GOVERNANCE

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Operationalising 'Thinking and Working Politically' in Facilities: KOMPAK case study

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1.   PURPOSE

1.1   This brief (and its annexes) summarise how Abt Associates' is testing and applying a 'thinking and working politically' approach in its international aid programs – using the example of the Australian Government KOMPAK program in Indonesia. It is hoped that, by sharing these lessons with the development community, Abt can add to the body of knowledge on what it *actually* takes to implement a TWP approach in large, 'Facility' mechanisms.

2.   CONTEXT

2.1   Relatively little has been written about the experience of 'thinking and working politically' (TWP). Many development agencies are increasingly *thinking* politically, but there is scant evidence yet regarding the practice and implications of *working* politically. Where evidence does exist, it is largely focused on the experiences of small, single sector, low-profile grants; not the experience of what it takes to 'TWP' in large, multi-sector, Facility-style initiatives.

2.2   Abt Associates is currently managing three such Australian Government-funded Facilities in the Indo-Pacific[1]. Generally speaking, our progress on TWP in these facilities has been mixed. Perhaps unsurprisingly, we seem to be better on the 'thinking' part than the 'doing' part – and there are clear areas where the TWP agenda has been easier to implement than others (for full reflections see the Abt Associates *Governance Working Paper #2*). However, by virtue of it being the longest standing of the three Facilities, the KOMPAK team in Indonesia are making head-way in developing, trialling and refining a set of tools, systems and practices to drive TWP across the Facility.

2.3   The process of KOMPAK 'learning to do TWP' is still ongoing. To date it has focused on turning the team's, existing tacit knowledge into explicit/ actionable knowledge, and getting teams comfortable with a more rapid cycle of thinking/ doing/ learning that would normally be the case in a more traditional pre-planned program (where design, implementation and evaluation are often managed sequentially). As such, the tools being developed by KOMPAK try to both incentivise and systematise TWP across the program, while also allowing for flexibility in how teams operate (especially where they are innately using TWP principles). Looking forward, the team will continue to focus on how TWP can be more closely integrated with its existing program cycle – including practical questions such as who has delegation for program adjustments? And what qualifies as 'sufficient data' to justify program change?

3.   KEY MESSAGES/ FINDINGS

3.1   The KOMPAK program is in the process of using, adapting and integrating the wealth of existing theory and practice on TWP[2], to design an approach appropriate for the Indonesian context and structure of program itself.

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[1] KOMPAK in Indonesia; the Papua New Guinea Governance Facility (PGF); and the Timor Leste Partnership for Human Development (ATLPHD)

[2] In particular, the development entrepreneurship model, the World Bank's problem driven analysis technique, the Development Leadership Program's 'everyday political analysis' tool and the DFID's Drivers of Change Analytical tool.

3.2   Given that KOMPAK is a large, multi-sector program comprising three distinct work areas[3] and multiple projects, KOMPAK is adopting a 'spectrum' approach to applying TWP. This acknowledges that not all KOMPAK project can (or should) operate in highly flexible and politically-informed ways over-night, and as such may begin with a 'minimalist approach' to TWP. It also allows TWP to be grafted to the existing KOMPAK program cycle (in particular it's established quarterly and six-month review and reflection process), and build on existing capacity within KOMPAK program teams (see **Note #2** for more detail on the KOMPAK context).

3.3   KOMPAK's starting definition of TWP assumes that (1) change is inherently political and (2) change is complex and often unpredictable. This then translates into three principles for programming [as drawn from the TWP CoP] (1) TWP requires strong political analysis, insight and understanding (2) TWP requires a detailed appreciation of, and response to the local context and (3) flexibility and adaptability in program design and implementation are required (see **Note #1** for further detail).

3.4   While still being refined and rolled-out, the KOMPAK approach comprises of a straight forward set of tools that enable teams to think about, and respond to, power and politics in their programming. These tools include:

1. **First, framing the problem**: This means clearly defining the 'problem' that teams are grappling with, or that they want to better understand – particularly the political dimensions of the issue at hand. **See Note #4.**
2. **Second, unpacking the drivers and different interests that have a stake in change:** This means working through a set of simple questions and an actor map to understand what the real drivers or blockers of change are. **See Note #5.**
3. **Third, turning our analysis into a strategy for action:** this means thinking critically about who and where change is emerging (e.g. coalition building etc), and determining whether our project is making the best choices to support this change (e.g. in terms of THE Theory of Change, relationships, activities, budget, partners, outcomes etc). **See Note #6.**
4. **Fourth, a process of constant review, interrogation and reflection:** this means revisiting analysis, activities and assumptions in light of: new information the team has learnt; changes in the local political context; and lessons from implementing activities. **See Note #7.**

These tools are illustrated in the diagram below and described in more detail in Notes 4 through 7.

Figure 1: TWP Tools Available to KOMPAK Staff
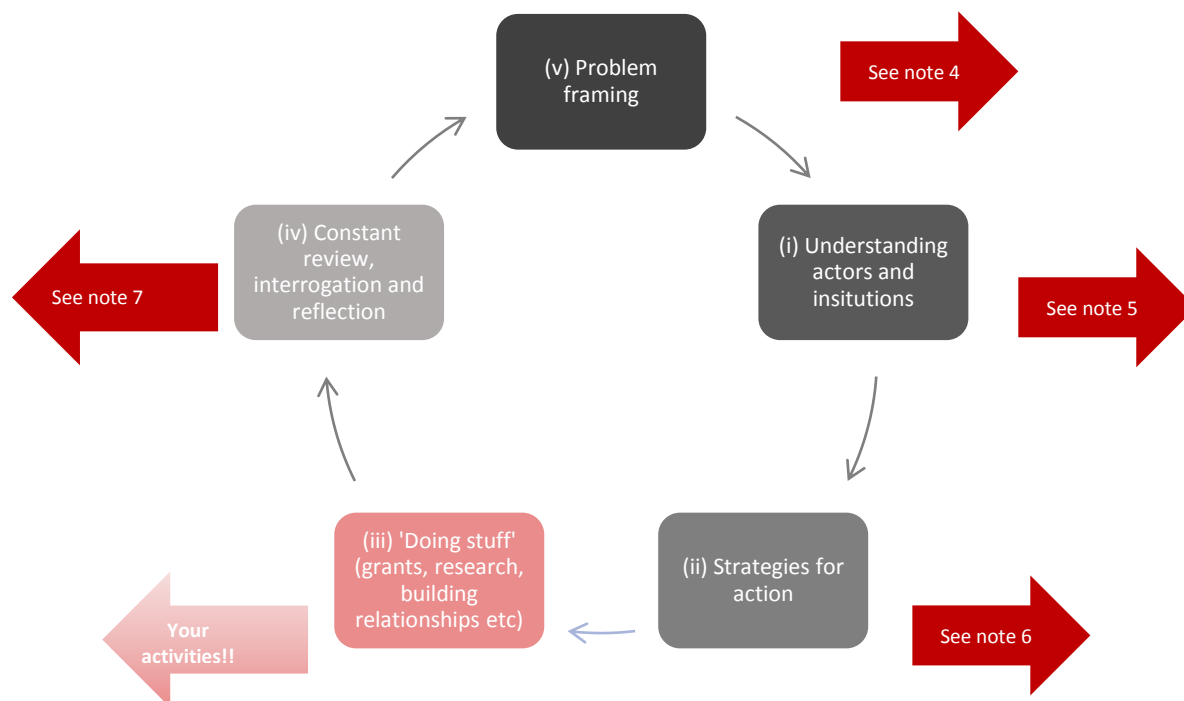
4. ENCLOSED RESOURCES

4.1 Attached are a series of 'how to notes' explaining how KOMPAK is testing, developing and learning how to apply TWP in its projects. These include: **#1 what is TWP; #2 how and why does KOMPAK apply TWP; #3 TWP 'tools; #4 defining the problem; #5 actor and institutional analysis; #6 strategies for action #7 review and reflection**.

