

# How to write an executive summary

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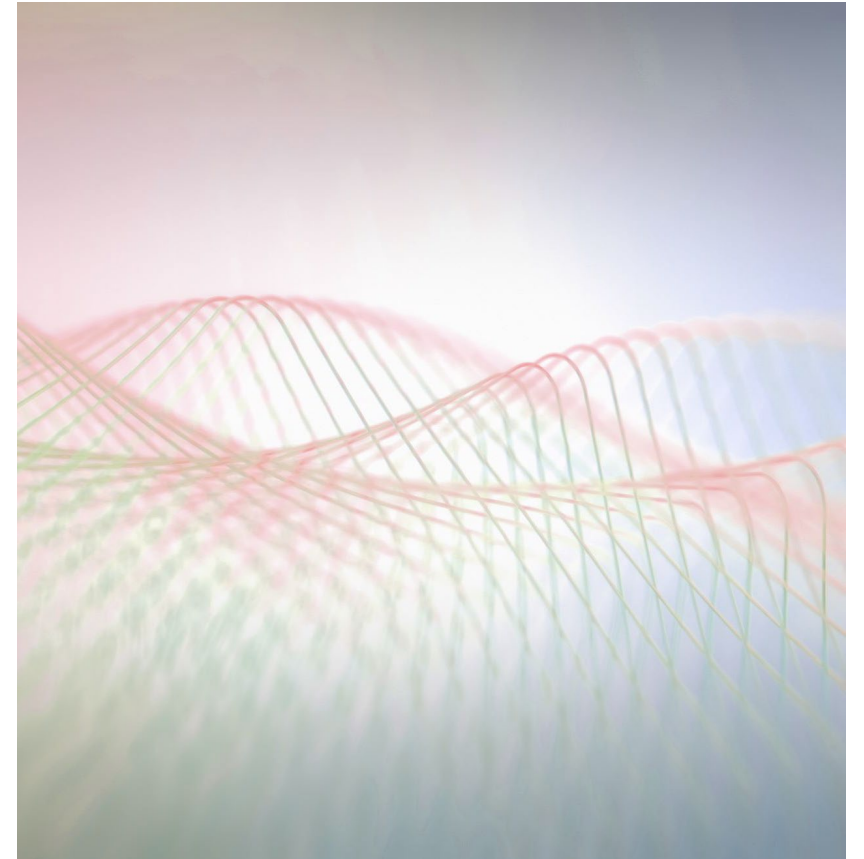
It would be helpful to know  
who is here – interested in  
general, writing a PAE, etc...?

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# Executive Summary

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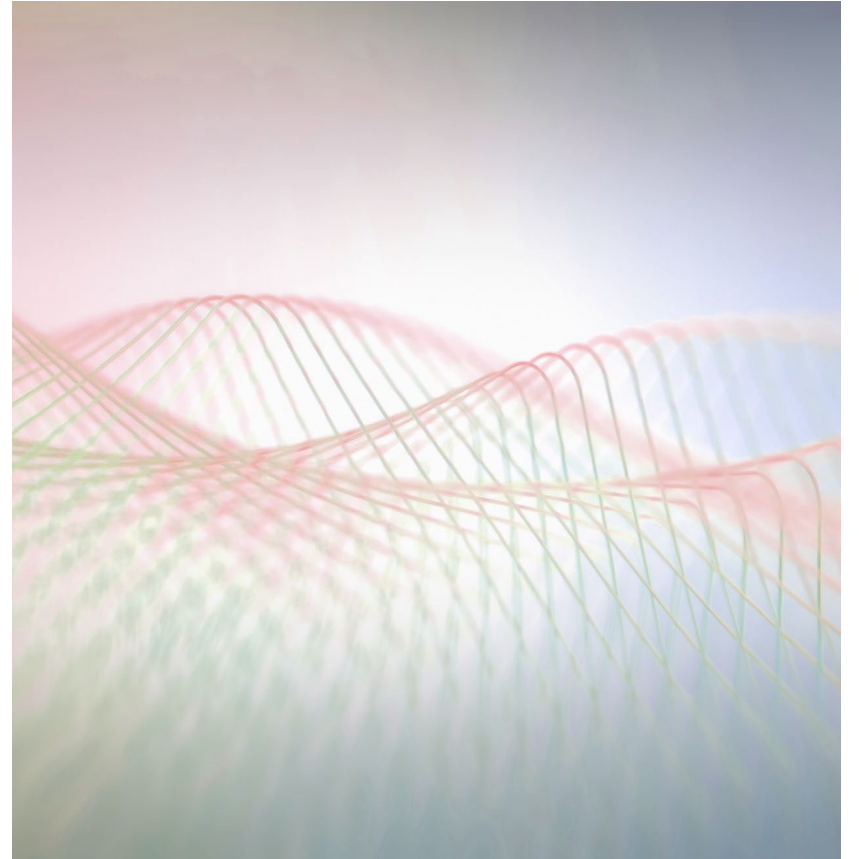
- Key components:
  - **Problem statement** (1-2 paragraphs, not all factors)
  - **Purpose of project:** Basic client info, and maybe research questions too if simple.
  - **Key findings** (tip of the iceberg)
  - **Recommendation** (tip of the iceberg)
  - Conclusion
- 1000 words – a stand-alone document. Usually, 1-2 pages in PAEs.
- Writing: concise sentences, active voice, jargon-free (define terms).



