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Applied Political Economy Analysis for Human Rights Programs and Campaigns

A Practical Guide for Practitioners



August 2018

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Section 1: Applied Political Economy Analysis and Why It Matters

1.1. Introduction and how to use this handbook

Applied Political Economy Analysis (APEA) is an approach to analyzing key power dynamics and social, political, economic, and other incentives operating within a given sector or locality. Donors and implementers of international development programs increasingly use APEA to help them base their interventions in an understanding of the local political and economic environment. Practitioners can point to a range of examples of where APEA or similar approaches have been applied in the governance sector, as well as in other sectors such as health, natural resource management, and economic growth. While implementers of human rights programs routinely have used assessment methodologies that shed light on local contextual factors, there is limited experience in or available guidance on using APEA as a foundation for human rights programming.

Getting to the why

Those engaged in a APEA-type exercise must be driven to go beyond understanding **what** is taking place in a particular geography or sector, or even **how** things are taking place, because answers to these questions may not tell us enough about what is driving or constraining key actors' behavior. Instead, any APEA should seek to understand the underlying causes for **why** a particular set of conditions exist.

This handbook was developed for the USAID-funded and Freedom House-led Protecting Global Rights with Sustainable Solutions (PROGRESS) consortium,¹ as well as other organizations supporting and implementing human rights programming. It offers practitioners a theoretical overview of APEA, but focuses on providing practical, operational guidelines and recommendations for grounding human rights interventions in a deep understanding of local- or country-level political economy. This handbook is rooted in Pact's experience using APEA in more than 20 programs across sectors. It also builds on PROGRESS consortium core partners' experiences and methodologies, which complement the principles and practices of APEA. The guidance will be deliberately updated over time as the consortium integrates APEA across a portfolio of human rights programs.

Section 1 defines APEA and explains why considering political and economic factors can lead to more effective development programs, including human rights programs. Section 2 provides step-by-step guidance for designing and conducting an APEA study, while Section 3 explains how to make "everyday" APEA part of ongoing program management. Finally, Section 4 presents key operational considerations for those planning and executing APEA studies and systems. This handbook is designed as a comprehensive document that can be read from front to back. However, practitioners are encouraged to use individual sections and appendices as stand-alone references as they plan their own APEA activities.

1.2. What is political economy analysis? Why analyze the political economy?

There are a range of definitions of political economy analysis (PEA).² We define PEA as **an approach for understanding the underlying interests and incentives that explain the decisions and behavior of key actors**. Some of these incentives may be highly visible, such as formal legal, policy, and economic frameworks. Others may be largely invisible, such as unwritten norms and values that shape the actions of individuals and groups. In colloquial terms, PEA helps practitioners answer the

¹ PROGRESS is led by Freedom House. The American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative (ABA ROLI), Internews, Pact, and Search for Common Ground serve as core consortium members.

² In its APEA Field Guide, USAID describes PEA as a "field-based methodology used to explore not simply how things happen in an aid-recipient country, but *why* things happen" (p. 2). In its *Problem Driven Political Economy Analysis: The World Bank Experience*, the World Bank describes the animating purpose of PEA as being to "understand the underlying drivers that shape the incentives of decision makers" (p. 8). See Appendix 6 for more information on both documents.

question: **Why are things the way they are in a given place at a given point in time? PEA can be carried out at multiple levels and within different domains.**



NATIONAL-LEVEL

National-level analyses tend to examine broad structural dynamics that influence the distribution of power within a society.



SECTORAL-LEVEL

Sectoral-level analyses uncover the motivating interests, incentives, and constraints of key actors that help explain sector outcomes.



PROJECT-LEVEL

Project-level analyses focus on critical social, political, and economic factors positioned to either contribute to or hinder project results.

So why do human rights practitioners and program managers need to worry about the political economy? The world in which our programs or campaigns are implemented is complex and messy. It is difficult to make sense of the many visible or invisible power structures, economic and political influences, or cultural dynamics that exist within a given society or system that could influence our ability to implement programs that enact lasting change. In many cases, these influences have a far greater impact on outcomes than the modest investments of our individual projects or campaigns. As development practitioners and promoters of human rights, we should understand that there are a range of factors outside of our control that have direct bearing on the change we are trying to achieve. If we ignore these factors, we risk missing the chance to seize windows of opportunity or to mitigate emergent risks.

Imagine a donor-funded project that aims to improve the ability of a country's human rights commission to fulfill its mandate to protect human rights and prosecute human rights violators. Recognizing that the commission is under-resourced, the project may provide targeted funding to support clearly defined protection and prosecution functions. The project also may offer a range of technical capacity development to fill key skill gaps among lawyers and other staff within the commission. Further, it may provide technical assistance focused on improving case management and work with civil society to improve referrals to the commission.

Will these investments in terms of financial support, capacity development, and networking with civil society be sufficient to improve the human rights commission's performance? Possibly, but it is far from assured. The commission could face a host of external factors that may influence its performance. For example, a new government might have a clear commitment to prosecuting past human rights violations, making it an ideal time to invest in the commission. Powerful economic interests could be pushing government to weaken the commission so it can escape scrutiny. Or, there could be a lack of public commitment to protecting key minority groups who are the primary victims of human rights abuses, undermining the government and commission's interest in protection and prosecution. Each of these factors directly relate to the overarching political economy, and each could have a tremendous influence on whether the human rights commission upholds its mandate.

Understanding these factors could steer project leaders to rethink their approach. For example, the project may determine that it is better to support civil society to exert external pressure on the commission and other government institutions, rather than provide direct support and legitimacy to the body. Or, the project may decide that there is a need for long-term investment in political campaigns promoting minority rights. Understanding the political economy through careful analysis helps ensure that the project invests time, energy, and resources in those interventions that are most likely to drive sustainable change.

1.3. Making PEA applied

PEA is used to analyze key political and economic dynamics; APEA is a methodology that supports **project-level or problem-driven analysis**. At its most basic level, APEA is used to check

assumptions and better account for the risks associated with implementing projects in complex environments. It focuses on how power and resources shape organizations, communities, and sectors in the local systems that the projects inhabit. APEA is problem-driven in the sense that it is used to investigate one or multiple defined issues or questions relevant to the project, rather than describe the context writ large.

APEA is *applied* in that it aims to practically inform project decision-making and investments. To maximize its usability, APEA often is tied to specific decision points/mechanisms within a project. For example, project managers may time an APEA study or related exercise to inform the selection of target geography, thematic focus, or sub-grantees. Furthermore, APEA is more than an analytical tool; it is a **participatory process** that helps project teams analyze the enabling environment and understand the key development challenges from a diversity of stakeholder perspectives.

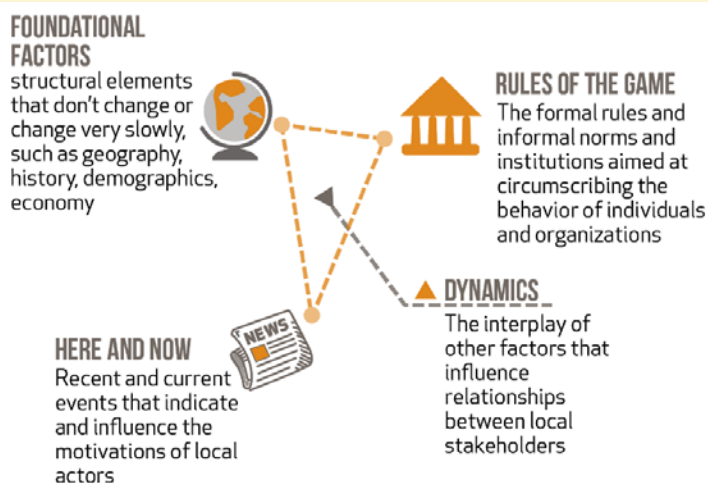
Key Principles of APEA

APEA is driven by a set of key principles, as follows. They are further elaborated in the remainder of Section 1 and in Sections 2 and 3.

1. **Focus on what's "core":** APEA is driven by a defined question or set of questions. Wherever possible, practitioners should adopt the narrowest definition of the core question(s) to generate analysis that is actionable. Loosely defined questions are apt to generate information that may be interesting, but less informative for project design and implementation.
2. **Flexibility:** APEA is a flexible process, as opposed to a scripted tool. While practitioners should be directed by core questions and committed to best practices in conducting and documenting research, they should remain flexible in how they gather information and from whom. Approaches for collecting key information include desk reviews, stakeholder interviews, focus group discussions, formal and informal surveys, and various participatory research methods.
3. **Participation:** APEA is built around participatory consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and actors connected to the project. Practitioners update the list of stakeholders on a continuous basis as an APEA unfolds.
4. **Consensus building:** The development problems addressed by human rights projects are invariably complex. APEA offers an opportunity to consolidate learning and perspectives from a wide range of stakeholders to promote a shared understanding of key challenges.
5. **Action oriented:** APEA's purpose is not to generate analysis for analysis' sake. Rather, it is to (1) adjust project design to reflect political and economic realities and/or (2) develop strategies for changing political and economic dynamics to achieve project results. As such, APEA goes beyond analysis to include processes for translating analysis into action, frequently by developing advocacy plans.
6. **Iterative process:** While a baseline APEA frequently occurs at the start of a project, the process is not a one-time event. APEA is most effective when it is integrated into a project's management plan and any analytical reports developed at project outset, and treated as a "living document" that is revisited on an iterative basis.

Frameworks for APEA

A framework offers a systematic means of breaking key contextual factors into their component parts. Using a framework can help a research team organize and make sense of a complex dataset. Various donors and institutions have created an array of PEA and APEA frameworks.³ These frameworks identify broad categories of incentives or influences that shape the behavior of key actors. While there are distinctions between available frameworks, they generally facilitate the analysis of structural factors that may evolve very slowly or not at all, formal and informal



³ In addition to USAID, the U.K. Department for International Development (DFID), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), and Dutch government have frameworks for conducting PEA or related assessments. Some NGOs, such as Oxfam, have created frameworks for assessing power structures.

institutions that constrain or enable behavior of key actors, or evolving social and political trends. The USAID 2014 field guidance on PEA organizes its framework into four categories: Foundational Factors, Rules of the Game, Here and Now, and Dynamics.

APEA as a complementary methodology

APEA can serve as an integral part of a project's overall approach to ensuring that it remains alive to its operating environment and adapts its programming accordingly. Approaches such as **Complexity-Aware Monitoring (CAM)**⁴ aim to provide projects with a structured means of capturing, filtering, and analyzing contextual information, including through the establishment of context indicators that help monitor change. Similarly, **Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA)**⁵ supports reflection on data and information that is both internal and external to a project as the basis for continual learning. Importantly CLA systems provide built-in mechanisms designed to make it easier for projects to adapt in response to learning. Likewise, donors have increasingly recognized that projects should take a **systems approach** for sustainable change, and that failure to engage with the whole system (or to understand the basics of how the system works) frequently leads project results to dissipate or reverse. APEA can provide a practical foundation for these and other processes by furnishing contextual data that feeds into CAM and CLA or that helps piece together the factors that drive a complex system.

Employing APEA to analyze local systems

Donors and implementing agencies have increasingly emphasized strengthening and leveraging indigenous, local systems to achieve sustainable development objectives. USAID's Local Systems Framework identifies 10 principles for engaging with local systems.

1. Recognize there is always a system.
2. Engage local systems everywhere.
3. Capitalize on our convening authority.
4. Tap into local knowledge.
5. Map local systems.
6. Design holistically.
7. Ensure accountability.
8. Embed flexibility.
9. Embrace facilitation.
10. Monitor and evaluate for sustainability.

To constructively engage local systems, projects must have a sophisticated understanding of the underlying dynamics that explain how those systems function. APEA maps the stakeholders, processes, and institutions that make up local systems. More fundamentally, the methodology helps illuminate the written and unwritten rules and interests that govern those systems. HRSM APEAs can benefit from integrating with these principles to structure its analysis of local systems.

1.4. Why APEA is useful to the human rights sector

Why use APEA in a human rights project setting?

- To gain deeper insights on political economy factors influencing the project, through a process-driven and replicable methodology
- To develop data-driven advocacy strategies
- To identify champions and spoilers on human rights issues
- To provide a methodological platform for ongoing analysis by project staff and local partners

There is a natural alignment between the basic orientation of human rights programs and the principles and purpose of APEA as a methodology. Most practitioners understand that the promotion of human rights is deeply tied to political and, to some extent, economic conditions within a given

society. Advancing civil-political or socio-economic rights rarely is merely a question of building the capacity of the right institutions or of providing optimal levels of funding to human rights organizations. More often, governments have failed to prioritize the protection of human rights or those in power directly benefit from suppressing those rights. Human rights advocates frequently struggle for influence over key policies. Similarly, it can be challenging to build broad-based citizen support for advancing certain human rights, especially if they relate to historically marginalized groups. Implementers of human rights programs know that politics is not something that can be avoided because these and other factors that can hinder a pro-rights agenda are fundamentally political in nature.

