



# Review: Focus on governance for more effective policy and technical support. Framework paper

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Bojić, D., Clark, M. and Urban, K. (2022) [Focus on governance for more effective policy and technical support: Governance and policy support framework paper](#). Rome: FAO.

### A review by Marco Mezzera

Spurred by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development's call for transformative change, in 2013 FAO started on a course to integrate political economy and governance analysis in its policy and technical work. These efforts to promote a political economy perspective in the organisation's work contributed a few years later to the creation of a Governance and Policy Support Unit.

The framework paper published in 2022 builds on a legacy of accumulated knowledge and experience stemming from FAO work at country, regional and global levels, while also drawing on academic literature as well as the experience of other international organizations and agencies.

This publication makes a meaningful contribution to ongoing research and debates on the centrality of politics and power in shaping development prospects, even in sectors like food security and nutrition which have traditionally been perceived as highly technical.

[Focus on governance for more effective policy and technical support](#) dedicates its first half to a detailed elaboration of the concept of governance and its relevance for FAO's work. It does so by presenting the key approaches that have influenced thinking about governance over the past three decades. It then examines how understandings of the concept of governance and its use have evolved in FAO over the past two decades. The concluding part of this first section outlines three principles for how governance analysis for agrifood systems transformation should be approached. Analysis should:

- 1) Serve as a means for understanding the context and not simply another technique for justifying a technical intervention;
- 2) Be problem-focused and contribute to collective learning and decision-making processes;
- 3) Be used to help inform policies that are not only technically viable but also politically feasible.

The more original part of the paper, however, starts with chapter III, where a basic framework for governance analysis is laid out. The framework is innovative because it puts forward four interrelated phases without turning their execution into a mechanical exercise. The emphasis of the framework is in suggesting the kind of analysis that should be carried out to arrive at a

proper understating of the context (or problem) in which a technical intervention or project are meant to take place. It also calls for identifying those stakeholders that should be part of any such collective understanding and intervention process. Finally, the framework does not stop with the analysis. Its additional value resides in a fourth phase, where all the knowledge acquired through the first three phases of the analysis can be applied to concrete and collective courses of action.

The paper seeks to convince its readers of the importance of taking a political economy perspective when approaching work related to food and agriculture, which tends to be perceived as almost purely technical. The paper is not prescriptive, however, and it does not impose the use a specific methodology. The paper clarifies that there is a wide variety of guidance and available frameworks out there that can be used to carry out the analysis recommended in the different phases of the framework.

Its publication ushers in a new phase of political economy awareness in one of the most technical UN agencies. But this is just the beginning. A profound and strategic work of sensitisation and accompaniment needs to continue to make sure that such an approach gets properly embedded in FAO's standard operational modalities.

**About the author:** Marco Mezzera is a governance expert with 25 years of experience working with both bilateral and multilateral organisations on conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and the political economy of development

**Disclaimer:** The views expressed in this review are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Thinking and Working Politically Community of Practice.

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