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[3] Supporting the Government of Indonesia (GoI) to: re-align incentives and build systems for frontline services, embed village and community structures for community development and increase options for off-farm employment.

TWP 'HOW TO' NOTE #1

What is 'Thinking and Working Politically'?

Thinking and Working Politically (TWP) is a way of *thinking* about the role that power and politics play in how change happens, and *applying* this knowledge in how we design and deliver aid programs.[1] Two key assumptions underpin the TWP approach:

1. Change is inherently **political**. It involves the renegotiation of power and resources: who has it, who doesn't, how they accumulate and retain it, and how power is distributed and used. We know that change will also create 'winners and losers': people or groups who want to block change and keep the status quo as it is (e.g. for financial reasons), and those who will gain from change. Change also requires alliance building, negotiation, compromise and potentially conflict. As such, any program looking to support change (be it to reduce poverty, promote growth etc), needs to understand the interests, motivations and incentives that drive the behavior of those who have a stake in the process. See Box 1.

2. Change is also **complex and often unpredictable**. It is very hard to know, with any certainty, how a reform process will unfold at the outset of a project. The challenge is that the decisions of key actors, their interests and drivers are either hidden or very hard to understand – especially at design. Furthermore, people's interests, incentives and access to power is itself dynamic – and will change in response to their circumstance, as well as their interactions with each other.[2] Thus, even the best analysis can quickly become outdated if the political reality of a given reform is fluid and uncertain.[3]

It is these two underlying assumptions – that change is inherently political, as well as complex and unpredictable – that shape a 'thinking and working politically' view of the world.

So what does 'Thinking and Working Politically' look like?

Box 1: A political view of the world…*

There are many ways to understand how or why humans create and solve problems. A political view of the world tries to understand human behavior by focusing on three issues: structure, institutions and agents (or actors) - and how they relate to each another.
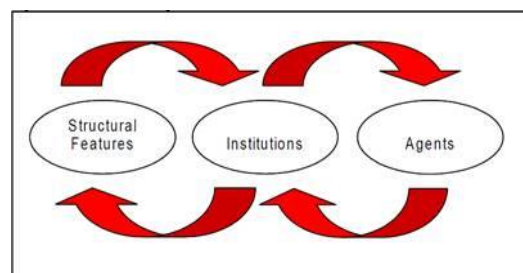
Source: DFID Drivers of Change work 2003

Structural: These are the background issues which shape the political and institutional environment. E.g. demographic pressures, political ideology, religious beliefs. These shape (and are shaped by) the rules and preferences of individuals and groups, but are hard to influence. They often change over years rather than month.

Institutions: These are the 'rules of the game'. They can be formal (e.g. policies, laws) or informal (e.g. norms, attitudes). They influence how deals get done, how people engage with each other and what is deemed acceptable behavior.

Agents: The people or groups with power who participate in change or bargaining processes. E.g. lobbyists, networks, powerful individuals, coalitions etc.

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[1] The TWP approach emerged from a frustration amongst aid practitioners that development projects were not achieving their intended impact, despite efforts to improve the technical quality of programs. *"Evidence tells us that domestic political factors are usually much more important in determining developmental impact than the scale of aid funding or the technical quality of programming…. Successful implementation usually happens when programs are aligned with a domestic support base that is influential enough to generate reform momentum, and overcome the resistance of those benefitting from the status quo. Too many times over the past few decades, we have seen projects fail because they demand changes that **are not politically feasible"**.* See: http://publications.dlprog.org/TWP.pdf

[2] Cole, Ladner, Koenig and Tyrrel, 2016 "Reflections on Implementing Politically Informed, Searching Programs: Lessons for Aid Practitioners and Policy Makers". The Asia Foundation

[3] Op cit.

A TWP approach has three core principles (adapted from https://twpcommunity.org/what-is-twp/):

1. *First, strong political analysis, insight and understanding*. In programming this means:
   - Constantly questioning, analyzing and refining the project scope, strategy and outcomes with a relentless focus on where power *really* sits, interests, incentives and institutions – for example through **political economy analysis (see 'how to notes #4 and #5')**
   - Designing projects based on problems and solutions that have been identified by local actors (and not by outsiders). This requires the project to have deep local networks and relationships – especially informal ones and with powerful actors.

2. *Second, a detailed appreciation of, and response to, the local context*
   - Working with and through domestic stakeholders, conveners and power brokers – i.e. those who actually have the resources and power to lead or make change happen.
   - Working with networks and supporting coalitions (vs relying just on one 'champion').

3. *Third, flexibility and adaptability in program design and implementation*.
   - Setting ambitious program goals but being flexible in the strategy used to get there (including being able to change outputs, inputs and even outcomes on a regular basis).
   - Continuing to assess the local political context throughout implementation (and not just at design) and adjusting the program in response to this analysis.
   - Merging design (traditionally 6-12 months) with implementation (typically 1.5-2 years) so that the team are constantly 'designing', 'testing' and 'reflecting' all at once.
   - Engaging the team in regular review and reflection to look critically at what's working, what's not and why, and actively stopping/ adjusting/ refining project budget and activities in response.

Table 1, below, compares a TWP approach to programming to more traditional approach.

Table 1: TWP vs. Traditional Program Approaches
(Adapted from Graham Teskey 2017)

	Traditional Program Approach	A full-scale TWP Approach
Problem framing	Problem usually defined in terms of a technical deficit or as a capacity issue	Problem defined in terms of power, politics, institutions, incentives etc
Planning paradigm	Teams lock in their approach (outputs, choice of partners, activities etc) at program outset.	Teams 'search' for the right approach to solve the problem through a constant cycle of learning/ building relationships/ acting.
Goal	Transactional. Largely used for accountability purposes.	Transformational and ambitious. Anchors and drives teams work.
Theory of Change	Usually set one single, prescriptive theory of change at design and this remains the same for the duration of the project	Multiple, plausible ToCs that are constantly tested and adapted through implementation and as new information arises.
Inputs/ Outputs	Programmed, static	Indicative, constantly updated
Implementation approach	Linear sequencing over usually 3 years of (1) design (2) implementing work-plan (3) end of program review	Traditional barriers between designs/ implement/ review collapsed. Team is free to constantly reflect on and update their design assumptions at implementation
Capacity to respond to change	Rigid program work-plan with little flexibility to respond to changes in context.	Capacity to recognize and respond program to critical junctures (e.g. a policy reform window)
Change agents/ partners	Officials, TA, formal structures and partners	Coalitions, networks, leaders, informal as well as formal partnerships**Importantly, the team do not rely on one 'champion' or individual, focus instead on coalitions and networks*

Where does gender fit in all this?