⁴ USAID Office of Learning Evaluation and Research. (2016). *Complexity-Aware Monitoring Discussion Note*. Available at: <https://usaidlearninglab.org/library/complexity-aware-monitoring-discussion-note-brief>

⁵ USAID Learning Lab. *Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting*. Available at: <https://usaidlearninglab.org/faq/collaborating-learning-and-adapting-cla>

There are also points of tension between many human rights approaches and APEA. **Human rights programs are almost by definition normative-based**, meaning that they aim to advance a set of nationally or internationally recognized norms and rights which define how citizens ought to be treated. By contrast, **APEA is a positive-based methodology** meant to describe a geography, sector, or issue as it is. Promoters of APEA encourage implementers to use resulting analysis to “think and work politically”⁶ achieve program outcomes. This often means “working with the grain”⁷ in an effort to leverage the underlying incentives that influence key actors’ behaviors. Advocates may be uncomfortable with this approach if the *grain* represents a set of incentives and actors that are fundamentally hostile to human rights. To what extent should a human rights program engage with political gatekeepers with a history of human rights abuse, especially if doing so risks legitimizing those actors? Or, should advocates compromise and focus on existing political opportunities to make partial progress in advancing rights?

APEA findings may raise these questions, but they are questions with which human rights programs already wrestle. The aim is not to use APEA to fundamentally change the orientation of human rights interventions. Rather, it is to help them promote their agenda in politically savvy ways. The hope is that human rights programs can use APEA to gather data on the political realities of their operating context to achieve their normative-based ends.

Beyond the basic fact that advancing human rights is fundamentally a political process, there are a range of related reasons that APEA is especially relevant to human rights programs.

- **Human rights programs tend to be implemented in especially dynamic operating environments.** Human rights protections are often most lacking in areas marked by poor rule of law, political instability, and even conflict. Practitioners cannot take the environment as static in these contexts, and programs need to put in place extra measures to continually monitor political and economic currents, and adapt accordingly.
- **The advancement of human rights can be propelled by “champions” and hindered by “spoilers.”** APEA provides a structured framework for identifying key actors positioned to move reforms or protection mechanisms forward, including those within the system and non-traditional allies, such as the private sector. Likewise, the methodology can help map individuals and institutions poised to serve as obstacles to progress in order to develop mitigation strategies.
- **Human rights interventions often present high risks of unintended consequences.** Human rights issues are sensitive. For example, programs seeking to support LGBTI rights in Tanzania or Uganda must weigh the risk of fostering unintended backlash against the LGBTI community. APEA can support the implementation of *do no harm* approaches by rigorously mapping the political risk associated with specific interventions.

The most effective leaders of human rights programs and organizations closely follow key political and economic dynamics. APEA offers a practical, structured way for managers to take the analysis they do implicitly and do it more systematically in a way that supports learning and data-driven decision-making.

⁶ Thinking and Working Politically (TWP) refers to a movement within the development community that aims to recognize that development interventions and outcomes tend to be political in nature and, as such, are directly and indirectly influenced by politics. TWP represents a break from some traditional approaches that saw development as distinct from political questions. The TWP Community of Practice (<https://twpcommunity.org/>) has a range of relevant materials on the topic.

⁷ Brian Levy, among others, advocates for “working with the grain” to promote development outcomes. For Levy, this means finding ways to align programming with local incentive structures. See Levy, B. (2014). *Working with the Grain: Integrating Governance and Growth in Development Strategies*. Oxford University Press.

Section 2: Designing and Conducting an APEA Study

2.1. What it means to conduct an APEA study and how to know if a project needs one

An APEA study takes place within a finite period. A study can be large in scope and carried out over several months. Alternatively, a project could carry out a rapid study that is far more limited and completed over a few weeks or even less. APEA studies can be distinguished from ongoing, *everyday* APEA processes, which are described in Section 3. However, APEA studies often are combined with those iterative approaches as part of an overarching APEA process or system, which give a project a continuous flow of information regarding the local context.

Even after a project determines that it could benefit from an investigation of political and economic dynamics and incentive structures, it should ask: **Is an APEA study necessary?** If project managers are trying to identify a very targeted set of information, something less involved than a study may be sufficient. Similarly, if a project needs information urgently to make a decision, even a rapid study may take too long. In some cases, a project or organization may have limited resources and need to make do with “good enough” information. For example, imagine that a project wants to think through the possible effects of a national election on the implementation of transitional justice mechanisms. Project leaders could rapidly organize one or a series of roundtable discussions to talk through alternative election scenarios and the known commitment of key political leaders to transitional justice. These discussions may be less involved than a full-scale study, but could still offer program leaders a rich level of information that can inform their interventions.

An APEA study is clearly optimal in many cases. Signs that it may be useful include the following.

- **The issues or topics to be investigated are complex.** This is not to suggest that complex questions cannot be probed through lighter, iterative APEA processes. But, some issues require deep consultation with a range of perspectives and data to be sufficiently analyzed.
- **There is need to document the program’s learning.** Making sure that APEA is truly *applied* is fundamentally a knowledge management challenge. In many cases, a project or donor may want to develop comprehensive documentation that can serve as a touch point for decision-making, aid future monitoring of the context, and be shared with key stakeholders. Often this documentation is provided in the form of a written report, but not always. As explained in Section 2.6, alternative formats could include memos or PowerPoint slide decks.
- **Sufficient time and resources for analyzing the focal issue are available.** Projects should not fill time and use resources just for the sake of doing so. However, if a project has adequate time before making critical decisions, it may be ideal to probe the issue more thoroughly. At the same time, remember that APEA should serve the purpose of a project, not the other way around. Therefore, a study’s scope should be molded to fit the time and resources available.

Many projects may find it useful to conduct a baseline APEA study at the start of implementation. A baseline study can be used to test start-up project assumptions, theories of change, and the planned package of interventions. A baseline study also can serve as a reference point against which the project will track changes in the operating environment. Baseline studies then can be updated periodically, sometimes on an annual basis or at midline. Alternatively, a project may decide to conduct a more-focused, issue-based study to inform its investments or approach in a particular area.

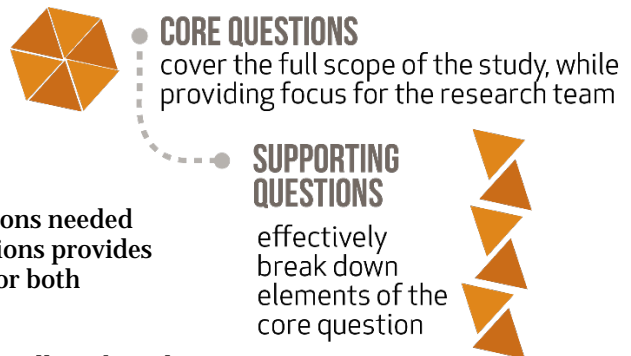
The Challenge of Baseline APEA Studies

Baseline APEA studies can provide an invaluable starting point for context-based implementation. They can be especially challenging because of the temptation to cover everything that is going on in the operating environment. If the scope of the study is too broad, the results likely will be an overly general context analysis. Researchers should be careful to probe into the issues that are of highest value to the project in terms of informing key technical and management decisions.

2.2. Identify research questions

APEA is fundamentally about asking **the right questions**. The right questions are of direct relevance to the project and should not be purely academic in nature. They are also typically difficult to answer; there is no reason to conduct an APEA, especially a deep study, to resolve questions project leaders already can answer. Given the complexity of the issues with which we will grapple, one may only develop partial answers to the questions we pose over the course of an individual study. That is fine. It is better to have a partial answer to the right question than a full answer to the wrong one. Many projects or human rights campaigns last multiple years, meaning that answering a particular question or set of questions can become a journey that extends beyond an individual study. Finally, the right questions do more than explore *what* is happening in a particular context. Instead, they require probing beneath the surface to understand *how* things are evolving in the context, *who* is engaged in particular behaviors, and, most importantly, *why* the status quo we observe exists.

An APEA study is typically framed around one or a few **core questions**. Researchers engage in a balancing act to shape the right core questions; the questions must be broad enough to encapsulate the entire scope of the study, but narrow enough to provide sufficient focus. As a general rule, researchers should strive for the fewest possible questions needed to guide the study. Identifying a single or couple questions provides the clearest possible articulation of the study's intent for both researchers and other stakeholders.



While core questions help guide the study, they are typically so broad that answering them can seem intimidating, and one may be left wondering where to begin. To provide further guidance, researchers should establish a set of **supporting questions**, which effectively break down the key elements of the core questions. These questions should remain at a high level and avoid getting into minute details. However, they should provide clear lines of inquiry that can guide us as we identify our sources and develop our data collection tools. As with core questions, establishing the fewest possible number of supporting questions will lead to greater conceptual clarity; often four or five supporting questions are sufficient.

Even if one understands that an APEA should be useful to their project or intervention, a researcher may still have difficulty knowing to what end the APEA should be useful. In shaping questions, researchers should ask: **What decisions should the study inform?** For example, a project may need to determine its target geography or focus issues or may want to identify the right partnerships or the best advocacy approach. Being clear on the **user requirements** makes coming up with operationally useful questions much easier.

Case study: Choosing the right questions

In Zimbabwe, more than 1 million people operate within the informal or illegal artisanal mining sector. The lack of legal status for these miners poses challenges in terms of protecting against environmental degradation and ensuring that mining communities receive basic rights and services. With DFID and USAID's joint support, Pact's Zimbabwe Accountability and Artisanal Mining Project (ZAAMP) aims to promote the formalization of the artisanal mining sector, i.e., integrating artisanal gold mining into the formal economy. During a six-month design period, the project team conducted an APEA to inform the design of program interventions.

Potential core questions:

What is the structure of the gold mining sector in Zimbabwe?

Too broad: The "structure" of the gold mining sector could cover lots of issues that extend well beyond the issue of formalization.

What laws serve to inhibit or facilitate the formalization of artisanal and small-scale gold mining activities?

Too specific: While undoubtedly important, there are many factors that explain the informalization of artisanal mining beyond the legal structure.

What are the significant incentives and barriers that inhibit artisanal gold miners from operating within the formal economy?

Focusing on the incentives and barriers that keep artisanal gold miners operating within the informal sector provided a high-level focus for Pact's study, but that core question was still quite broad. As such, Pact sought to establish supporting questions that served to further define the research focus.

Potential supporting questions:

What is the capacity of the Director of the Ministry of Mine's policy department?

Just right: This question covers the full scope of the study, while providing some focus for the research team.

Too specific: This could be an interesting question to pursue in a specific interview, but a question about a single individual is too narrow for the entire study.

Who within the Ministry of Mines is most supportive of formalization? (i.e., Who are the champions within the Ministry? Why are they supportive?)

Just right: Understanding key champions and spoilers of reform within key government institutions could represent a key area of inquiry.

How does the Zimbabwe Mining Development Act affect artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) activities?

Too specific: This may be an important act to examine. However, most studies will want to examine the larger legislative and policy framework.

How do existing laws and policies regulate the gold sector in Zimbabwe? To what extent are laws/policies enforced? What laws serve to inhibit or facilitate the formalization of ASGM activities?

Just right: This series of questions sets up the researcher to examine the larger legislative and policy framework. This will be one key piece of understanding the barriers to formalization of the ASGM sector.

The analysis that resulted from this study in Zimbabwe allowed the ZAAMP team to identify key points of entry in facilitating constructive and dialogue on the issue of ASGM formalization. For example, the analysis found that the Environmental Management Authority (EMA) had traditionally served as a spoiler on the issue of formalization, believing that it would effectively legalize destructive environmental mining practices. However, the research team identified that EMA was under pressure to develop a credible action plan for mercury abatement after Zimbabwe signed the Minamata Convention on Mercury. Thus, by linking ASGM formalization to the issue of mercury abatement, the project and its partners could effectively engage EMA in policy discussions.

2.3. Develop a scope of work

It is easy to approach creating a scope of work (SOW) as simply a bureaucratic or contractual process. However, for APEA, researchers should think about developing an SOW as an opportunity to define the breadth of the assignment and all the key inputs needed to carry it out. Getting the scope right up front will help ensure that researchers properly focus and resource their study.

While developing an SOW is important, it need not be complicated. As discussed in section 2.2, the most important element is the core and supporting questions. However, researchers should also use the SOW to outline relevant background information and define the study's purpose. Furthermore, the SOW should clearly lay out key roles and responsibilities and expected level of effort (LOE) for each team member. Projects should use this as an opportunity to think through how different members of the team will engage in the research. Pact's experience suggests that **strong engagement by the project team is a key success factor in the uptake of the APEA study**. Even when a study is led by an external technical staff or consultant, members of the project team should participate in defined points throughout the research and analysis process.

There is no hard and fast rule on the structure of an SOW. Key components may include:

- Background information
- Statement of purpose
- Expected LOE
- Key roles, responsibilities, and reporting lines
- Core and supporting research questions
- Key tasks/activities
- Key deliverables
- Timeline

Example APEA SOWs are in Appendix 2.