# Executive Summary

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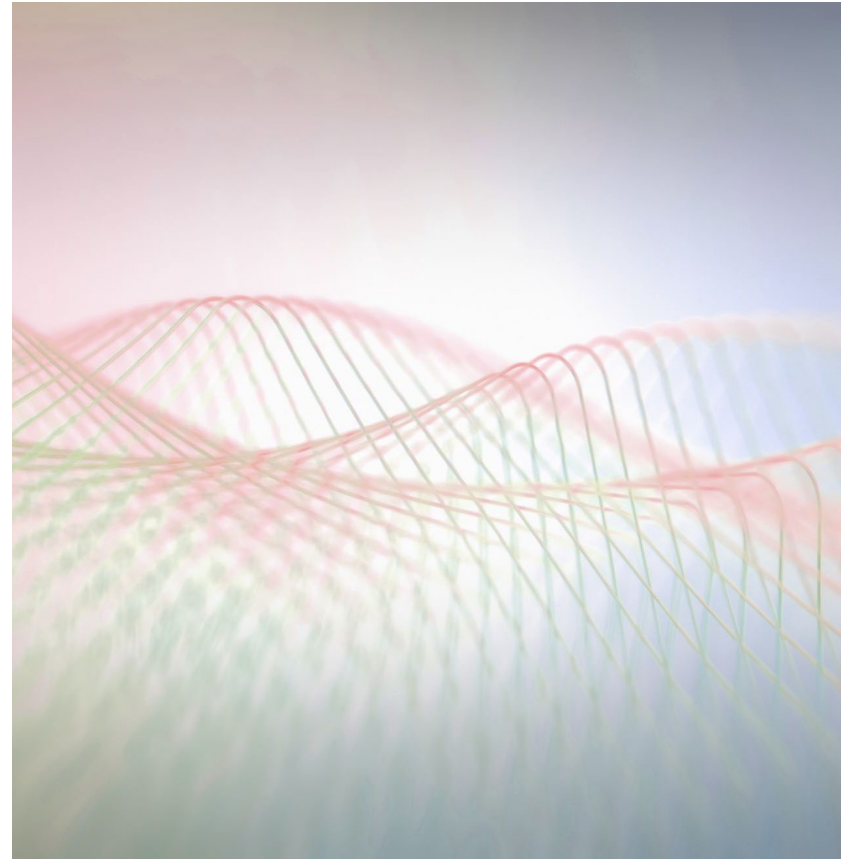
- Key components:
  - **Problem statement** (1-2 paragraphs, not all factors)
    - Problem statements answers “what’s wrong” and will possibly quantify the scope of the problem with 1-2 data points.
    - If you don’t have data, you will need to explain with narrative.
    - Problems should be separated from factors (which could be the causes and/or the consequences).