There is – as yet – no one agreed tool or approach to integrate gender into TWP.[4] But we know that gender is critical to a political understanding of the world for one simple reason: *gender shapes power relations at all levels of society (public, private, political etc), and in TWP, we want to understand how power is negotiated, used and maintained.*

As such, TWP must also take into account how one of the world's most significant systems of power – gender – constrains or enables the outcomes we want our aid programs to achieve.

The [DLP] helps us understand the importance to gender to TWP in five ways:

> **What is gender?**
>
> "Gender is the socially constructed characteristics of women, men, and other genders. These include norms, roles, power relationships and institutions. Therefore, gender is not synonymous with 'women', and gender analysis is focused on more than the differences between women, men and nonbinary genders. For example, institutions both reflect and reinforce gender through their membership, their formal and informal rules, and the outcomes they produce. Yet, it is rarely easy to see – and therefore respond to – these gendered aspects of institutions without specifically applying a gender lens". *Source: Gender and Politics in Practice, DLP.*

Why does Gender matter to TWP?	Explanation
Gender helps us understand the significant inequalities that often exist between women and men.	"For example, one of the most consistent features of political decision-making is women's lack of influence. This is in turn often the result of….perhaps the most pervasive, institutionalized and detrimental power-over relationship in our world: the domination of women by men."[5]
Gender roles are power relations.	"[Gender] is a key mechanism through which power not only constrains but constitutes individuals and is perhaps the most persistent form of 'invisible power' in our world….In many contexts, what it means to be a woman is to be powerless; it is considered 'feminine' to be quiet, accommodating, and obedient. By contrast it is considered 'manly' to … get others to do what you want them to do….This, for example, significantly reduces women's access to decision-making …Recognizing these dynamics, work on women's empowerment has stressed women's sense of self-worth and self-knowledge (power-within) as a critical aspect of the process for change."
The private sphere is an arena of power and politics.	Often, in TWP, we focus on the public sphere (media, Parliaments, politicians etc), and overlook the private sphere. However, how power is exercised by men and women privately (e.g. in the home, in relationships) can influence how people behave publically. Because TWP is about understanding what drives behavior, it must understand the public/ private sphere too.
Gender interacts with other hierarchical power relationships.	Gender also helps TWP understand how other forms of inequality, such as class or ethnicity, might interact with gender to shape the incentives, norms and power relationships which affect how actors behave.
Our understandings of power may themselves be the result of men's power over women.	Gender helps us be critical and reflect on where our own understanding of power (e.g. who we believe has power, who as the ability to use it, and whether or not we are missing the opportunity to support change agents that we might otherwise overlook).

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[4] To date, it is widely accepted that the TWP movement has struggled to integrate gender into its thinking and tools. Where gender has been included, it is often narrowly focused on 'women' and their formal representation (e.g. numbers of women in parliament etc). See Browne, E. (2014) Gender in Political Economy Analysis, Helpdesk Research Report 1071. GSDRC, University of Birmingham and Koester, D. (2015) [Gender & Power], DLP Concept Brief 04.
[5] Direct quotes sourced from: http://publications.dlprog.org/Gender&Power.pdf

Is TWP different to DDD* and PDIA**?

*DDD = Doing Development Differently
**PDIA = Program Driven Iterative Adaptation

Yes, but only by matter of degree.

The thinking in this note comes from the mounting literature discussing what is variously called 'Doing Development Differently'. 'Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation', and Thinking and Working Politically.

While these approaches emphasize slightly different aspects of the broad 'responsiveness' agenda, they should be thought of as complements, not substitutes. The figure below highlights their different points of emphasis as well as their commonalities.

Figure 1: DDD, PDIA and TWP
(Source: Graham Teskey 2017)

	Doing Development Differently	Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation	Thinking and working politically
Three features emphasised	• Use locally legitimate institutions • Partnership not principal agent • Focus on real results	• Relentless focus on a specific problem • Make many small 'bets' • Learn and adapt as you go	• Explicit recognition of competing interests • Engage with (i.e. fund) reformers / pro-poor coalitions • Based at all times in political economy perspectives: country / sector / program / issue
Common features	• Context is everything • Best fit not good practice • No blueprint – rather flexible, responsive, adaptive programming • Real-time learning • Long-term commitments with staff continuity • Enabling, not doing		

TWP 'HOW TO' NOTE #2

As KOMPAK prepares for 'phase two' of implementation (i.e. implementing pilots, feeding back learning, scaling up and replication[1]) it was timely for the team to reflect on how the program can more systematically apply a TWP approach to its work.

Taking into account the important and early successes of the program (e.g. using political nous to progress birth registration reform in Aceh, Lombok Utara and Bima), there are also areas where a more systematic approach to TWP could benefit project outcomes. For example; setting a number of clearly defined reform outcomes at the national level to which political strategies, analytic agendas and relationships could be deepened, developed and targeted (see **Guidance Notes #5 and #6** for further detail).

Such work is also consistent with the KOMPAK 'Review and Revitalization report', which calls for KOMPAK to continue deepening its relationships with Government of Indonesia (especially at the national level) and for the Senior Leadership level to continue working with 'political nous'.

Why does KOMPAK apply a TWP approach?

KOMPAK Strategic Planning Performance and Monitoring Framework commits to basing *"…implementation on real time political-economy analysis: at every level of the Facility, KOMPAK will seek to interpret and respond to the pace of social, political and economic change in the country."*

A TWP approach to programming lies at the heart of how change happens (or doesn't happen) in Indonesia, and is thus central to how KOMPAK designs and implements its programs.

KOMPAK's growing focus on TWP builds on decades of evidence demonstrating that projects focused only on 'technical fixes' are insufficient to tackle the development challenges Indonesia seeks to overcome.[2] Many of the challenges Indonesia faces are not simply a result of 'poor capacity' or 'a lack of technical knowledge': they are challenges rooted in issues of power, politics, incentives and institutional change. Too many times, in Indonesia and beyond, aid projects have failed because they demand changes which are not owned by local stakeholders and are simply not politically feasible.[3]

On a more positive note, we also know – based on case studies from the Philippines, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, India and the Democratic Republic of the Congo – that politically smart, flexible and adaptive approaches to programming (i.e. TWP) can produce real results, well beyond traditional programs which have sought to address the same issues. [4]

What does a TWP approach add to KOMPAK Programs?