2.4. Create a data collection plan

APEA studies typically employ a mixed methods approach to research. This basically means that practitioners of APEA are free to pragmatically use a combination of methodologies and approaches to gather and analyze information. At the start of an APEA exercise, a best practice is to create a **data collection plan** (see Appendix 3); it can vary in formality, but is essentially a tool for making sure researchers are intentional about the sources and methods they use.

A data collection plan should do more than identify *what* and *who* will be consulted. It should likewise outline *why* those sources will be consulted. In other words, to the extent possible, the plan should specify what information researchers will seek from the source. This is important because during the data collection phase, this information forms the basis of the design of data collection instruments, like key informant interview (KII) or focus group discussion (FGD) guides.

A data collection plan flows directly from the core and supporting questions established in the SOW. To develop a plan, begin with a couple basic questions: **Which information sources (including secondary and primary sources) will help answer the established research questions? Which methods will be most effective in cultivating information from those sources?** Then, map both the secondary and primary sources that are relevant to the questions.

- **Mapping secondary sources:** Researchers will want to make use of available, documented information (literature) that can shed light on the key questions being investigated. Secondary sources include laws and policies, academic studies, sector or country analyses, past project/intervention assessments and evaluations, available public perception data, and newspaper articles and other forms of journalism. Creating a map of secondary sources does not have to be a complicated process. Researchers should begin with focused internet searches for the above and other documents that relate to the focus topic. Some secondary sources may not be available (or are hard to find) online. Thus, it is often necessary to consult with organizations and individual experts that can recommend important sources, especially if the research team is new to the topic at hand.
- **Mapping primary sources:** The goal in mapping primary sources is to identify the institutions, individuals, and stakeholder groups that will have a perspective on the defined research questions. Identifying these actors can be accomplished through basic or more sophisticated stakeholder mapping processes. For a rapid study, the research team could simply brainstorm a list of key stakeholders. For larger studies, it can be helpful to go through a more extensive and even participatory stakeholder mapping exercise. Researchers should remember that the stakeholders that are mapped represent a starting point in terms of who will be consulted over the course of the study.

Finally, the data collection plan should identify the methods that will be employed to gather information and make a note of any considerations in targeting particular sources. For example, researchers may note that an all-female team should interview a set of women human rights violation survivors.

Consider the following example for a project investigating human rights protection.

Source	Information Sought	Method	Considerations
Human rights defender organizations (HRDOs)	Understand how well HRDOs have worked with the national Human Rights Commission, as well as with each other	FGD, with follow-up KIIs	There are many HRDOs in the country and it could be efficient to review key, overarching dynamics regarding how human rights and work with the Commission in a FGD setting. However, many HRDOs may be reluctant to discuss challenges with inter-organization collaboration in a group setting, necessitating follow up KIIs.
Women's civil society organizations (CSOs)	Understand the extent to which CSOs serving women are connected to the Human Rights Commission and make referrals to HRDOs	FGD	The primary interest is in understanding how existing networks of women's CSOs engage with the Commission and make referrals. It will be most efficient to speak with a cohort(s) of groups working with female constituencies. If sensitive issues come up, then follow-up KIIs can be conducted.
Human Rights	Understand Commission's perspectives on engagement with HRDOs and human	KII	The research team should use its most senior team members, who are known to the Commission Chair, to conduct this interview. The Chair may be unwilling or unable to discuss key

Source	Information Sought	Method	Considerations
Commission Chair	rights defense of vulnerable groups, like LGBTI		workings of the Commission. Interviewers should ask for approval to interview mid-level employees of the commission.

Selecting diverse and representative informants

The quality and value of the information researchers get from individual and group discussions depends to a large extent on they talk to. Thus, project teams should be sure to make **good decisions about who to include as information sources in their data collection plan**. In building out their plan, researchers should guard against developing a list of informants that is likely to reinforce their existing assumptions, or the assumptions of the larger project team.

How can teams go about identifying and selecting informants in a way that is practical? Researchers should ask team members who know the local context best to develop a comprehensive list of **everyone** with whom they may want to consult. Once list of these possible information sources is generated, the team should decide who to prioritize for KIIs, FGDs, or other consultations. The final list will include a combination of organizations, individuals, or stakeholder groups (e.g., human rights abuse victims, school officials, etc.). Project teams should **keep in mind that some of the people most difficult to access (such as those in rural areas or high-ranking officials too “important” to spare time for consultations) may offer perspectives the team is missing**. Researchers should be systematic, conscious, and transparent about who they use and do not use as information sources, doing their best to fill potential blind spots. They should be sure to identify any clear gaps in their discussion of the research methodology in the final report.

2.5. Review secondary source material

APEA researchers should make maximum use of existing research and data through a thorough literature review. While secondary research may be consulted at any point during a study, researchers often will want to begin their inquiry with desk research. This initial research can serve multiple purposes, including:

- Helping researchers identify existing knowledge gaps and even adjust their defined core and supporting questions
- Identifying key themes and issues that relate to the focal questions
- Identifying additional informant groups to consult
- Providing basic contextual understanding we need to ask the right questions during the primary research phase (i.e., questions framed in KII and FGD interview guides, such as those in Appendix 4)
- Serving as a key tool for analyzing the legal and policy framework

Depending on the study, it may be helpful to maintain an annotated bibliography of sources consulted through a literature review. Annotations can be short, consisting of a paragraph or even a few sentences that summarize the key issues and ideas presented in a particular secondary source. They can

provide the project, donors, or partners with a useful reference of key issues that relate to the research topic. In some cases, a project may enlist a subject matter expert to complete and deliver a literature review as a discrete product, annexed to the final study. However, projects will often find that they have no need for a formal literature review.

SECONDARY SOURCES



laws and policies



academic studies



sector or country analysis



past project/intervention assessments and evaluations



available public perception data



newspaper articles and other journalism

Making use of academic experts

Academic subject matter experts bring rigor and deep knowledge to an APEA exercise. However, academicians must understand and contribute to the APEA’s *applied* purpose and respect the project’s needs. Secondary research can be a great opportunity for leveraging academic experts. Desk research is a skill, and subject matter experts can often more efficiently review literature and distill key insights than project staff.

2.6. Conduct primary research

The heart of most APEA exercises is primary research, because projects typically try to answer questions that have been insufficiently dealt with by existing secondary research. Additionally, researchers often investigate current or evolving events (or even anticipate future scenarios) available analysis does not address. As such, research teams must consult with a wide range of informants who can share experience and offer differing perspectives on key research questions. Some of these informants will be experts who follow and study key events or issues of interests. Others will be institutions and individuals who shape or are affected by focal issues, including politicians, private sector, or target communities. The data collection plan should provide researchers with a clear starting point for our primary resources and serve as a living document that expands over the course of the primary research phase.

Although there are cases when quantitative surveys or similar methods are used as part of APEA studies, the research is typically grounded in qualitative approaches. Project teams should select research methods that will be most effective at eliciting rich information from informants. They need to construct and facilitate conditions under which informants can fully share their knowledge and perspectives. This requires thinking carefully about the relative sensitivity of the topics we will discuss. It also requires considering group and power dynamics that could play out through the data collection phase. For example, researchers must consider questions such as: **Will female informants feel freer to participate with female interviewers? Will informants share more information in a group setting or in individual interviews?** Finally, researchers must make sure that informants understand how the research will be used and avoid causing distress to stakeholders, particularly survivors of human rights violations.

Capturing sensitive information from key informants

It is human nature that people are often reluctant to discuss their own behavior, especially when it may be perceived as illicit, immoral, or deviant in some way. Similarly, people may be reticent to call out other stakeholders by name. Researchers often have better luck giving informants an opportunity to describe the behavior of peer actors in a way that is impersonal. For example, in conducting a study on informal gold mining in Zimbabwe, Pact researchers asked operators of gold mines whether *other* gold operators commonly sell gold on the informal market and for what reasons.

Pact's experience suggests that a combination of KIIs and FGDs tend to be the most effective and efficient ways to get information from stakeholders. However, there are innumerable research approaches that can be employed and teams should feel free to be creative. Below are a few examples.

- **Key informant interviews:** KIIs are discussions with individual stakeholders in which an interviewer guides an informant through a set of questions to capture his or her knowledge and perspective on a set of defined issues. A distinct advantage of KIIs is that they are the most discrete, private way of directly collecting information. In many cases, individuals will be more comfortable discussing sensitive topics when no other stakeholders are present. KIIs also give an interviewer maximum time to focus on getting information from a single person. KIIs can be unstructured, semi-structured, or structured in nature, and researchers should consider ahead of time the degree of flexibility that should be built into the discussions.
- **Focus group discussions:** FGDs are conversations between a researcher and a set of informants, frequently between five and 12 people. FGDs can be a time-efficient way to include a wider array of voices in a study. When well structured, they can generate rich information as informants feed off each other's thoughts. Researchers must give significant thought to the composition of focus groups, considering factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, and occupation. In different contexts, more homogeneous or heterogeneous FGDs may generate more and higher quality information. There is a risk that a small set of voices can dominate, so strong facilitation is key to effective FGDs. Facilitators should take note if there are individuals who do not participate in FGDs to flag whose voices may not be reflected in their analysis.
- **Participant workshops:** Workshops provide a forum where researchers can bring together varying numbers of participants to gather information or insights on a particular topic. Project teams can be creative in how they structure discussion and exploration of issues of interest during a workshop. For

example, they could use FGDs, stakeholder mapping approaches, or methodologies inspired by Participatory Rural Appraisal. In some cases, using larger participant workshops to facilitate collective reflection on key issues may be efficient, as compared to facilitating a large number of KIIs and FGDs. However, workshop structures are not recommended for politically sensitive topics because of workshops' more-public nature.

- **Scenario planning:** When doing an APEA study, researchers often need to look ahead at what may happen and why. Scenario planning is a structured approach through which researchers can support stakeholders to outline the likelihood of certain events and to think through factors that could cause the emergence of defined scenarios. During a scenario planning session, participants are typically asked to explicitly describe the features of a current operational scenario and to assign probabilities to the emergence of new scenarios. Scenario planning can generate useful data for research purposes about how an operational environment is likely to evolve and also support stakeholders or partners to sharpen their own understanding of the context.
- **Stakeholder mapping and network analysis:** Stakeholder mapping and network analysis are approaches to identify key actors within a given system, and describe their relationships. There are many established stakeholder mapping approaches, such as Net-Mapping.⁸ Network analysis can provide more detailed measures of the relationships within a given network, including the scale and density of the network and the flows of information between key actors.⁹ Stakeholder mapping and network analysis can help define the universe of actors that are relevant to an APEA study. These methodologies can also be used to identify the most significant stakeholders and begin asking questions around why particular individuals or institutions sit at the center or margins of a system.
- **Media monitoring/analysis:** Media monitoring can provide researchers with an understanding of how particular issues are covered in print, radio, television, and online media. Close analysis of media can indicate the perceptions and interests of defined stakeholder groups and provide a sense of how public opinion is being shaped.

Considerations for primary research

How structured should the research be? Pact's experience is that KIIs and FGDs are best approached as semi-structured discussions. Establishing a semi-structured framework provides some level of consistency in terms of the questions that are asked of informant groups, usually developed into interview guides consisting of overarching questions or prompts for the discussions. At the same time, the researcher is flexible to opportunistically pursue lines of inquiry in the discussion.

What's the plan for triangulating information? Triangulation is the process of using different data (including different sources and types of data) to get a holistic view of the situation being described. In simple terms, it is the effort to seek multiple viewpoints on a topic or question and use those viewpoints to construct a more robust analysis. Wherever possible, teams should have at least two researchers present for a KII, FGD, or related session with informants. This allows researchers to confirm that they heard information the same way. Researchers should also track whether statements from informants are corroborated by others.

How should data be captured? There are multiple options for recording data during discussions with informants. Most often, researchers assign a person to take detailed notes while someone else leads the interview. Recording interviews allows transcripts to be generated later, which can support analysis and coding and make it easier to capture verbatim quotations. However, in many cases informants may feel uncomfortable being recorded and such a detailed level of analysis is not necessary. For some particularly sensitive discussions, researchers may choose to forego notes in the moment to set the informant at ease. In those cases, researchers should write up summaries of the discussion immediately after it happens, while the conversations are still fresh.

Do no harm and primary research

Many human rights projects raise significant *do no harm* considerations. As a tool for navigating complex political environments, APEA can directly support projects to develop strategies to mitigate risk and unintended consequences. But, while executing an APEA can help to ensure that projects do no harm

⁸ Schiffer, E. (2015). *Introduction to Net-Mapping*. Available at: <https://usaidearninglab.org/library/introduction-net-mapping>

⁹ For more information on network analysis and network strengthening more broadly, see Module 2 of Pact's Network Strengthening Toolkit. Available at: <http://www.pactworld.org/library/network-strengthening-toolkit-part-2>

through their development interventions, operational and reputational risks can arise within the process itself, especially in conflict-affected or otherwise complicated environments.

