is utilized as collateral for borrowing by homeowners, thereby generating funds for other investments and wealth creation. Thus, the housing industry has the capacity to both cultivate and protect wealth.

Since Ghana's independence, provision of housing has remained central to the development agenda. Various policies, programmes and institutions have sought to address issues such as land tenure, land title regulation, and provision of affordable housing units to the working population. However, a number of these housing strategies were negatively affected by lack of funds, poor macroeconomic environment and lack of private sector participation. Thus, compared with other advanced countries, Ghana's housing industry remains rudimentary.

In recent times however, and within the context of the improved macroeconomic environment characterized by low inflation rates, low interest rates and relatively stable exchange rates, activities in Ghana's housing sector is gaining momentum. Although housing demand and supply gaps that are fueled by a rapidly growing middle-class as well as increased urbanization remain, the rising mortgage debt outstanding to GDP ratio provides evidence that the sector has recorded moderate growth over the past three years in particular, albeit from a low base.

The gradual improvement in housing supply notwithstanding, the sector faces a number of challenges such as land acquisition, prolonged land title and registration processes, high costs of rental units and house prices that require policy intervention. Empirical evidence has demonstrated that housing policies based on the "Enabling Markets Approach (EMA)'' often yields better results. Basically, the EMA relies on the private sector as the main supplier of houses and issuer of long-term financing for households whereas Government's role is limited to that of a regulator and facilitator. This underscores the importance of government emphasis on creating an enabling environment for increased private sector participation in Ghana's housing industry.

EXAMPLE 4:

Excerpt from **an open letter to Ben van Beurden, CEO of Shell, from John Ashton, former UK Envoy for Climate Change**: ***www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/mar/30/open-letter-shell-ben-van-beurden-john-ashton-climate-change***

Th[is] is the story of your mask: a manifesto for the oil and gas status quo, justified by the unsupported claim that the economic and moral cost of departing from it would exceed the benefit in climate change avoided.

Beneath the mask is the face. Its story is encoded in language and tone, and it does not match the mask. You reject “stereotypes that fail to see the benefits our industry brings to the world”. But you resort freely to stereotypes yourself, to attack those who want more ambition.

You and those who agree with you have a monopoly on realism and practicality. You are “balanced” and “informed”. Your enemies are “naive” and “short sighted”. And you accuse them of wanting “a sudden death of fossil fuels”. No phrase in your speech is more revealing. Nobody is asking for this and if they were they would be wasting their time. But the Freudian intensity of your complaint flashes from the text like a bolt of lightning.

Moreover, although you acknowledge doubts about the credibility of your industry, you don’t address them. You speak, as it were, peering down, with authority and detachment, at a world that should self-evidently look the same to others as it does to you. And from that height, you seem to be want us to believe that the issue is not how to deal with climate change but how to do so without touching your business model.

EXAMPLE 5:

Extracts from **Center for Global Development Working Paper Number 50, 'seven Deadly Sins: Reflections on Donor Failings'** by Nancy Birdsall, December 2005

Abstract

In the face of continuing development challenges in the world's poorest countries, there have been new calls throughout the donor community to increase the volume of development aid. Equal attention is needed to reform of the aid business itself, that is, the practices and processes and procedures and politics of aid. This paper sets out the shortcomings of that business on which new research has recently shed light, but which have not been adequately or explicitly incorporated into the donor community's reform agenda. It outlines seven of the worst "sins" or failings of donors, including impatience with institution building, collusion and coordination failures, failure to evaluate the results of their support, and financing that is volatile and unpredictable. It suggests possible short-term practical fixes and notes the need ultimately for more ambitious and structural changes in the overall aid architecture.

Extract from Introduction

In this paper I focus on the "sins" of donors as a community in the hope it will enrich the ongoing discussion of reform of what might be called the "business" of development assistance. I deal with the shortcomings of the donor countries as providers of development assistance, leaving aside in this paper their shortcomings in such other areas as trade, security, and international migration that also affect the developing countries. In referring to donors and the donor community I refer both to bilateral donors and the World Bank, the IMF, and other international institutions that provide credit at below-market rates to developing countries, and whose policies and practices are heavily influenced by the rich countries.