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[1] Phases as defined in the KOMPAK 'Review and Revitalization' Report
[2] See 'The Case for Thinking and Working Politically' for more information
[3] Op cit.
[4] For some examples see: The Almost Revolution: Development aid confronts politics (Carothers, de Gramont, 2013); Problem-driven political-economy analysis: The World Bank's experience (Fritz, Levy, & Ort 2014); Politically smart, locally led development (Booth, Unsworth, 2014); Built on Dreams, Grounded in Reality: Economic Policy Reform in the Philippines (Faustino et al., 2011); Adapting Development: Improving services to the poor (Wild et al., 2015)

Some teams in KOMPAK are starting to test and trial a more systematic approach to TWP – that builds on their innate understanding of how power and politics affects change. By doing so, this:

- ✓ *Helps teams understand why change is or isn't happening*
    - E.g. if the program has stalled, then what are we missing? Who are the blocker/s of the reform and what do they stand to lose/ gain?

- ✓ *Helps teams understand where positive change is emerging and why*
    - E.g. where are people already coming together around a specific reform issue and starting to take action?

- ✓ *Helps teams better understand what those with power want (or don't want)*
    - E.g. if the success of a project hinges on the will of a handful of powerful actors, what do we know about what they want and can we use this information to influence them?)

- ✓ *Improve programs (what we're doing and how, who we work with, where we work, and why)*
    - E.g. a political understanding of the world helps us establish realistic theories of change, to pick partners who can actually influence change, and to help us set realistic and politically possible program goals.

Ultimately, a TWP approach helps focus KOMPAK's work on the real problems and solutions that matter to our Indonesian counterparts, and helps us achieve better outcomes (that are not only technically sound but also politically possible) for the people of Indonesia.

What does a TWP look like in the KOMPAK Program Cycle?

While it will naturally take time to achieve, KOMPAK is starting to put in place the minimum foundations for TWP across its portfolio of work. This acknowledges that, given the diversity of projects KOMPAK implementing, not all can (or should) operate in highly flexible and politically-informed ways 'over-night' [see left hand side of the table below]. It also aligns with the existing KOMPAK quarterly and six-month review and reflection process.

However, as internal capacity increases and KOMPAK's relationships deepen, it is expected that, over time, more and more projects will shift to the 'highly flexible/TWP' end of the spectrum night' [see right hand side of the table below]. The reflects the fact that, for the majority of KOMPAK's work: the regional and district context is unpredictable; available evidence does not conclusively prove which modalities or strategy will achieve greatest impact; reform efforts must be buttressed by coalitions (and not just rely on one 'champion'); that most teams have innate skills in TWP (in that they are almost always thinking politically), and; that change will require a significant shift in the pattern of incentives and institutional arrangements driving GoI if service delivery is to improve.

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Table 1: TWP in the KOMPAK Program Cycle

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TWP Principle	Minimalist Approach	Highly flexible/ TWP Approach

Political Analysis	✓ Actor and/or institutional mapping undertaken for major policy or reform issues in mid-2017 ✓ Actor and/or institutional maps and analysis updated based in learnings/ new information *ahead of quarterly review* ✓ *Ad-hoc* political economy analysis commissioned or undertaken in house to take a 'deep dive' into a specific sectoral or programmatic bottleneck the team want to understand better	✓ Actor and/or institutional mapping undertaken for major policy or reform issues in mid-2017 ✓ Actor and/or institutional maps and analysis used and updated *informally* by team as part of a *constant* process of acting/ thinking/ reflecting – e.g. weekly team meetings, partner discussions ✓ Team have a clear strategy for coalition building, relationship management and political action – linked to achieving their project outcome – which *drives the teams work* in a coherent manner and is constantly adjusted in light of new information. ✓ Political economy analysis *regularly* commissioned or undertaken in house to take a 'deep dive' into a specific sectoral or programmatic bottleneck the team want to understand better
Appreciate and Respond to Context	✓ Team understand who the key power brokers are, their interests and incentives, and how this might affect the achievement of their project outcomes. ✓ Team have established (or are establishing) key relationships with key Government, private sector or non-government individuals who have the ability to influence their project outcome/ reform objective.	✓ Teams not only have deep and trusted relationships with key/ powerful individuals, but also *connect* individuals to other networks and support the emergence (or continuation of) *coalitions* for specific reform problems. ✓ Team make strategic use of the relationships and networks through other parts of KOMPAK to further their reform or project goals (e.g. linking national reform efforts to a sub-national agenda).
Flexibility in Program Design and Implementation	✓ At each six-monthly refocus meeting, teams take the analysis in their actor/ institutional maps into account when deciding on budget/ activity/ input/outputs etc for the next six months.	✓ Teams have permission to adapt their theories of change, inputs, outputs and even activities in between quarterly and six-month review sessions, based on their analysis of the political context, learning and new information.

What are some of the tools KOMPAK teams will use to implement a TWP approach?

There are a wide range of tools available that different organisations have used to apply a TWP approach to programming. For KOMPAK, teams have the ability to select from the following mix of tools, depending on their preferences and the nature of the problem they are addressing:

- An approach to problem framing
- Actor and action maps
- Every-day institutional analysis questions
- Questions to ask at review and reflection (6-monthly, quarterly or more regularly)
- Political action strategies linked to specific policy reforms (these link analysis to action – i.e. what the team will do and with whom)
- Formally commissioned (internal or external) political economy analysis

These tools are each described in more detail in Notes 3 through 7.

TWP 'HOW TO' NOTE #3

TWP 'Tools'

What tools are available for programs wishing to 'TWP'?

There are a wide range of tools used by different organisations to apply a TWP approach to programming. Some of these focus more on the quality of our analysis (i.e. the 'thinking' bit of TWP), whereas others focus on helping teams develop program strategies, relationships, networks or supporting leadership and coalition building efforts (i.e. the 'doing' bit of TWP).

Some well-known examples of 'tools' include:

1. **The [development entrepreneurship](link) method which includes**: (1) a set of criteria for selecting a technically sound and politically possible reform (2) a theory of change template (3) a key measure to signal whether or not impact has been achieved (4) a timeline to track key events, milestones or progress markers for the team (5) a tool for selecting team members and (6) a coalition analysis and action map.

2. **The World Bank's [problem driven analysis](link) technique**: which focuses on the constraints to collective action problems and groups/ individuals being able to reach agreements (i.e. bargaining) on the way forward. This tool is usually applies to a specific problem or sector to understand why it hasn't performed as expected.

3. **The Development Leadership Program's ['everyday political analysis'](link) tool:** which provides a set of simple and easy questions for teams to work through to consider why change is or isn't occurring from the perspective of stakeholders.

4. **DFID's [Drivers of Change](link) Analytical tool:** which is focused on helping donors understand the long-term structural, social, political and economic drivers of change in a given context, and identifying what this means for how donors structure their engagement at the country and sector level particularly.