When human rights defenders are involved and/or there are possible security risks, the APEA team should ensure that the identities and involvement of the people interviewed are protected. In highly sensitive contexts, researchers may need to ensure that even notes do not include the names and other identifying information of informants. Study teams must exercise caution when identifying and selecting potential key informants and should consult closely with the project leadership. For example, interviewing government agents on particular issues of human rights abuses could compromise the project's relationship with the government. Similarly, research teams should tread carefully in collecting data from human rights violation survivors to ensure that researchers are sensitive to the informants' psychosocial needs. When in doubt, researchers should consult with experts, such as psychologists or social workers, to ensure that their questions and lines of inquiry are appropriate.

Research ethics and informed consent

Data ethics are the rules or standards governing the conduct of a person collecting, collating, reporting on, or using data.

Informed consent is a basic human right: an agreement to participate or to not participate in a data collection effort that is based on an appreciation and understanding of the facts and the decision's implications. An individual or community giving informed consent means they feel they have enough information about the data collection effort to enable them to make knowledgeable decisions about whether or not to participate. All APEA KIIs or FGDs should begin with an informed consent statement, where the interviewer or moderator can receive verbal consent before beginning. The statement should detail who is doing the research and why, the intended usage of the data, and whether it will be confidential and not attributed to individuals. See Appendix 4 for an example.

2.7. Analyze data

Analysis is the process of interpreting data and information; this is the stage at which researchers determine the meaning of their rich data. The job of the researcher is to sift through the primary and secondary data and information to **identify key themes**. For example, in trying to understand why a human rights commission fails to function in a particular setting, researchers may note that *most government informants repeatedly describe the lack of budget as the binding constraint*, while *civil society stakeholders emphasized that the commission's leadership was handpicked by an administration committed to ensuring that past human rights abuses are not investigated*. Each of these would represent themes to be noted and investigated. A researcher may relate both of these emergent themes with yet another theme: *multiple newspaper articles and conversations with policy analysts suggest that the commission's budget was cut for politically motivated reasons*. By uncovering these and many other themes and counter-themes, a complex but coherent story can emerge about the drivers of the human rights commission failing to uphold its mission.¹⁰

When analyzing data, it can be helpful for the research team to explicitly fit identified trends within the framework being used. Using USAID's APEA Framework, the issue of the new administration affecting the operations of the human rights commission may fit within the *here and now* category. By contrast, other findings may speak to *rules of the game*, such as a discovery that *the commission lacked clear legal jurisdiction to prosecute human rights abuse cases without the sanction of the Attorney General's office*. In piecing together key observations and findings within the selected framework, the researchers can begin to tell a full story of the incentives and factors that shape outcomes within the system.

A lead researcher may be principally tasked with conducting data analysis, but the analytical process should not be solitary. Furthermore, researchers need not wait until the end of the data collection process

¹⁰ For additional information on qualitative data analysis, see: Taylor-Powell, E. and Renner, M. (2003). *Analyzing Qualitative Data*. Available at: http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/resources/guides/analyzing_qualitative_data and Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrative Theory and Practice*. SAGE Publications. Available at: http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/resources/guide/MQP_Qual_Research_Evaluation_Methods

to conduct analysis. The research team should develop structured ways to collaborate on data analysis over the course of the study, which can include multiple processes.

- **Daily review of key observations:** Research teams will typically conduct four or five KIIs and FGDs in a day or will be involved in a handful of distinct discussions within a workshop. At the end of each day, researchers can convene to compare notes and identify what themes and new questions emerged from the sessions. It can be challenging to stay disciplined to sustain this practice, especially over what can be many days of intense data collection; teams can keep these discussions brief (about 30 minutes) and well organized.
- **Merging analysis of field notes, transcripts, and other data:** Members of a research team can conduct separate analyses of field notes, transcripts, and any raw or processed data. Teams can then come together to share their own interpretation of the data, discussing the possible meaning of key trends that they identify.
- **Workshopping the analysis:** Field teams may present their identified themes and initial analysis to a panel of selected stakeholders. These stakeholders could include subject matter experts or partner organizations and could confirm some of the initial themes that emerge from the analysis. More importantly, they may provide additional perspectives on the significance of different themes.

Projects that are interested in adding further rigor to their analysis may consider performing basic **coding** of the field notes or transcripts. Coding offers a more systematic means of reviewing patterns, themes, and connections in the findings. It also provides reviewers with a record of their analysis. Appendix 5 provides a general overview of two basic coding methods.

Researchers should be sure to match their analysis approach to their study's requirements. Researchers conducting rapid studies should be comfortable with *good enough* analytical processes that rely on a fairly basic review of secondary sources, interview notes, and other data. It can be particularly useful to workshop findings from rapid studies as a means of cross-checking analysis.

2.8. Document and disseminate findings

At the end of an APEA process, researchers are faced with a major knowledge management problem. They will have undoubtedly generated a rich and possibly overwhelming amount of information. The challenge is to document and present that information so it can be absorbed and used by intended audiences. No matter whether the information is only shared with the project team and the donor or is disseminated to a wider audience, APEA findings should be discussed, challenged, and further elaborated. This will ensure that the analysis is internalized by key audiences and will help stakeholders meaningfully apply key findings and recommendations.

Findings can be documented and shared in multiple ways. A formal report is the most common final product of an APEA study. However, in many cases a full-scale report may be superfluous and not an effective use of time by an overstretched project team. Formal reports can be useful for presenting key observations, findings, and recommendations in the fullest detail possible. They can provide a written record as a reference point against which to track changes in the context. At the same time, there is a tendency for long, dry reports to collect dust on a shelf and not be used. APEA reports should be no longer than necessary to communicate key ideas to the intended audience. Therefore, researchers must understand how their specific target groups consume information.

What if a researcher wants to think beyond a report or share information with someone who needs to digest it quickly? There are innumerable ways to communicate study findings. Researchers may prepare short memos or briefs that dispense with extensive background sections and place greater focus on presenting the *main* findings and recommendations. Similarly, researchers may create PowerPoint slide decks, which can serve as the documentary record of the study. In some cases, especially for rapid studies, oral presentations may serve as a primary APEA output. In other cases, researchers will need to package their findings differently for different audiences. Furthermore, sensitive information may be excluded from public versions of the APEA report.

Integrating gender analysis and APEA

Infusing gender or inclusion analysis into human rights-focused APEAs can allow researchers to assess how power and incentives manifest across different identity and other groups. A gender lens can support the development of APEA recommendations that drive human rights programs to focus on inclusion and participation, *do no harm*, and redress gender imbalances.

Gender analysis integration can take the form of asking supporting questions that specifically focus on gender identity or sexual orientation. The resulting analysis can be used to understand how gender dynamics influence the behavior of certain groups. For example, an analysis may explore how women may be disincentivized from running for local elected office by a range of public and private expectations for their gender roles. This is traditionally where APEA and gender analysis have overlapped.¹¹ Integration also can involve a deeper dive using a gender analysis framework to interrogate societal-level systemic imbalances of power. Researchers can overlay the five domains of gender analysis in Freedom House's Gender and Inclusion Toolkit within their APEA: **access to and control over assets and resources; knowledge, beliefs, and perceptions (norms); roles, responsibilities, and use of time; legal rights and status; and access and decision-making.**¹²

While APEA often seeks to understand how the rules of the game impact public power dynamics, gender analysis can assess the undercurrents of power dynamics in hidden spaces that impact issues such as who has time to participate in activities and power-sharing and divisions of labor between men and women. The benefits of incorporating gender analysis into APEA rest on a few central tenets.¹³

- Men and women are groups with different interests and motivations.
- Obstacles to reform are sometimes gendered.
- Informal politics and power can be highly gendered.

Gender analysis also could provide a useful perspective for analyzing the role of people who do not fit into classic productive and reproductive categories in society (e.g., sexual minorities) or to examine participation in labor markets. In integrating gender analysis into APEA, researchers should remember the following:

- **Gender patterns are often invisible to informants.** Thus, researchers should ask open-ended questions and urge respondents to provide details that may allow interviewers to discern underlying gender patterns. For example: Who makes key decisions? Do women really participate in meetings? How are their ideas perceived?
- **Studies should avoid replicating the tendency to only ask women about “women’s issues.”** Researchers should be sure to pose gender-related questions to men as well.

Even if an APEA does not have an explicit gender focus, gender should factor into the selection of key informants. Researchers should be sure to consult with a representative sample of informants. Remember that it is easy for existing patriarchal power structures to influence who researchers consult with.

¹¹ Browne, E. (2014). *Gender in Political Economy Analysis*. GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report 1071. Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.

¹² Freedom House (n.d.). *Human Rights Support Mechanism Gender and Inclusion Toolkit* (Draft).

¹³ Fritz, V., Katayama, R., & Simler, K. (2008). *Breaking out of inequality traps: political economy considerations*. World Bank. Available at <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/11137/467220BRI0Box311PUBLIC10premnote125.pdf?sequence=1>.

Section 3: Executing APEA Throughout the Project Cycle

APEA studies can furnish a project team with the deep and targeted information they need to inform project decisions. However, as has been emphasized elsewhere in this handbook, APEA should not be viewed as a one-time event, but rather a process that can inform all aspects of the project cycle, including design, baseline analysis, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E).

From APEA to Thinking and Working Politically (TWP)

APEA is not a single product, but rather a powerful approach for helping a project think and work politically. TWP represents a movement among development practitioners and thinkers based on the reality that development outcomes, including human rights outcomes, are tied to political and economic incentives. By integrating APEA across a project or campaign lifecycle, project managers and human rights leaders can remain attuned to evolving contextual dynamics.

The idea of integrating ongoing contextual analysis into all aspects of project management and design can sound overwhelming. But, it is important to understand that iterative APEA need not be labor intensive. Instead, the APEA approach should be molded to fit the information needs of individual projects, and very often “lighter touch” processes designed to fit within the activities of project are most effective. This section will provide some practical considerations for embedding APEA into each stage of a project.

3.1. During project design

Implementers of human rights interventions may have different processes for planning and implementing activities. Some organizations may have a set of human rights monitoring or protection activities that they support on a continuous basis. Some very fortunate organizations may have core funding or a steady source of financing that they can tap into to support these activities. However, most organizations rely on some version of donor-funded projects to fulfill their missions. Donors typically award their funding based on proposals, which may take the form of an unsolicited proposal initiated by the human rights implementer, but is usually in response to a request for application (RFA) or similar call for proposals.

When writing proposals for donors, there are often significant constraints to the project design process. Frequently, complex, multi-faceted proposals have to be developed in a short window of time, typically around 30 days. Additionally, organizations may lack the financial or staff resources to invest in significant research without a commitment of donor funding. While acknowledging the reality of these limitations, human rights interventions should be designed from the start with an understanding of the political and economic factors that could impact the change being sought through the project.

Pre-proposal stage

Human rights implementers will frequently know of a funding opportunity well before the release of an RFA or, occasionally, the proposal window may be multiple months long. In either case, a lengthened period for project design can offer implementers the time and space needed to conduct intentional and even comprehensive contextual analysis. In a few cases, it may be possible to conduct a complete baseline-like APEA study during this initial pre-proposal period. Doing so will allow the initial design to be shaped by the deepest possible level of understanding of the political and economic constraints that define the context. It can also enable organizations to jump into contextually-aware programming soon after the start of the new project.

When is it worth the investment of doing a deep APEA study during the design period?

A few questions can help organizations decide whether it is worthwhile.

- **Is there time and resources available?** This is perhaps an obvious question. Section 2 explained that APEA studies can be made more or less intensive. However, there is some level of commitment involved in completing an APEA study. Organizations should be sure they have the resources to allow staff and/or consultants to complete a full study.

- **How much is known about the parameters of the opportunity?** As discussed in Section 2, APEA studies are most useful when the topics and questions are narrowly defined. In some cases, implementers will have lots of information about the expected RFA and terms of the donor-funded opportunities, making it possible to outline specific research questions tied directly to the eventual project design. In other cases, the information known about the opportunity may be far more vague, making a heavy investment in a full study less worthwhile.
- **How soon after the proposal submission will the project be awarded?** Sometimes implementers can expect a quick turnaround (e.g., a few months) between the submission of a proposal and the award of a grant or contract. Assuming that key fundamentals of the context are unlikely to change during this period, it may be worth investing in deeper research during the design period. In other cases, implementers can wait upwards of six months or longer for an award to be issued, making heavier analysis possibly a less useful investment, particularly in highly dynamic contexts.
- **Will the analysis be useful to the organization, regardless of whether it receives funding for the project?** Most organizations operate on limited budgets and are less able to commit significant intellectual and financial resources to a project that may not be funded. However, in some cases, the APEA may provide a strategic value to the organization, regardless of whether they win the immediate funding opportunity. Implementers should consider whether the assessment could inform current programming, organizational strategic thinking, or other medium-term funding opportunities.