After more than a decade of declines in total foreign aid, commitments on amounts of aid have increased, both in the U.S. and in Europe, so I refer only briefly to the inadequate quantity of aid. Instead I concentrate on problems with the "quality" of aid. The problems with aid quality matter tremendously because research indicates that they reduce considerably the effective value of the aid that is transferred, and in the most aid-dependent countries may well mean that the way the "business of aid" is conducted actually undermines those countries' long-term development prospects. The sins I discuss are, in the order in which I address them:

1. Impatience (with institution building)
2. Envy (collusion and coordination failure)
3. Ignorance (failure to evaluate)
4. Pride (failure to exit)
5. Sloth (pretending participation is sufficient for ownership)
6. Greed (unreliable as well as stingy transfers)
7. Foolishness (underfunding of global and regional public goods)

My purpose is not to condemn the donor "sins" but, by being frank and clear about them, to generate a broader conversation among donors, recipients, and the concerned non-official development community, about how they might be addressed. In that spirit, I suggest "fixes" for the sins of donors.

STRUCTURE OF A BRIEF

Generally, policy briefs are four pages in length (around 2,200 words, including references and tables). They are usually organized as follows:

Quote/idea from each point/section of the reading	What it reminds me of as a learning person
Executive statement (10%)	Includes a brief overview of all of the parts of a policy brief Should be written last!
Introduction (10–15%)	Highlights the importance of the issue, problem or situation, using entry points Gives a brief overview of the conclusions or the direction of the rest of the brief
Methodology (5–10%)	Designed to strengthen the credibility of the brief by explaining how the findings and recommendations were arrived at Not always applicable or necessary – you can sometimes leave this out or restrict it to one sentence
Results and conclusions (30%)	Designed as an overview of the findings/facts Constructed around the policy recommendations
Implications or recommendations (30%)	This is the most important part of the brief Usually limited to three implications or recommendations Recommendations, which are direct and clear suggestions for action, are preferred, but less direct implications may be more appropriate depending on the context
References and useful resources (10%)	Helps readers find out more on the issue if they require more information In a brief, keep references to a minimum, but make sure you do include them – particularly seminal work on the issue or topic

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR STRUCTURED WRITING AND PRESENTATIONS

The following principles for written pieces and structured presentations[5] have been compiled from the feedback from the assignments completed by parliamentary researchers, as well as the key principles outlined throughout Module 4, and the checklist used to assess briefs written by the UK Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology (POST).

Criteria	Yes	Partially	No	N/A
1. Structure				
Chosen structure is appropriate for topic (e.g. in length and format)				
Clear beginning, middle and end. The beginning tells the reader/listener what to expect and why it is important, the middle focuses on the details of each key point in turn, and the end summarizes what has been said and 'looks forward' (mentions implications, links the issue to the wider context)				
If provided, recommendations are specific, clear and feasible suggestions for action				
2. Clarity				
The purpose and key messages of the presentation/ document are clear				
Uses simple language as much as possible, rather than technical jargon				
Graphs, charts, infographics and pictures are easy to interpret and help the reader/listener understand the key points				

5. Note this is intended as a general guide for written communications for a range of audiences, not a guide for academic research writing. Formal research writing is a much more specific skill with accepted principles and standards which are not covered in this guide.

Criteria	Yes	Partially	No	N/A
3. Use of evidence				
Evidence is properly referenced; all sources are fully acknowledged				
Evidence is accurately presented/interpreted				
Evidence is treated with objectivity				
Evidence comes from credible and official sources; where the source is informal or unofficial, this is clearly acknowledged				
A combination of different kinds of evidence is used (primary and secondary sources, research evidence, grey literature etc.)				
4. Relevance				
Directly addresses the topic without extraneous information				
Addresses the topic comprehensively, providing an accurate contextual framework/overview, and does not omit key information				
Contextually relevant in scope and content and enhances understanding of the specific situation				
An appropriate balance of theory and practical application				
Appropriately targeted at the audience and makes allowances for different information needs				
5. Visual presentation				
Titles and section headings are clearly and concisely labelled				
Presented in an engaging and professional visual style which is appropriate to the audience (e.g. use of colours, font, bold and italics, logos etc.)				
Where appropriate, the piece makes use of pop-out boxes, graphs, charts and infographics				
Visual style and use of headings, bullets etc. is consistent throughout				

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