While all of these tools adopt a slightly different approach to thinking about, and acting on, power and politics – at heart they each address at least one of the three key issues central to a political view of the world. Structure (background issues, e.g. demographic trends, political ideologies etc); institutions (the 'rules of the game') and/or agents (the people or groups who participate in change, e.g. lobbyists, politicians). See Guidance Note 1 for further detail.

What tools does KOMPAK use?

While still being refined, tested and rolled out, the KOMPAK approach to TWP has initially comprised of a simple and straight forward set of tools that enable teams to think about, and respond to, power and politics in their programming. These tools include:

1. **First, framing the problem**: This means clearly and succinctly defining the 'problem' that teams are grappling with, or that they want to better understand – particularly the political dimensions of the issue at hand. **Guidance Note #4.**

2. **Second, unpacking the drivers and different interests that have a stake in change:** This means working through a set of simple questions and an actor map to understand what the real drivers or blockers of change are. **Guidance Note #5.**

3. **Third, turning our analysis into a strategy for action:** this means thinking critically about who and where change is emerging (e.g. coalition building etc), and determining whether our project is making the best choices to support this change (e.g. in terms of our Theory of Change, relationships, activities, budget, partners, outcomes etc). **Guidance Note #6.**

4. **Fourth, a process of constant review, interrogation and reflection:** this means revisiting our analysis, activities and assumptions in light of: new information we have learnt; changes in the local political context; and lessons from implementing our activities. **Guidance Note #7.**

These tools are illustrated in the diagram below and described in more detail in Notes 4 through 7.

Figure 1: TWP Tools Available to KOMPAK Staff
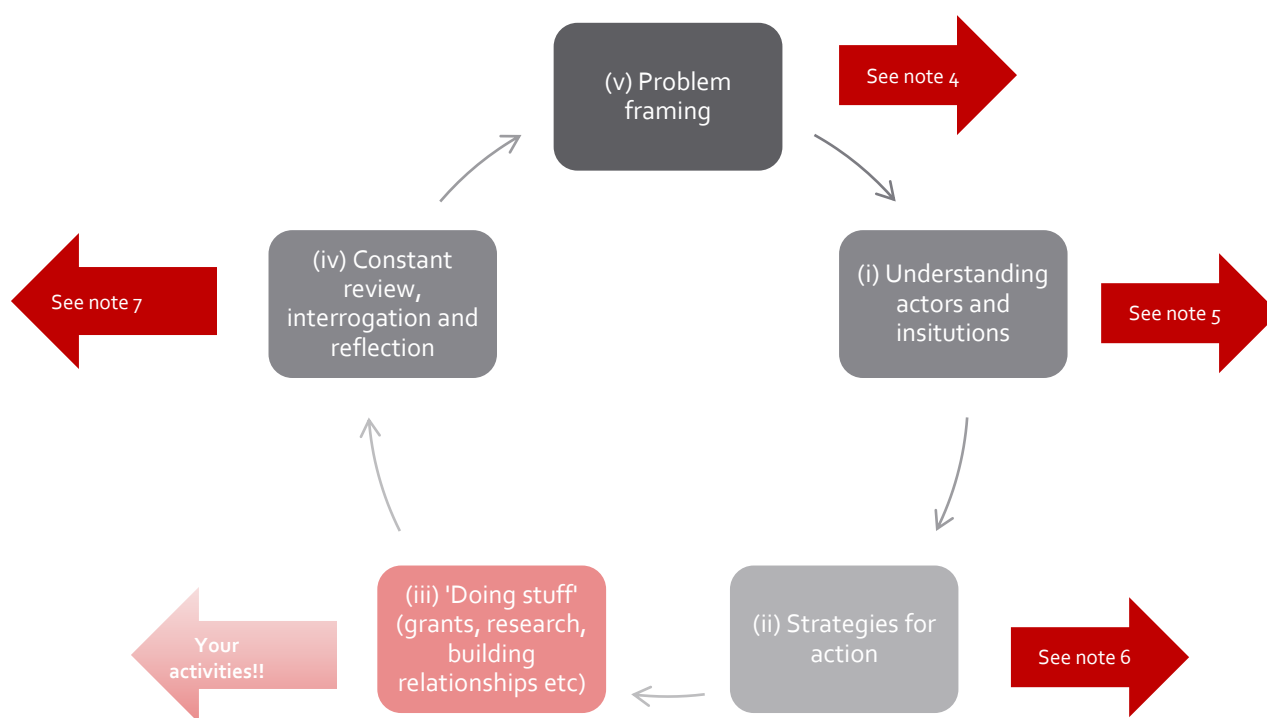
How often should you use 'TWP tools'?

The advantage of a TWP approach is that it can (and should) be used *constantly* throughout project design, implementation and review. Once teams have some initial analysis (or a best guess) in place, the most effective teams undertake the above 'cycle' of (i) thinking about power and politics (actors and institutions), (ii) what they will do in response (strategies for action), testing their ideas (activities, building relationships etc) and reflection on a **weekly**, if not **daily** basis. While some analysis can be undertaken formally (e.g. a deep dive by a consultant into a specific sector or policy issue), successful programs are *constantly* and *informally* meeting, as a team or one-on-one, to ensure they are sharing new information they have learnt and adapting the project in real-time in response to the local political context. The advantage of a TWP approach is that it does not have to wait until a formal review point in order to make micro-adjustments to budgets, activities, inputs and outputs.

TWP 'HOW TO' NOTE #4

In order to effectively apply TWP thinking we need to first clarify specifically *what* it is that we want to know about. What is the one 'thing' in our program that we are most worried and unsure about, and/or that we think will block progress, and/or that we thus want to understand better?

While TWP tools can be applied at any level (the country level, the sector level, project, ministry, geographic area etc), most development practitioners find that TWP works best when applied to a clear and specific *problem* they are facing in their day-to-day work. By applying TWP to a specific problem, it is much easier to then identify what the program needs to change/ drop/ adapt or add in response – and in order to help bring about the change needed.

However, focusing on and defining your problem can be hard….

A common mistake made by aid programs is to jump straight to the 'result' or 'solution' without fully considering the multiple and complex causes of the problem at hand – especially the **political** dimensions of the problem. Sometimes this occurs because of project legacies (i.e. the common tendency to only make small tweaks at evaluation rather than drastically critiquing whether the proposed 'solution' is the right one at all to address the 'problem'), and sometimes it is because a donor or counterpart has asked a project to adopt a certain modality or 'solution' (e.g. train public servants). Whatever the cause, the key point here is that TWP both start from a clear, locally-defined and realistic understanding of the problem itself – from which we can then make educated guesses at 'solutions'. Not 'inverse problem solving' (i.e. starting with results and working back to causes).