Case study: Joint APEA and conflict assessment contributes to new programming in Southeast Burma

In Southeast Burma, Pact carried out a blended APEA and conflict assessment in areas where there remains mixed control between government and ethnic armed organizations. This assessment provided Pact with a better understanding of the underlying drivers of conflict or potential conflict in the region, including complex power relationships among different groups and individuals. The rich contextual information developed through the APEA helped provide Pact with the requisite understanding of the implementing environment to successfully design a new USAID-funded community empowerment program.

Perhaps in most cases, investing in a full APEA study during the design or pre-proposal period will not be possible or make sense. However, organizations can still do a lot to apply an APEA lens to design processes. Except in rare cases, human rights implementers should design interventions in consultation or direct collaboration with key partners and stakeholders. At a minimum, this should include conducting semi-structured or informal consultations with stakeholders and other actors within the local system. At the more participatory end of the spectrum, implementers may hold co-design workshops to help key actors shape the contours of the planned intervention. However they proceed, it should be possible to embed consideration of political and economic factors into the process. Some ideas for how to do so include the following.

- **Integrate questions related to contextual factors and power dynamics into consultations with key actors.** Most human rights implementers do this already, but there may be scope to do so with more intention. Ahead of meetings (or design workshops) with partners and other actors, implementers should outline a set of questions about political and economic constraints that could inform decisions, such as where to focus interventions in terms of geography, sector, or issues or which stakeholders are positioned to serve as champions or spoilers of initiatives.
- **Organize one or a series of FGDs or round-table discussions to review the local context.** It can be tempting to jump right into designing interventions. However, organizations should consider pulling together a handful of key individuals knowledgeable about the implementation environment to review contextual drivers. It can be useful to approach this as a scenario planning exercise in which stakeholders map out conditions that could emerge over the life of the planned project.
- **Conduct a stakeholder mapping exercise.** A comprehensive understanding of key stakeholders relevant to a local system is necessary for designing and implementing a human rights project, and many implementers routinely conduct stakeholder mapping as part of their design process. Notably, stakeholder mapping can be a useful way for organizations already familiar with the local implementation environment to recheck their assumptions about who is relevant. Stakeholder mapping can be completed over the course of a few hours with staff and partners knowledgeable about the context. It can also be a longer, more involved exercise. In either case, to apply an APEA lens, implementers should not stop with identifying the key actors. Rather, they should outline what they know and do not know about the underlying incentives and interests that shape their behavior.

Live proposal stage

There is no significant distinction between applying an APEA lens during the pre-proposal and live proposal stages. As noted above, the extent to which implementers can invest in deep research processes depends significantly on the length of the proposal period. Organizations can integrate APEA considerations into key information-gathering and design processes during proposal development. The release of the solicitation will provide complete details of the scale, scope, and focus of the project, allowing the organization to check the relevance of any contextual analysis completed during the pre-proposal stage. With the solicitation in hand, those designing the project also can use APEA-like inquiry (including consultations with key stakeholders) to test key assumptions upon which the project is premised.

The proposal stage is also a time when organizations should design the APEA process for the entire life of the project. Organizations should think carefully about their expected information needs during implementation, reflecting on the relative need for deep baseline analysis and the required frequency of information updates during implementation. Project designers should consider whether there are opportunities for marrying APEA with other analytical processes expected during implementation, such as gender or conflict assessments. The staff or partner responsible for leading or overseeing the APEA process during implementation should have access to the full solicitation and proposal so they understand how contextual analysis fits within the larger project vision.

3.2. During project implementation

Baseline APEA

Section 2 outlined many of the reasons for and challenges of conducting a baseline APEA. As noted, a baseline APEA can be useful for documenting the initial understanding of key contextual factors to provide a basis for tracking changes in the contextual environment over time. This baseline assessment can directly inform key decisions during the project start-up period, such as the selection of geography, sectors, issues, and partners.

A baseline APEA often warrants the heaviest investment in time and resources during the life of the project, partly because many projects will be starting from scratch, whereas future studies can focus on updating the initial research using the same or similar questions and methodologies. However, even baseline studies need not be significant investments or even studies at all. The HRSM consortium, for example, carries out programs ranging in size from multi-million-dollar, multi-year projects to short, lower budget projects implemented over a few months. For small interventions, organizations may be tempted to dispense altogether with a baseline APEA. However, simple processes such as structured roundtable discussions with well-selected key informants may provide a useful means of establishing and documenting a baseline understanding of the context that supports implementation.

Case study: Using alternative models for structuring baseline APEA studies

During the first 15 months of the HRSM program, the PROGRESS consortium adopted different strategies for conducting baseline APEA studies. Some of the first projects funded by HRSM include:

- A two-year, \$2.99 million initiative to strengthen the Honduras' Human Rights Defenders Protection Mechanism, a statutory instrument aimed at establishing a system that enables human rights defense in the country
- A two-year, \$800,000 effort to strengthen the Office of the Human Rights Defender in Armenia
- A five-year, \$8 million project to support evidence-based advocacy in Tanzania

In Honduras, the project identified an independent consultant to lead the baseline APEA in close collaboration with project staff. In Armenia, the project contracted a leading national research firm, the Caucus Research Resource Center, to conduct a baseline study that combined APEA with ABA ROLI's Access to Justice Assessment Tool. In both cases, technical experts from the PROGRESS consortium trained and advised those leading the study.

In Tanzania, the project team directly carried out a large and complex APEA study. The research team was led by a single APEA expert and included 10 staff and consultants. The large team served two purposes. It allowed the project to collect a great amount of data from three locations over a short, two-week-long research period. It also ensured that nearly all project staff members, from the Chief of Party to the capacity development officers, were intimately involved in and knowledgeable about the research process and its findings.

These examples convey the diverse options that projects have in structuring baseline assessments and other APEA studies. Regardless of whether the study is completed directly or through an external entity, its scope should be built around the project team's user requirements, and key staff should be involved in research and analysis.

Where baseline APEA studies are carried out, match the intensity of the study to the requirements of the project. Implementers can also consider questions such as: **Should the project team conduct the baseline APEA itself or should it be contracted to consultants or research firm? How should we engage local partners in the study?** Pact has found that project team ownership of the APEA process, even when external firms are engaged, is critical to facilitating the uptake of key findings and recommendations. In addition, involving local partners can be an important means of building local skills related to contextual analysis and of ensuring that baseline findings are owned by a broader set of stakeholders.

Issue-based APEAs

A baseline APEA can help frame a project team's understanding of the context at the start of an intervention. However, a baseline APEA study (and annual or midterm updates of that analysis) often will not meet the project's analytical requirements. Over the life of a project, implementers may find that they need to dig into very specific issues. For example, a project team may determine that it wants to support advocacy around a particular rights issue, such as access to information or prison reform. Undertaking or commissioning a focused, issue-based APEA study can help the project make politically smart investments on the issue at hand. Findings could directly inform partner selection or the development of a strategy for convening and influencing key decision-makers who are relevant to the issue.

As with a larger APEA study, the scale and scope of an issue-based study can be matched to the complexity of the issue and the project's needs. Implementers should embrace "good enough" rapid studies that can provide project teams with actionable information needed to begin making programmatic decisions. Streamlined research processes can be implemented over the course of a week or less and be built around consultations with a handful of well-selected informants.

3.3. Ongoing, iterative APEA

The goal of a well-developed APEA system is that analysis of political and economic drivers becomes not just a research process, but a state of mind that shapes ongoing project management. Discrete studies play an important role in a continuous or everyday APEA process. However, a comprehensive APEA system should include a set of specific mechanisms that support ongoing collection of intelligence about the implementation landscape.

To be practiced, everyday APEA processes must be embedded into routine project management. Wherever possible, APEA should be linked to activities built into the management plan that will happen anyway or reflected in simple, non-resource-intensive processes for gathering information. Therefore, APEA should not be seen as something *extra*, but something that seamlessly fits into the way a project works.

Tools and approaches for gathering contextual information are nearly limitless. Here are a few examples of methods that could form the backbone of an iterative APEA process.

- **Using partner meetings to review the context:** Many projects bring grantees or other partners together on a monthly or quarterly basis to discuss the status of activities. Frequently these meetings are filled with fairly general discussions of grant management issues, budgets, and the like. Pact has found that contextual issues are often discussed during these meetings, but not in a structured way that allowed information to be captured and to easily inform project decisions. Project partners typically offer windows into discrete geographies, sectors, or issues. By formally building in time to review the local context with partners, project teams can develop rich intelligence and foster cross-learning among project stakeholders.
- **Request reporting from partners and grantees on contextual changes:** Implementers typically require grantees and other partners to submit regular programmatic reports. These reports

frequently become dry recitations of output-level information. Project teams can explicitly ask partners to report on contextual dynamics, while making the reporting requirements light so as not to create undue burden on local organizations.

- **Monitor local media:** Local radio, television, newspapers, and online media provide relevant information regarding political and economic developments. Project teams can dedicate one staff member to complete basic scans of local media on a weekly or monthly basis to monitor trends that are relevant to project activities and results.
- **Consult with panels of key informants:** Discussions with key informants tend to form the backbone of APEA studies, and regular consultations with selected experts or stakeholders can similarly be built into ongoing analytical processes. Projects can identify a handful of selected informants to interview on a monthly or quarterly basis to track changes in local conditions.
- **Form a “reference group” or expert group to advise the project:** Implementers can formalize a role for key experts or important stakeholders to serve not only as informants, but as advisers to the project. Projects can create a “reference group” of academicians, civil society or human rights activists, media, government employees, and others to discuss changes in the contextual environment and provide advice on potential trends. Projects teams can approach these sessions as formal scenario planning exercises or can conduct scenario planning with staff or project partners.
- **Identify and track context indicators:** Implementers are used to tracking a range of output and outcome indicators as a means of monitoring project results. However, project teams can similarly track a narrow range of context indicators to follow how key political and economic dynamics shift over time (see text box and Section 3.4 for further discussion).

Matching information flow to absorption capacity

In developing a system for ensuring a continuous flow of information, implementers must be mindful of their ability to process and absorb the information they collect. Simply put, more information is not always better. Too much data can become white noise that goes underutilized and high-frequency reporting of contextual information can become burdensome. Implementers should be clear about who within the project team will be able to process, reflect on, and report on the collected information.

As a general rule, **projects implemented in more dynamic contexts may benefit from higher-frequency data collection and reporting.** In conflict settings, iterative APEA can be embedded within ongoing processes for monitoring conflict dynamics. Project teams implementing in more stable settings may be better off setting a slower-paced schedule for reviewing the context. This could involve establishing a few basic processes for doing landscape analysis on a quarterly or even semi-annual basis.

In addition to being clear on the processes used for harvesting information, implementers should develop a basic structure for reporting ongoing APEA findings. Documentation or reporting should never become an end in and of itself. However, if findings are not routinely documented, they risk being lost and, thus, will not inform project management decisions. Pact has found that simple memos or contextual analysis reports (often as short as one page) can distill key contextual updates and outline recommended actions.

Case study: Using APEA as a scenario management tool

Under the USAID-funded Civic Engagement for Accountability and Democracy in Zimbabwe (CEADZ) project, Pact uses many of the approaches listed above as part of its overarching APEA system. In addition to annually updating the baseline APEA, the project includes targeted issue- or sector-focused studies. Pact completes weekly “environmental scans” based on media monitoring, consultations with local experts, and reporting from local partners. The project also convenes a reference group of 20 academicians and civil society activists to advise Pact and USAID on possible shifts in the local context.

In partnership with USAID, the CEADZ team uses APEA to guide its scenario change management plan, which is built around four possible archetypes of scenarios that could emerge over the life of the five-year project, including the current scenario. Pact has outlined how programming will be adjusted if different scenarios emerge. Furthermore, the project team has identified context indicators that it will track over the life of the project that may indicate whether there has been a shift toward a more or less permissive scenario. The project updates its understanding of the operating scenario at least twice per year, but also in response to events on the ground.

3.4. As part of the M&E system

A project's monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning (MERL) system typically focuses on understanding the results and impact a project is having against a desired change. APEA enables a project team to track and measure changes that are occurring in the larger implementation environment. **By linking APEA and MERL processes (or seeing MERL processes as a basis for APEA), a project team can better relate project results to shifts in the contextual landscape.** Then, implementers can anticipate the extent to which a project is likely to reach key milestones and indicators. Furthermore, APEA can provide a solid evidence base for whether the project's development hypothesis and key assumptions hold true or whether adaptation is necessary to stay on track to reach desired goals.

What does this look like in practice? Suppose a project is focused on supporting prison reform. Key output-level indicators may focus on supporting constructive dialogue events on prison policies among key decisions-makers. Higher-level results may relate to the introduction, passage, and eventual implementation of legislation focused on defined prison reforms. APEA processes would focus on monitoring political opportunities and constraints to making progress on prison reforms. For example, ongoing APEA findings may reveal that national elections scheduled for the following year make it a difficult time to engage elected politicians in something as controversial as prison reform. Thus, the project may decide that targets around the extent of policy dialogue need to be rethought and that the focus should be engaging non-elected, senior civil servants in dialogue with the goal of reaching out to politicians post-election.

Context indicators can provide a structured means of monitoring political and economic changes. In Zimbabwe, for example, Pact has deliberately monitored raids on human rights and civil society activists and specific economic indicators in order to determine whether the implementation environment is becoming more or less permissive.

Reflecting APEA in project learning agendas

Many projects organize their monitoring, evaluation, and research activities against a set of "learning agenda" questions that define the parameters of meaningful inquiry for the project team. These focused questions typically delineate areas where projects can best contribute to a local or global evidence base. Frequently they are aimed at understanding what approaches and methodologies work best within a given context. For example, a learning agenda may read: *What capacity development approaches best support human rights organizations to carry out effective advocacy campaigns?* Or *What are the most effective mechanisms (e.g., funds, in-kind grants, technical assistance, etc.) of supporting nascent CBOs?*

Project teams can structure APEA activities to link to defined learning agenda questions. They can also include context-based or APEA-like questions directly within their learning agenda. These questions may allow projects to directly examine the relationship between contextual changes and project results. Examples of context-focused learning questions include:

- How does the enabling environment for passing progressive policy reforms evolve over time and how can human rights organizations best change their strategies to reflect those changes?
- Who are the in-system (i.e., government) champions for protecting the rights of LGBTI and how can they best be cultivated?

In addition to reflecting context-focused questions within their learning agenda, project teams can also examine the results of APEA activities as part of their approach to learning and adapting. This could include systematically documenting elements such as the *number of project assumptions or proven or disproven through APEA* or the *number of strategic/tactical project decision that are made as a result of APEA*. While challenging, teams can try to capture changes in performance after key strategic/tactical decisions are made. Tracking this type of information can support projects to understand the extent to which APEA activities contribute to effective project management and even project results.

Section 4: Operational Aspects of APEA

4.1. Typical timeline for an APEA

This handbook has made clear that APEA exercises should match the needs and constraints of individual projects and can take place over various time horizons. Complex and comprehensive studies can take multiple months to complete, whereas a rapid study can be completed over a few weeks or even less. The table below lists indicative timelines for a common, baseline APEA study and a rapid study.

Phase	Baseline APEA study		Rapid APEA exercise	
	Timeline	Activities	Timeline	Activities
Pre-research	2–4 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define available budget Develop preliminary SOW Approval from donor, if required Identification of lead and additional researcher, if needed, or staff who can support Identify local researchers, if required 	A few days to 2 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify information needs Develop SOW Rapidly identify project staff, consultants, or partners to lead the activity
Data collection	3 weeks to 2 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct secondary research, either prior to or concurrent with primary research Hold a training/study design workshop for the research team: finalize the SOW, map stakeholders, develop interview guides and other research instruments, plan logistics for field-based travel Conduct primary research 	1–2 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct secondary research, as useful (1 week or less) Collect primary data through roundtable discussions, KIIs, FGDs, or other means
Analysis, writing, and dissemination	2 weeks to 1 month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold a joint analysis workshop in which the research team shares provisional findings with project team and other key stakeholders prior to writing Complete analysis and writing (research lead and designated staff) Disseminate to primary audience, including presentation with project team, donors, key stakeholders; revisions of report to follow Disseminate to wider range of stakeholders; develop multiple versions of analysis or presentation as required 	1 week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint analysis of data by research team Documentation of findings in the form of a memo, slide deck, or simple report Presentation to project team Dissemination to wider range of stakeholders; develop multiple versions of analysis or presentation as required

4.2. Required resources

Staffing

The main cost associated with APEA is local and/or international staff and consultants. In many cases, most or all of the human resources required for APEA activities may already sit on a given project or campaign team. More complex initiatives may require larger research teams with a diverse technical and professional capacities. For example, a substantial baseline APEA study commonly requires a team of three or more researchers to carry out the research.

Most APEA exercises require multiple perspectives and skills. Thus, it is helpful to think of some of the specific roles that a project may need to include as part of the research team.

LEAD RESEARCHER



Typically someone who has led APEAs or similar qualitative research and political analysis. Ability to train the larger team on research methodologies, including staff with limited experience with qualitative

research. It can be useful for the lead researcher to be a subject matter expert in the research topic, but this is often not required. If the project needs a written report, then it could be important that the person is a capable writer.

FIXER



APEA activities can have a lot of moving parts, especially when there are multiple research teams in the field. For larger exercises, it is important to have someone who can handle the scheduling and logistics of what can be multiple dozens of consultations. Notably, this role is often more than a basic administrative role. The fixer is often part of the core research team. The individual must be able to clearly describe the purpose of the research study and understand the personalities of the stakeholders with whom the team is trying to consult.

TECHNICAL/SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT



The research team's in-house expert on the topic at hand. For example, for a project researching factors constraining the implementation of a human rights protection mechanism, the subject matter expert would be

someone with experience working on human rights protection, ideally in the local context.

INCLUSION EXPERT



Most APEA exercises examine dynamics that contribute to and result from marginalization. Ideally, all members of a research team should be sensitive to inclusion issues. However, it can

be helpful to include at least one person who can rigorously examine factors related to inclusion and marginalization.

DOOR OPENER



A successful APEA exercise depends on being able to consult with a wide range of stakeholders. It can be difficult to identify and, in some cases, get access to the people with whom

a research team must consult. Thus, it can be critical to have one or more people who are well networked with key stakeholders. For example, different people may have access to high ranking government officials or community-based activists.

TRANSLATOR



It may be necessary to employ a translator if one or more team members is not conversant in the local vernacular. It is often tempting to have individuals

serve as both research team members and translators. However, team members will likely have difficulty participating in core research tasks while translating.

These roles may be required to a greater or lesser degree depending on the specific APEA exercise. In some cases, projects may have to hire for other roles. For example, a research team may hire an academician to complete a literature review. Additionally, in many cases, individual people may fill multiple roles. For example, the core subject matter expert may be highly networked and able to open requisite doors and may bring the needed understanding of key inclusion issues. What is key is that early in the process the project team clearly defines the required roles for the project.

Budget

The cost of embedding APEA into a project is largely dependent on the complexity of the project. The primary costs associated with any APEA study or ongoing APEA system are human resources in the form of project staff and/or consultants, and travel. Thus, the cost will vary significantly depending on the amount of LOE that is required and whether the project team determines that it is necessary to hire expert consultants, particularly international consultants.

Pact's experience suggests that a rapid, streamlined APEA study can be completed for as little as \$5,000, primarily in the form of LOE that is already built into a project. More comprehensive APEA studies may cost upwards of \$20,000. Very large, multi-month studies, such as those that are part of an extended project inception period, may cost more than \$50,000. These larger studies typically include more support from international staff and consultants. Iterative APEA exercises often can be integrated into ongoing activities at minimal to modest cost.

It is most helpful to think of the specific costs that may be built into different types of APEA activities. The exact composition of any research team can vary considerably, but the table below provides indicative figures for how a team may be structured and the line items to budget for.

APEA exercise	Team and line item details
Baseline or in-depth APEA study	Team lead (LOE 30–50 days) 2–4 project team members (LOE 20–25 days each) Translation, if required International and domestic travel Dissemination workshop, if required Qualitative analysis software for coding, if required
Rapid APEA study	Team lead (LOE 10–15 days) 2 project team members (LOE 5–15 days each) Translation, if required Domestic travel
Ongoing APEA activities (monthly consultations with key informants; semi-annual scenario planning workshop)	2 staff conducting and documenting KIIs (LOE 2 days per month each) 1 staff conducting and documenting media scans (LOE 2 days per month) Scenario planning workshop costs with 10–20 participants

4.3. Operational lessons

This guidance has provided a number of practical recommendations for designing and implementing APEA studies and iterative contextual analysis. A few overarching operational lessons for conducting APEA activities include the following:

Frame APEA activities in an accurate but strategic manner. It is important that key stakeholders have an accurate understanding as to why a project or campaign is collecting information. However, it is also true that framing research or intelligence gathering activities in explicitly political terms can be sensitive, particularly on topics related to human rights. In certain cases, Pact has avoided using the term APEA to describe its research activities, instead using more benign terms such as “contextual analysis” or “systems analysis,” while still describing the essential purpose of our activities to key stakeholders. Additionally, in a recent study in a country where human rights have become highly politicized, Pact and Freedom House avoided direct use of the terms “human rights” or “democracy.”

Integrate APEA with other analytical activities. Projects and campaigns frequently make use of a range of research and other analytical processes. Depending on the intervention, these may include conflict analysis, gender and inclusion analysis, and capacity assessments of local institutions. APEA can be carried out in conjunction or merged with these and other analytical activities. Doing so can ensure the effective use of limited project or campaign resources for analysis and provide a political economy lens to other research exercises.

Recognize response and confirmation bias. Because of the staff's or consultant's perceived relationship to donors, the presumption that the researcher has influence over funding decisions may influence conversations. This can affect informants' willingness to engage honestly during the primary research phase. Similarly, projects and campaigns should be careful in the selection of informants, especially since the networks of team members may not be fully reflective of the universe of actors within

a system. Teams engaged in APEA exercises should make an explicit effort to include the voices of actors who may provide perspectives that contrast with the dominant view.

Consider the composition of the research team. Project teams should remember that there are many factors that can bias the results of their research. The gender, ethnicity, or nationality of research teams can significantly influence the extent to which informants are willing to answer questions in a full and open manner. Furthermore, researchers' own identities can have an impact on how data is interpreted. Research teams should examine their own biases ahead of a research exercise. For example, it is common for even open-minded urban, educated individuals to discount the opinions of less-educated, rural communities.

Maintain impartiality. As with all research and information gathering activities, those engaged in APEA exercises must have a capacity to conduct objective analysis. This is especially important given the political nature of APEAs. Within a given team carrying out APEA activities, there may be individuals that bring strong perspectives on key issues being analyzed. These perspectives should be acknowledged up front, and those leading the activities must have the ability to balance the views of team members. Even the perception of impartiality, especially if the subject matter is sensitive, can threaten the legitimacy of a project or campaign.

Case study: Vetting APEA teams to ensure impartiality

On a baseline APEA study focused on human rights issues in a highly sensitive political context, Pact assembled a large team of project and partner staff and consultants to carry out joint research. The day before primary research was set to begin, Pact and its partner realized that one consultant was heavily engaged in opposition politics and even had charges pending against him for political activities. The team quickly determined that he threatened the security of a human rights project already trying to navigate challenging terrain. The consultant had clearly been improperly vetted up front and had to be removed from the research team.

To the maximum extent possible, let local staff and partners lead. International or otherwise external experts can provide impartial perspectives that benefit APEA exercises. However, the issues that are examined as part of an APEA study are often so nuanced that local staff steeped in an understanding of the context are best placed to drive the analysis. In particular, internationally funded projects should look for opportunities to support local CSO partners to independently carry out APEA activities. Doing so can lead to high-quality analysis that supports the larger project, but also builds local capacity for robust political analysis.

Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms

core question	The main, practical research question that drives an APEA; it defines the parameters of an inquiry
explicit incentives	Formal motivating factors that influence the decisions and actions of key actors, such as laws and policies
implicit incentives	Informal motivating factors, such as cultural norms, values, and economic interests, that influence actors' decisions and actions
informed consent	A voluntary agreement that is signed or verbally given before participating in research; the research subject is informed of the research process and any potential uses or risks
mixed methods	A research approach that combines multiple methodologies, such as desk reviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and simple surveys
political economy	The intersection of political and economic processes and forces within a given country, sector, or location
political economy analysis	An approach for understanding the underlying interests and incentives that explain the decisions and behavior of key actors within a given system
qualitative coding	Categorizing passages of text from KIIs/FGDs and linking to common themes, allowing for systematic qualitative data analysis
research/data ethics	A system of moral ideas and rules about research conduct that reflects international standards and the values of the culture we work in and the communities we serve; the rules or standards governing the conduct of a person collecting, collating, reporting on, or using data and representing a standard of what is appropriate
theory of change	A form of project planning that defines a desired goal and outlines key inputs and lower-level outcomes that must be achieved to meet that goal

Appendix 2: Example APEA Scopes of Work

SOWs for APEA activities can take different forms. At a minimum, they should:

- Clearly outline the purpose and parameters of the APEA exercise
- Spell out who will be engaged in the process and over what timeline
- Name some of the key approaches or techniques to be used as part of the study and any expected deliverables

Below are two examples of APEA SOWs used by Pact. The first is a draft SOW used for an APEA consultant carrying out research on the issue of artisanal mining in Zimbabwe. This was not a human rights activity per say, but it touched on key rights issues. The second SOW was used for an APEA exercise in an unnamed country marked by closing space for civil society and human rights. In that country, Pact used its APEA to identify issues around which it was possible to support civil society-led human rights advocacy. Notably, this SOW explicitly organizes guiding research questions within the USAID APEA framework.