Another common mistake is to define a key 'solution' as simply the inverse of your 'problem'. Rarely is this the case. E.g. if the problem is "the government lacks cash" then the solution must therefore be "more cash". Yes? No. This is not the solution at all – it is merely a re-statement of the problem. While dedicating more money in the national budget to basic services may be part of the solution, it is almost always not the full story. What if existing funds for service delivery are being mis-used and not even making it to the facility level? What if staff aren't equipped to carry out their jobs? What if there are no systems in place to actually account for funds moving between different levels of government?

Another final trap which aid practitioners fall into is designing long, elaborate and convoluted problem statements that list any and every possible issue affecting the achievement of their outcomes. E.g. "the key problems tackled by this project include: the weak capacity of providers to deliver services, low public awareness of their rights, weak demand by CSOs and public groups for quality services, poor government data collection on service delivery, unclear and inappropriate policy and regulations regarding service, a lack of political will and the uneven pace of decentralization". While all of these factors may indeed be important and true, they simply describe the situation, and none of them get at the 'heart of the matter'. What, in all this, is the *key binding constraint* to better service delivery that the program must try to influence?

So, as we can see, it is not only hard to come up with a clear problem statement – **but the way we *define* the problem has profound implications for how we apply TWP, and thus the types of conclusions we come to**.

In short. Poorly defined problem = poorly defined proposals and recommendations.

As such, it is important we take time to first develop a concise problem statement to which PEA thinking can be applied. Ultimately, in so doing, we want to be able to answer the following question:

What is the key binding constraint to achieving progress?

Let's take an example of a clear and simple problem statement….

"…The absence of environmental compliance standards have been identified as the key binding constraint holding back the potential of the Bangladesh leather industry, and relocation of the industry is the required policy action…."[1]

So, do you get there?

There are many ways to reach a clear problem statement. But one simple way to do so is by working through a series of 'so what' questions, each time forcing yourself to be more and more specific (and less descriptive) in identifying what you see as the biggest single problem/ worry/ concern holding back progress. Let's see how this might apply to the example mentioned above.

Photo credit: cartoonstock.com

….Tell us what the problem is that your program is trying to address?

Here the team has described a high level challenge, not the key problem/ binding constraint itself.	The Bangladesh leather sector contributes over $1 billion to export receipts (around 4% of total exports from Bangladesh) and employs roughly 50,000 workers. Economists predict that if the leather industry continues its impressive growth, it may challenge the ready-made garments sector as Bangladesh's most valuable export. However, the potential of the industry is currently being constrained by its location in an area of Dhaka called Hazaribagh. **…Yes, but so what?**
Here the team is providing more detail but confusing the *state of play* (the location doesn't support growth) with the *problem/ key constraint itself* (the industry can't meet international environmental standards and thus export overseas)	The production base in this location is unable to support growth and expansion, as it lacks facilities and infrastructure to meet international environmental standards, and the historical absence of industrial layout planning makes it infeasible to establish the required facilities in the current location. Bangladesh may lose the majority of its leather export market (close to 60%), as international buyers are increasingly choosing to avoid sourcing material from countries with poor environmental records. Major buyers, particularly from the European Union, have already warned that they will discontinue sourcing from Bangladesh if appropriate action is not taken to comply with environmental standards.

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[1] Credit for all text relating to this example, and the example itself, must go to **The Asia Foundation**

	…Yes, but so what?
Here the team have described multiple, possible causes of the problem – but not sufficiently narrowed the problem itself.	High end machinery also cannot be used in leather processing in Hazaribagh, resulting in lower quality finished leather; this has also deterred foreign investors from sourcing leather from Bangladesh. Lack of waste management causes serious health consequences for the workers in the industry, and the 180,000 residents of Hazaribagh. Liquid waste from the industry causes severe pollution of the nearby river, rendering it unsuitable for use in water supply, and exacerbating Dhaka's water crisis. Furthermore, chemical-soaked solid waste ends up being used in fish and poultry feed, posing health hazards to consumers throughout the country. **….Yes, but so what?**
This is the single binding constraint – linked to a clear outcome, to which a TWP approach can be applied	The absence of environmental compliance has thus been identified as the binding constraint holding back the potential of the leather industry, and relocation of the industry is the required policy action.

TWP 'HOW TO' NOTE #5

The aim of actor and institutional analysis is to help KOMPAK teams understand how and why the political context around them in changing, and make politically-informed decisions in response.

KOMPAK's emerging approach to this analysis follows and adapts the DLP's **'everyday political analysis'** tool and Sida's **Power Analysis: A Practical Guide**, and involves a simple two step approach.

- Step 1: Understanding interests: What makes people tick?
- Step 2: Understanding change: What space and capacity do people have to effect change?

**Step 1: Understanding interests: What makes people tick?**

As a first step, sit with your team and map (on the following diagram) who the key stakeholders are that have the potential to influence the problem you want to address.

Place them on the map according to how influential they are (left hand axis) or how supportive they are of the reform (right hand side of the axis). For example, if the CEO of a company was very influential but anti-reform, you would list them in the top left hand corner.

As you include these actors, put a square around those who you think are *very likely* to use their political capital to make a change, and a circle around those who are only *moderately likely* to spend their political capital. You may also wish to use lines or arrows to indicate where different individuals or groups have a connection to each other (e.g. the CEO of a company might be the sister or brother of a prominent academic).

While you are completing your map, keep in mind that your stakeholders can be both individuals (e.g. the President) as well as networks, organizations, groups and coalitions (e.g. a Government Ministry, a union lobby group, the media etc). They can come from a wide range of backgrounds: government, NGO, academia, international donor, private companies, the media, a CSO, a religious group, community leader etc.

Actor and Action Map[1]