Example scope of work for an APEA consultant

Position Title

Applied Political Economy Analysis (APEA) Consultant

Level of Effort

XX days¹⁴

Supervisor

Reports to Country Director, coordinates with Pact HQ Governance team

Background

The two-year Formalizing Artisanal Gold Mining and Trading in Zimbabwe project aims to (1) scope opportunities for and implement a pilot program for increased cooperation between artisanal, small-scale, and industrial miners in Zimbabwe and (2) work collaboratively with industry and government to formalize and legalize production and trade of gold by artisanal and small-scale miners. Pact will implement the project and will begin with a six-month scoping and design phase to understand key issues, actors, parameters, dynamics, and the political economy of the gold sector. Using the information gathered in the scoping phase, the next step will be to move to implementation, starting with an 18-month pilot project in the Midlands province.

The scoping, design, and implementation components will be carried out in close collaboration with private sector partners from the Chamber of Mines of Zimbabwe (COMZ) with key stakeholders, including the Government of Zimbabwe (GOZ), the artisanal and small-scale mining community, formal and informal businesses serving the mining sector, civil society actors, and donors. This project will have a public policy component that will seek to ensure that mining policy and regulations allow the practical co-existence and indigenization options that the industry seeks. This comprehensive mining policy will seek to prevent contradictory regulations and standards that often result in conflict between industrial, small-scale, and artisanal miners over resource access, rights, compensation, liabilities, and other issues. A key element of the scoping study will be the completion of an APEA analyzing the incentives that guide the behavior of key actors within the artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) sector.

Purpose of the APEA

In order to develop effective strategies for helping to formalize and legalize the work of artisanal and small-scale miners within the gold sector, Pact will complete an APEA to develop a comprehensive and

¹⁴ Pact has chosen not to specify the exact number of days of LOE necessary to complete an APEA. Determine LOE based on the team's specific needs.

accurate understanding of the various factors that inhibit those miners from joining the formal economy. This will include analyzing the legal and policy framework and how it discourages legalized ASGM activities. The APEA also will examine the implicit interests and incentives that explain the behavior of key actors, including miners, traders, large-scale industrial companies, government agencies at the local and central levels, and others. The APEA should provide Pact with a complete picture of which stakeholders are relevant to the ASGM sector and should identify potential “champions” and “spoilers” of efforts to formalize ASGM activities.

APEA Foundational Questions

The APEA will be driven by the following core question:

What are the key incentives and barriers that inhibit the entry of artisanal and small-scale gold miners from operating within the formal economy?

Some of the corollary research questions to be explored through the APEA include:

How do existing laws and policies regulate the gold sector in Zimbabwe? To what extent are existing laws/policies enforced? What laws serve to inhibit or facilitate the formalization of ASGM activities?

What key actors are connected to the ASGM sector in Zimbabwe, in particular the Midlands region? How are they connected to the sector? What are the unique interests that determine the behavior of specific actors?

Who are potential “champions” and “spoilers” of bringing ASGM into the formal economy? What strategies can be employed to empower champions and mitigate the actions of spoilers?

The APEA Consultant may identify additional questions over the course of the APEA.

Key Tasks

- Work with Pact’s Senior Technical Officer for Governance to establish a research plan and begin research activities
- Complete an extensive review of the legal and policy framework governing the gold and ASM sectors in Zimbabwe
- Conduct consultations with a range of key gold sector stakeholders, including miners, mining associations, industry, CSOs, government agencies, and others
- Complete stakeholder mapping and analysis, analyzing the discrete interests of key ASGM sector actors
- As part of the above-listed analysis, identify potential “champions” and “spoilers” of efforts to increase cooperation among artisanal, small-scale, and industrial miners and to formalize/legalize ASGM activities in the country, particularly in the Midlands region
- Document key findings and recommendations in a final report to Pact and the donor
- Debrief Pact project staff and, as requested, participate in dissemination events with the donor and other stakeholders

Key Deliverables

1. Annotated bibliography briefly summarizing key documents consulted and their relevance as part of the legal and policy review: draft submitted Day X, final draft included as part of final report
2. Legal and policy review of ASGM sector: draft submitted Day X, final draft included as part of final report
3. Stakeholder mapping analysis including identification of champions and spoilers and an extensive review of explicit and implicit factors that influence the behaviors/decisions of key actors: draft submitted Day X, final draft included as part of final report
4. Comprehensive final report presenting APEA findings, including final drafts of the annotated bibliography, legal and policy review, and stakeholder mapping, plus recommended actions for increasing cooperation among artisanal, small-scale, and industrial miners and for

formalizing/legalizing ASGM activities in the country, particularly in the Midlands region: draft submitted Day X, final draft due Day X

Experience/Knowledge

- Strong social science research skills; demonstrated experience conducting political economy research strongly preferred
- Strong understanding of Zimbabwe's political, economic, and legislative context
- Knowledge of civil society/NGO sector
- Knowledge of Zimbabwean mining sector preferred
- Exceptional diplomacy
- Good written and oral communication skills

Example scope of work for a context analysis/APEA

Background

Brief project description.

Work Objectives

1. To carry out a baseline Applied Political Economy Analysis (APEA) study
2. To establish a protocol for iterative use of APEA for the duration of the project period

APEA Purpose

The APEA aims to:

- Inform the program's capacity development and coalition-strengthening efforts
- Help develop programming and advocacy strategies
- Ensure that gender equality considerations are addressed
- Facilitate youth inclusion in policy processes and advocacy activities
- Identify citizen priorities

Specifically, the study will:

- Identify current issues that could support increased efforts or benefit from new actions to constructively engage stakeholders and government
- Identify key windows of opportunity where activities are currently limited but where there appears to be interest and the possibility for future engagement
- Assess the government's levels of interest and cooperation that may be expected for different issues and possible individuals, organizations, and institutions to constructively engage
- Examine the effectiveness of existing collaboration platforms for civil society and, to the extent possible, detail their strengths, weaknesses, and potential for engagement
- Integrate gender analysis¹⁵ to identify the diverse needs and interests of rights-focused CSOs
- Outline rights issues that affect youth most acutely to identify priorities and approaches

During start-up, the context analysis will be used to guide key project decisions. The study will inform the selection of focal issues for grant-making. Findings will be shared with an Advisory Committee that will guide project decisions on sub-grants topics.

¹⁵ Drawing on USAID's 2013 gender analysis for Country X

Foundational Questions

Context Analysis Questions		
Core Question		
<p>1. In the current political environment, on which rights issues are civil society networks and advocacy organizations able to effectively advocate to government? Why?</p> <p>a. What aspects of these topics are considered by stakeholders to be more politically palatable?</p> <p>b. What aspects or ways of framing issues are perceived as being “off limits”?</p>		
Supporting Questions		
USAID PEA framework	Questions	Source
<p>Foundational factors Historically rooted structures that shape the sector, its integration into the state, its outputs, and revenues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where has Country X excelled or failed to meet international standards? • Which state and non-state actors have championed human rights? Which have been noted abusers? • Are there regions of the country where human rights concerns are more prevalent? Why? Are there urban–rural divides regarding human rights issues? If so, what are they? 	Literature, national and regional CSOs
<p>Rules of the game Formal and informal institutions that shape behaviors, power distribution, rents, policy-making, and sector management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does Country X government’s structure impact its capacity to respond effectively to human rights issues? If so, how? • Which groups are disproportionately affected by lack of protection of rights? What is the impact on marginalized people? • What gender-related barriers do women-led groups face in advocating for rights? What barriers or opportunities do youth advocates face? 	Legal experts, CSOs focused on legal issues, women- and youth-led groups, other marginalized groups
<p>Here and now Current and recent events, actors and behaviors that affect the sector and its outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under this administration, what issues is government less likely to react negatively to CSOs’ advocacy and convening efforts? Why? • Are there localized windows of opportunity for civil society to engage in right now? • What are the most significant current challenges to promoting rights? What barriers to the enabling environment (formal policies and informal practices) jeopardize the work of rights organizations? 	CSOs, media, government
<p>Dynamics Which actors, networks, or socioeconomic and political organizations and processes provide an avenue for change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do CSOs collaborate together and with others? Are existing platforms perceived as effective and unified vehicles for advocacy and messaging? If so, which ones, and why? What does effective collaboration mean? • How do rights groups engage with government? How do different government departments view the role of CSOs? • How can issues related to women and youth be integrated into the broader agendas of civil society stakeholders rather than be seen as only the purview of women- and youth-led organizations? • What are other stakeholders (media, private sector, non-rights focused CSOs, and others beyond the traditional advocacy space) already doing in the rights space? How can they engage with rights-focused CSOs, and where do they have stronger incentives to do so? 	CSOs, government, parliament, commissions, business associations, development agencies, media

Research Team Composition

- Lead researcher
- Research team: 3 country-based staff, 2 HQ-based staff, 1 local research consultant

Time Period

Baseline research, including primary data collection, will take place within 2 months.

Literature Review/Desk Study

The team will review relevant academic literature and government, civil society, and donor reports to glean information relevant to the core and supporting questions. The literature review will be integrated into the report or attached as an annex.

Geographic Focus Areas

6 locations¹⁶

Data Analysis

The team will set aside additional time to collectively workshop the findings and recommendations, including with the USAID point of contact prior to production of the final report.

Anticipated Constraints

The topic is politically sensitive, and informants may be reluctant to engage. The team will communicate the goal of the project and the purpose of the research by focusing on “rights” rather than “human rights” and on “context analysis” rather than “APEA.” The team will take precautions with digital security and will use encrypted communication platforms where possible.

Outputs

The APEA product will be combination of a report memo and an MS PowerPoint presentation. These findings also will be shared with the Advisory Committee for validation.

Use of Findings

The consortium will ensure that APEA findings are integrated into the ongoing project management and monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the program approach continues to be responsive to the socioeconomic and political context and gender dynamics and adapts to local realities.

Pact will update the analysis iteratively through quarterly environmental scans, which will gather data through simple processes, such as consultations with key informants and grantees. These will be shared with USAID, the Advisory Committee, and partners, as appropriate.

¹⁶ Note: Location names have been removed. Researchers should specify exact locations in their SOWs.

Appendix 3: Data Collection Template

Research teams should feel free to determine the scope and structure of their data collection plan. Researchers should ensure that they think through the likely primary and secondary sources early in the research process, including identifying why key sources will be consulted and any key considerations or challenges in consulting with particular stakeholders. Below is a suggested simple template for this process.

Proposed information source (secondary or primary source)	Data collection/analysis method (if applicable; e.g., FGD, KII, stakeholder mapping session)	Purpose/expected information from source	Timing considerations (if any)

Appendix 4: Example Key Informant Interview Guides

The following examples of KII guides (starting on the next page) were used in an unnamed country as part of an APEA study (see also the second SOW in Appendix 2). No matter which questions are chosen, researchers should include introductory text in their interview to explain the purpose of the study and to get explicit verbal consent to proceed with the interview.

Each guide provides a distinct but overlapping set of questions for a specific stakeholder group. Additionally, the questions have been arranged to align with the USAID APEA framework. While each guide may have as many as 15 questions, interviewers may not be able to cover all of them in a single KII. KIIs may have as few as 8–10 questions. Keep in mind that researchers will ask follow-up questions and pursue specific lines of inquiry that emerge during the interview, while using the guide to ensure some level of standardization and structure across KIIs.

Introductory text

Hello, we are [facilitator names]. We are from a new project called [project name] and are conducting a context analysis of key current and upcoming issues around rights and advocacy in [country name]. This context analysis will inform key project decisions in terms of how it supports civil society and other stakeholders to work on advocacy issues and to use data. Further, this analysis will support these groups to develop more strategic advocacy approaches and ways of working together.

We have asked you to participate in this consultation based on your knowledge and experience in the rights and advocacy sector in [country name]. The information that you will provide will be strictly confidential. Informant names will NOT be reported, and your inputs will be anonymous. This interview will take approximately 1 hour of your time. We may take notes during this conversation to ensure we accurately capture what you share. Information you provide will not be used for any other reason than this context analysis.

Do we have your permission to proceed with this interview?

KII guide for CSOs

A. Icebreakers

1. Describe for me how your organization defines advocacy?
2. What issues does your organization advocate for?

B. Legal, structural, and historical issues related to advocating for rights

1. From your perspective, which government institutions have championed rights? Which have been abusers?
 - a. How does government regard its commitment to different international treaties and standards related to the areas that your organization works on?
2. Are there particular offices or departments that are especially supportive of rights issues? Are there any that are less interested? Please explain.
3. Are there regions of the country where human rights concerns are more prevalent? Why?
 - a. Are there urban–rural divides regarding human rights issues? If so, what are they?