Willingness to spend political capital (Medium) [High]
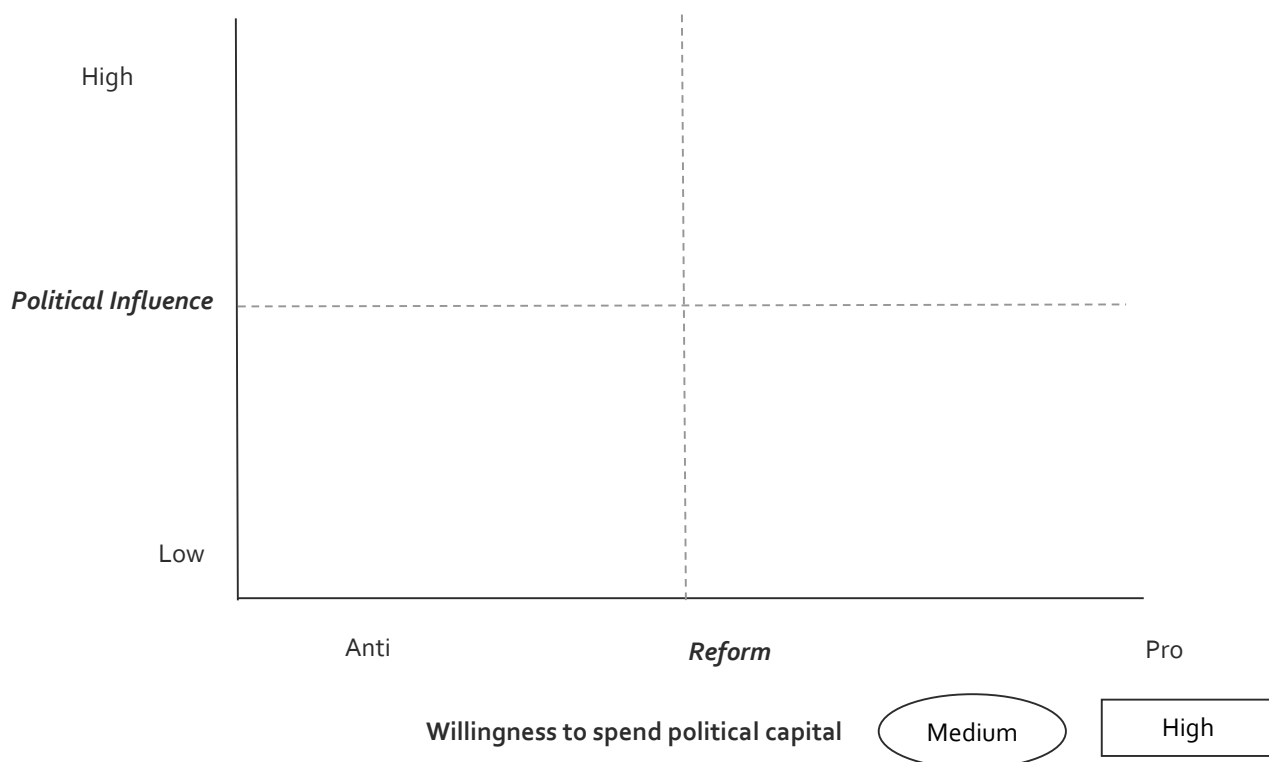
Once you have completed your map, ask yourself the following questions to help you understand what is motivating the stakeholders on your map: what is making them 'tick'.

1.1 **What do they want?** "Is it to secure a source of income? To secure power? To repay a favour? To make the world a better place? Is the person pursuing short or longer term goals? Is the objective to block change or a reform/ action or actually inaction? And how confident are they in their position?"[2]

1.2 **What constraints do they face**? Are the constraints formal (e.g. policies, laws)? Are they informal (e.g. unwritten rules, such as social norms, religious norms, gender norms or cultural expectations of what they should do or not do)? Or is it more about structural factors – such as population pressures, the class system, land distribution or historic or cultural trends which over time have shaped their behavior?

1.3 **Who and what is influencing them**? "Does their behavior reflect the interests of others? How are the interests of those they work with, or other organisations of individuals, influencing

> **Best-Guesses are OK!**
> Remember that your answers is simply your best-guess at this point in time. It is OK if you don't fully understand what is motivating an individual or group, much of this you can only learn-by-doing when you build relationships and implement your activities.

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[1] Credit for this map – Jaime Faustino, The Asia Foundation, presented to DFAT in 2013 as part of PEA training

[2] DLP's **'everyday political analysis'** p2.

them? Is this through sources of money, access to or security or employment to other resources? Do others wield authority (traditional, political, religious) over them? Think outside their organization or ministry too:"[3] what about international actors including donors, or your own project or team? Do you have any influence over them?

1.4 **Where does gender fit in this picture**? How do gender norms reinforce the relationships between powerful actors on your map – *think here about not only formal relationships (e.g. Minister and his/ her department) but also informal relationships (e.g. intimate relations, domestic life, family etc)*? "Is legislation gender neutral, or do particular laws reinforce and sustain subordinate or discriminated gender roles?" What can be said about both the situation of women in general on this map, as well as the situation of particular groups of women (e.g. unmarried women, single mothers etc) or of disadvantaged men? And last but not least: *who have you left off your map and why* – the disadvantaged, marginalised or those without power – and what does this mean for your analysis?[4]

Step 2: Understanding change: What space and capacity do people have to effect change?

Now, given our best-guess at what is driving these individuals or groups, and the constraints they face, we must now assess how realistic it is that they can lead change.

As the DLP reminds us *"people will always weigh up the costs and benefits of any change to them, but this is almost never a mechanical process. There is almost always room for maneuver, and people can be creative in making the system 'work for them' within existing constraints or by renegotiating them. This space to maneuver is often found or created at considerable cost, and it will be for the individuals to decide whether they are willing to pay the price"*.

2.1 **Who are they key decision-makers on your map?** "Who gets to decide, vote, sign off, fund, chair the process? This is not just about the formal decision-making chain but those people / organisations that hold informal power over a decision. Who could veto it? Can they influence these people? Do these other people influence them? This is critical to a political view of the world; we need to look beyond our usual focus on the poor and their (claimed) representatives, and ask who or what is key to effective change".

2.2 **Do they have potential coalition partners?** "Are they trying to go it alone? Are there like-minded individuals or groups? Can they work beyond the usual suspects, e.g. private sector, the military, faith leaders? What's the glue that could hold the coalition together? Do you know if there's been a deal? Are interests aligned around an objective or values? Are they key brokers/'kingmakers' that hold different parts together?"

2.3 **What are their key decision points?** "What is the known timeline? Are there windows of opportunity? How many decision points need to be passed for them to achieve their objectives? Which decision points present the most risk to them achieving their objectives, and why?"

2.4 **How likely are the 'pro' side to succeed?** Is their framing of the issue likely to succeed? "Will they convince other powerful stakeholders that the change is in their interests? Does it resonate with local social and political norms? If it doesn't, is it likely to provoke antagonism and backlash? Are they doing so on purpose?"

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[3] Op cit.
[4] Adapted from Pettit, J. (2013) Power Analysis: A Practical Guide. Stockholm: Sida.

TWP 'HOW TO' NOTE #6

Now, given that we have a fairly good understanding of the political context (see Note #5), we need to decide what this means for our projects, budgets and activities going forward. *What, if anything, do we need to do differently to help bring about a change in the problem we identified?*

Because KOMPAK is already well into implementation, much of our effort will focus on fine-tuning existing project plans and budgets – rather than starting with a blank slate. As such, the final component of the 'TWP' approach includes:

- Step 1: Understanding what our actor and institutional analysis means for our projects
- Step 2: Agreeing how we will work differently

Step 1: Understanding what our analysis means for our projects

Looking back on your actor map, now consider the following questions. It may be helpful to record some of the answers on your original map – so you can see the difference between *your project's* level of influence and where the *real power-brokers* are.

> **Change is led by Indonesians**
>
> At this point, it is important to remember that KOMPAK's role is to support, enable and facilitate our Indonesian counterparts and partners to lead change and solve the problems they face. It is well-known that sustainable change cannot be led by foreign actors – instead, it must be led, shaped, defined and taken forward by Indonesians.