C. Rules of the game: formal and informal institutions

1. What legal barriers could jeopardize CSOs' advocacy?
 - a. Are there informal government practices that challenge the enabling environment for your organization? If so, what are they?
 - b. [If they need a prompt:] Do you operate without fear of retribution, freely hold meetings, and have an online presence? Has this recently increased or decreased?
2. In your work, are there legal barriers that make advocacy on human rights more difficult?
3. Which kinds of groups are disproportionately affected by violations or lack of protection for rights?
 - a. Are women and youth impacted on par with or more than other groups?
4. Do women- and youth-led groups face more or different kinds of operating environment challenges? If yes, what are they?

D. Here and now: current events impacting the rights and advocacy space

1. Since the new government took office, for which rights issues is it less likely to react negatively to CSOs' advocacy and convening efforts? Why?
 - a. Which ones are more approachable right now or are less likely to cause a backlash?
2. In this political moment, are there any specific windows of opportunity for civil society to engage on rights issues? At which level: national, district, or community?

E. Dynamics between organizations, within networks, among stakeholder groups, and at a societal level

1. Which civil society advocacy efforts and approaches have been the most successful? Are there any useful models?
2. How do rights-focused CSOs collaborate with each other and with other groups?
 - a. Are existing platforms perceived as effective and unified vehicles for advocacy and messaging?
 - b. How do you define effective collaboration between CSOs?
 - c. Which networks do you think are effective?
3. How do existing platforms engage government? With which bodies do groups have the best working relationships?
4. How do rights groups engage other actors, such as the media, development NGOs, business, and the private sector?
 - a. Are there examples of collaboration or areas of common interest?
 - b. Do private sector organizations and business associations have any incentive to engage on rights issues? If so, which ones?

F. For women- or youth-focused organizations

1. How can issues related to women and youth be integrated into the broader agendas of civil society stakeholders, rather than be seen as the purview of organizations like yours?

KII guide for media

A. Icebreakers

1. How long have you been in your current position?
2. What role in society does media have regarding rights issues?

B. Legal, structural, and historical issues related to advocating for rights

1. Over the last decade, which rights issues have been covered the most by media? Why?
2. Does the current government structure impact the media's capacity to respond effectively to rights issues? If so, how?
3. Are there regions of the country where human rights concerns are more prevalent? Why?
 - a. Are there urban–rural divides regarding human rights issues? If so, what are they?

C. Rules of the game: formal and informal institutions

1. Have there been any laws or regulations passed over the past 2–3 years that affect the ability of media to cover rights issues? If so, which ones, why?
2. Who enforces the respect for rights? Who abuses them? Why?
3. Are some people disproportionately affected by violations or lack of protection for rights?
 - a. Are women and youth impacted on par with or more than other groups?

D. Here and now: current events impacting the rights and advocacy space

1. Which rights issues is government currently most receptive to from media? Why?
 - a. Within those issue, which ones are you able to freely advocate on now?
 - b. Which topic does media fear to touch? Why?
2. In this political moment, are there any specific windows of opportunity for media to engage on rights issues? At which level: national, district, or community?
3. Do traditional media or social media cover rights issues more frequently?
 - a. Who are the most prominent rights promoters in both traditional and social media?

E. Dynamics between organizations, within networks, and among stakeholder groups

1. Which government institutions are most receptive to media on rights issues? Why?
2. Are there examples of rights-focused multi-stakeholder platforms or networks that media regularly report on? Which platforms or networks and why? Which platforms or networks are not helpful?
3. Do media directly empower rights-focused CSOs and other rights defenders?
 - a. If yes, how? If no, why not?
 - b. What is the relationship between the media and rights-focused CSOs and other rights defenders?

Appendix 5: A Brief Introduction to Qualitative Coding

What's a code?

A word or short phrase that assigns a summative attribute for a portion of language-based data¹⁷

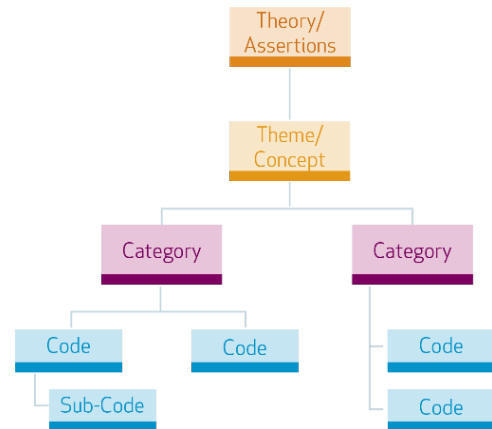
Coding can supply researchers with a means of providing greater structure and rigor to their analysis by allowing for the systematic review of patterns, themes, and connections. Very simply, coding provides a means of labeling and tracking themes. While establish a coding framework takes time, it actually can provide a more efficient means of managing large quantities of qualitative data. It also provides researchers with a structured roadmap for analyzing data.

Coding methods

By hand

Coding can be done “by hand,” meaning without the use of qualitative analysis software. The following steps constitute a basic coding approach that will work for most APEA studies.¹⁸

1. **Documenting primary data:** Create transcripts (verbatim is best) or detailed notes from KIIs, FGDs, or other field-based research processes.
2. **Initial review of data:** Read through transcripts or field notes.
3. **First cycle coding:** Devise a list of codes (and possibly sub-codes) based on the research question and the conceptual framework. Researchers can start by looking at the KII guide, refining as they go through the notes/transcripts. This enables an analysis that directly addresses the research questions and goals.
 - **Develop categories and themes:** Categories and themes will emerge as research begin coding. They may also draw inspiration from the organization of the research instrument itself (headings/sub-headings), as mentioned above. Themes are higher-level concepts and categories are related lower-level concepts underneath each theme.
 - **Sub-coding:** Conducted as researchers move through the first cycle coding process, sub-coding may help them further drill into the findings. Sub-codes enable researchers to add detail to the codes that relate to the categories.
4. **Second cycle coding:** The primary goal of second cycle coding is to review the emerging categories and themes, possibly add additional categories or collapse similar categories into the same to streamline the set of codes.¹⁹ This step is not necessary in cases where strong and sufficient patterns/themes emerge from the first cycle. However, this is the step where codes are clarified and merged, some are discarded, and final categories emerge. For example, if researchers have identified 60 codes in the first cycle, they can start to look for patterns or categories that would allow for grouping down to a dozen categories and a few themes. If the coding framework changes in the second cycle coding, they can go back through the transcriptions and do a second round of coding using the codes and categories they developed in steps 5 and 6, while remaining open to potential new themes that may emerge upon second view.



¹⁷ Saldana, J. (2013). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage. Available at <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/the-coding-manual-for-qualitative-researchers/book243616>.

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ibid

A coding method: structural coding

Structural coding is a basic coding approach in which the researcher assigns a theme to items resembling response options in a quantitative survey. Structural coding is often used to analyze data generated through semi-structured interview processes, such as KIIs or FGDs. Structural coding is framed by a clearly stated research question or goal and is used to categorize large parts of the raw data, either transcripts or detailed field notes. Using this technique, the researcher analyzes the frequency at which specific codes appear. By analyzing all identified codes that emerge across the data, the researcher can confidently analyze the frequency and magnitude of responses across participants.

With software

While it is acceptable to read and code data by hand, the process of sorting through data can be made significantly easier by using qualitative analysis software, such as Atlas.ti, HyperRESEARCH, MaxQDA, and Nvivo. This software allows researchers to efficiently tag and sort text with codes and multiple researchers can code the same transcripts. For example, researchers may generate the following through their analysis, allowing them to easily see the most-cited responses within a theme:

Structural code: Factors that facilitate human rights defenders' success (n=22)

- *Strong staff qualifications=4*
- *Continuous funding support=2*
- *Ongoing capacity development support=10*
- *Flexible grant mechanisms=6*

The following screenshot shows data being analyzed in MaxQDA.

The screenshot displays the MaxQDA software interface. On the left, the 'Document System' pane shows a list of documents, with 'Gutu HFOMC_08 02 17' selected. Below it, the 'Code System' pane shows a hierarchical structure of codes, including 'SA Mechanisms', 'Views on Federalism', 'Comm-Gov't Interaction', 'Health-Feedback', 'Impact-Comm Structures', 'Risks', 'Great Quotes', 'Opportunities', 'Social Audit (Experience)', 'Limits', and 'Data Not used'. The main window shows a document titled 'Document Browser: Gutu HFOMC_08 02 17'. The document content includes a section header 'D. Understand health facility views on LBs and political federalism' and a list of numbered items (84-90) describing relationships with local governments and budget issues. Three codes are applied to the text: 'Great Quotes' (orange), '..Lack of Budget' (blue), and '..Staff Transfer' (green). The 'Great Quotes' code is applied to item 86, and the other two codes are applied to item 88.

Coding example

So what does coding look like at practice? Imagine an APEA formed, in part, around the following research question: *What are the factors that influence the ability of the National Human Rights Commission to fulfill its mission of human rights protection?*

Based on this question, researchers may establish *factors that influence* as a category, and within this category, a range of codes, such as:

- *Budget factors*
- *Legal framework*
- *Relations with human rights defenders*
- *Political will of Commission leadership*

Sub-codes in this example could include:

- *Legal framework: Prosecutorial power of Commission*
- *Inadequate legal framework: Independence from the Executive Branch*
- *Political will: Relative willingness to investigate powerful entities, including military*
- *Political will: Relative interest in protecting marginalized groups, including LGBTI*

By examining the codes and sub-codes that emerge through the analysis, researchers will be able to form a set of theories or conclusions about the meaning of their data. For example, in the example above, if a large number of stakeholders cited *political will* as a significant factor, particularly around protecting marginalized groups and military figures, and described the chairperson of the Commission as being politically aligned with the ruling party, then they may draw conclusions related to the lack of independence of Commission leadership.

Dos and don'ts of coding

- **Do** pick a simple coding approach that provides a systematic framework for the analysis.
- **Don't** pick an overly complicated approach if it does not fit the study's needs or analyst's skills.
- **Do** use qualitative analysis software if there are typed notes and transcripts, time, and budget to do so.

It is generally advisable to not report percentages or numbers of people stating something as researchers would in quantitative research because it can falsely convey that the data is based on a sample and therefore generalizable to the wider population. Instead, describe qualitative data in terms like "most respondents" or "only a handful of informants said." Presenting qualitative terms with firm numerical figures can give a false sense of precision or an impression that quantitative sampling took place, which also is unnecessary for presenting the research team's larger analytical theory.

Framing categories, codes, and sub-codes

It is a best practice for coding to be done by two or more team members, allowing researchers to compare their understanding of key themes. If it is not possible to engage multiple researchers in the process, researchers should write up their coding *rules* as if they were instructions for another person to follow. This ensures that coding is approached in a transparent and systematic manner, leading to less biased analysis.

Ideally coding should be an inductive process, in which codes are formed based on initial analysis of transcripts and field notes. Codes and larger categories should be framed in neutral, non-normative terms to avoid inserting pre-existing assumptions into the analytical framework.

In the example included here, therefore, codes are framed neutrally as "legal framework" as opposed to "inadequate legal framework," or "relations with human rights defenders" as opposed to "insufficient relations with human rights defenders." Using these codes, the job of researchers is to identify or tag data that relate to the legal framework or budget situation and determine how these factors influence the ability of Commission to fulfill its protection mission.

Appendix 6: Additional Resources

Below are links to useful external materials for understanding APEA.

Applied Political Economy Analysis Field Guide

- <https://usaidlearninglab.org/library/applied-political-economy-analysis-field-guide>
- This document provides an overview of USAID's APEA methodology, designed to be used by Missions to help design aid interventions.

Applied Political Economy Analysis: A Problem Driven Framework

- <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8334.pdf>
- This paper describes the key components of the problem driven framework, the relationships between them and how to use the framework to undertake analysis.

Applied Political Economy Analysis: Five Practical Issues

- <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8193.pdf>
- This report notes that varied frameworks have been developed by different agencies for “brand recognition.” The paper highlights the aspects that bind various PEA tools together and issues to consider in application.

From Political Economy to Political Analysis

- <http://publications.dlprog.org/From%20Political%20Economy%20to%20Political%20Analysis.pdf>
- This publication takes a comprehensive look at the different generations and applications of PEA.

Problem-Driven Political Economy Analysis: The World Bank's Experience

- <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/16389/9781464801211.pdf;sequence=1>
- This compilation presents the World Bank's experience implementing problem-driven PEA across eight distinct country/programmatic contexts.

Research tools: Focus group discussion

- <http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/5695-focus-group-discussion>
- This webpage provides an overview of the FGD process and links to additional resources on FGD best practices and techniques.

The Case for Thinking and Working Politically: The Implications of “Doing Development Differently”

- <http://publications.dlprog.org/TWP.pdf>
- This paper was developed by a number of leaders in the “Doing Development Differently” (DDD) movement and makes a clear case for politically informed or development assistance.

The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers

- <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/the-coding-manual-for-qualitative-researchers/book243616>
- This reference manual comprehensively explains different coding types and provides related examples and exercises.