1.1 **Where do our relationships and partners fit on that map?** Are we mainly focused on one type of actor (e.g. government, CSOs or the private sector)? Are we working with those trying to influence decision makers (e.g. the media) or the decision makers themselves (e.g. politicians)? Are our networks and relationships direct (e.g. a grant) or indirect (e.g. informal relationships through family or past-work ties)? Are we only focused on individuals or also thinking about their coalitions and networks too?

1.2 **Who or what can/can't they influence?** How influential are our partners and relationships over the problem at hand? Can they influence decisions directly or do they need to work through others (e.g. senior managers or as part of a coalition)? Can they influence all the decisions we think are needed to overcome the problem we are worried about? If not, why not?

1.3 **Are we doing enough to influence the change needed to overcome the problem we identified?** Are we actively supporting (directly or indirectly) those who we think have the ability to progress positive reform? If not, what new or expanded relationships do we need to develop? How else can we access the power-brokers (if not directly)? Are we doing enough to connect individuals to broader networks or groups who also have an interest in seeing positive change? If not, how else could we support this? Are we using all the networks available to us *across KOMPAK* to overcome the problem identified? If not, what else should we do?

Step 2: Agreeing how we will work differently (our strategy)

Any good political strategy for action has at least three components[1].

1   **Analysis and knowledge** of the political context you are working in – the institutions, incentives, interests and motivations that are driving behavior. This is the information you provided under **How to Note #5** (Actor and Institutional analysis) and which you will update on a constantly (daily, it not weekly) as you learn more information through implementation.

2   **Relationships** that enable your team to undertake your projects and work with, through or alongside individuals, groups or coalitions who are willing to either put their political capital on the line to make change happen – or willing to work with others to overcome the problem at hand.

   This is the information you provided in your actor map under **How to Note #5**, as well as your answer to question 3 in Step 1 (above).

3   **Program action** or 'learning by doing'. The proccess of implementing activities, allocating budget, issuing grants/ contracts and adjusting them as we go in response to our analysis, what's changing in the local political context and new information that we have learnt.
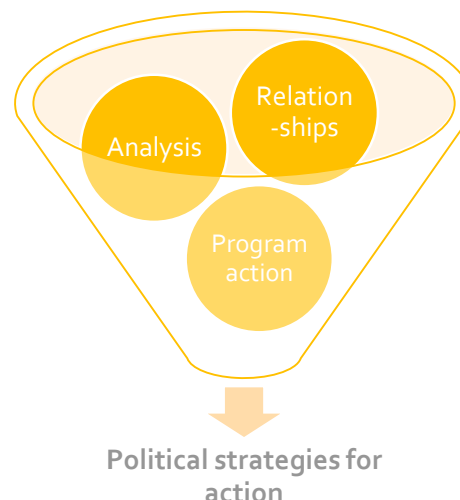
   For KOMPAK teams to truly think and <u>work</u> politically it is critical that our program action reflects our understanding of the political context.

In order to bring to bear the analysis you have completed through the past guidance notes, teams will need to discuss and agree the following points with their senior management:

- Any changes to partnering arrangements or new relationships we need to develop/ strengthen
- Any changes to how grants or sub-contracts are structured
- Any amendments to budget allocations for the following 3-6 months
- Any updates to the overall workstream theory of change
- Any updates to project outputs, inputs and outcomes over the following 3-6 months
- Any amendments to activity scope or duration
- Any revisions to internal team structure or core work duties
- Any areas where we need to undertake more in-depth analysis
- When the team will come back together informally or formally to continue to refine their analysis and assumptions reached through this process.

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[1] The Asia Foundation must be credited for this typology. For more information see the paper *"Reflections on Implementing Politically Informed, Searching Programs: Lessons for Aid Practitioners and Policy Makers"* April 2016. https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Reflections-onThree-Years-200416.pdf
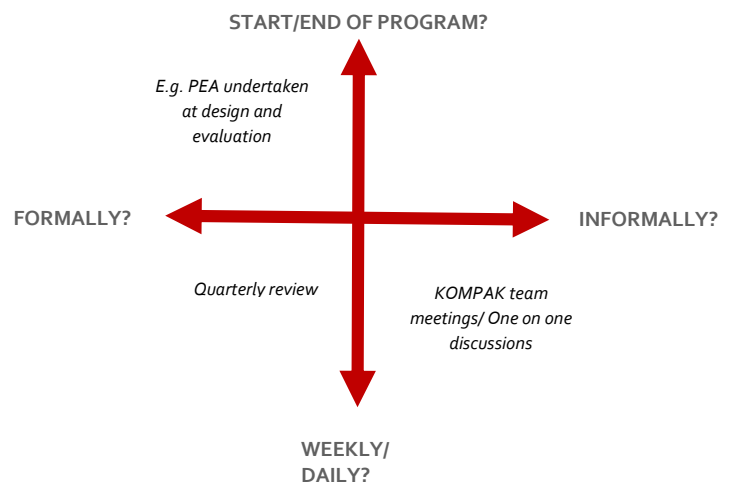
TWP 'HOW TO' NOTE #7

Critical to a political view of the world is also being open to constant review, interrogation and reflection. This is because politics (people's interests, how they react to act other and their circumstance) is unpredictable, and thus it is very hard to know exactly how a reform will unfold at the outset of a project. As a result, instead of locking in projects for three years up-front at design, a TWP approach engages in a constant process of review and project adjustment.

For KOMPAK, this means revisiting our analysis, activities and assumptions in light of: new information we have learnt; changes in the local political context; and lessons from implementing our activities.

How often should we undertake review and reflection?

There is no hard and fast rule about how frequently a team trying to 'TWP' should stop and reflect on its progress and the changing political context.

However, for KOMPAK, we know that the most successful teams may be using some form of **informal team meeting (daily or weekly) or one-on-one discussions** to constantly adapt their strategy, make small adjustments to their project in light of new information that has come to hand, and to respond to changes in the political context. See the bottom right hand side of the diagram on the right.

START/END OF PROGRAM?

E.g. PEA undertaken at design and evaluation

FORMALLY? ←——————→ **INFORMALLY?**

Quarterly review

KOMPAK team meetings/ One on one discussions

WEEKLY/ DAILY?

Some KOMPAK teams may also take the time to **update their actor and institution maps (see Note #5) as well as their political strategies (see Note #6) prior to each quarterly review.** This allows teams to then respond to the following questions (in addition to those already set) during the formal peer-review process:

1. What's changed in the political context and how should our program respond?

    i. Have there been any significant changes in the political context that require you to adjust how you frame the problem you are trying to address? If so, how?

    ii. Have any key actors on your map, or their relationships and interests, changed since the last quarterly review? Is our project still focused on the right people/ networks?

    iii. Have there been any big changes in the formal (e.g. legislation or policy) or informal rules (e.g. norms, religious edicts etc) which effect the issue you are working on? What does this mean for our own program strategy?

    iv. Given the changes discussed above, do we need to revisit any of our activities, budget allocations, outputs or even outcomes? Is our project outcome still realistic? Remember that our outcomes always need to be 'technically sound and politically possible'.