# Executive Summary

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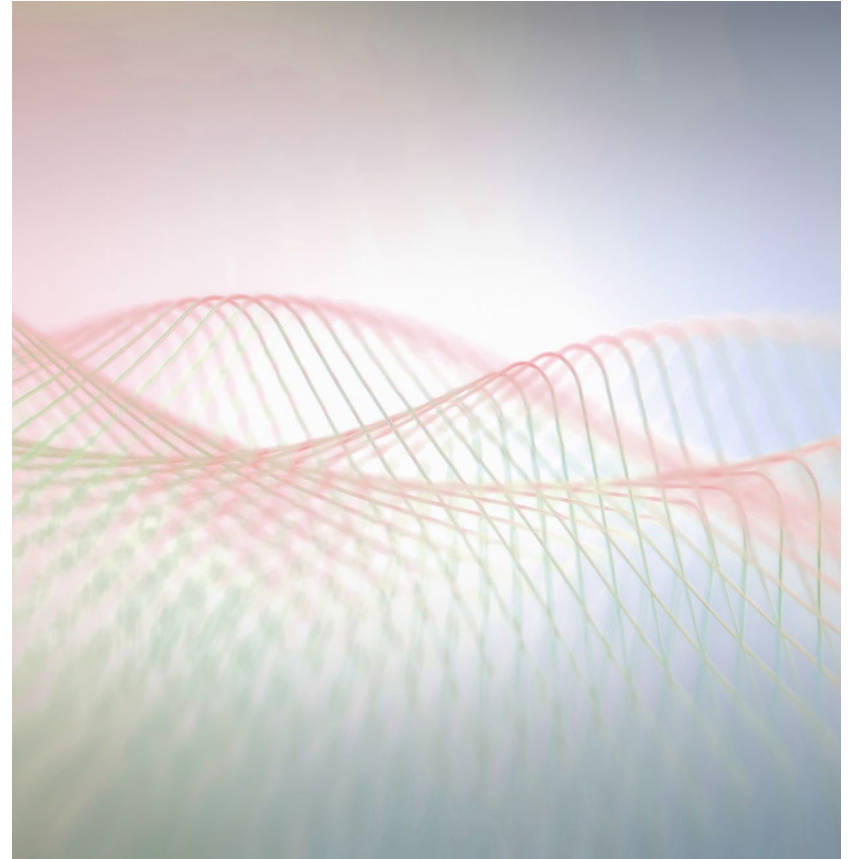
- Key components:
- **Purpose of project:** Basic client info, and maybe research questions too if simple.
  - Sometimes research questions are long (1-3 questions) and are asking evaluative questions – i.e. what has happened so far? That will not necessarily help your audience know what's wrong quickly.
  - Instead, consider connecting back to the client or audience – who is this report for? Why will it be helpful to them? What do they need to know?



# Executive Summary

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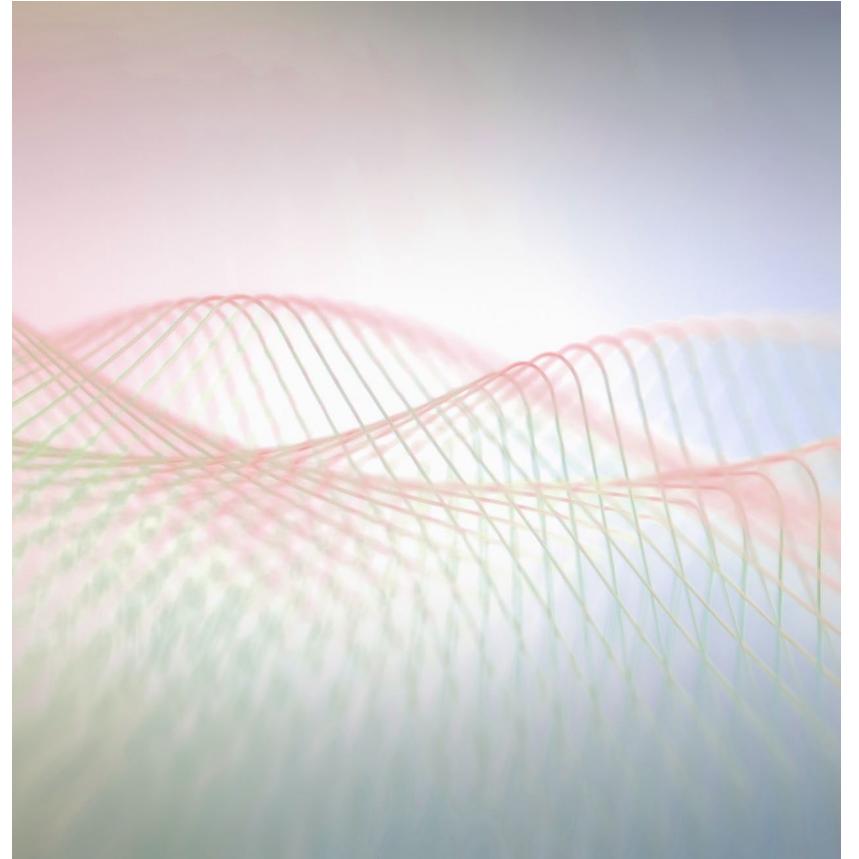
- Key components:
  - **Key findings** (tip of the iceberg)
  - **Recommendation** (tip of the iceberg)
    - Tip of the iceberg may mean –
      - “What” NOT “how.”
      - The flavor – “three types of curriculum changes that aim to enhance reading skills”



# Executive Summary

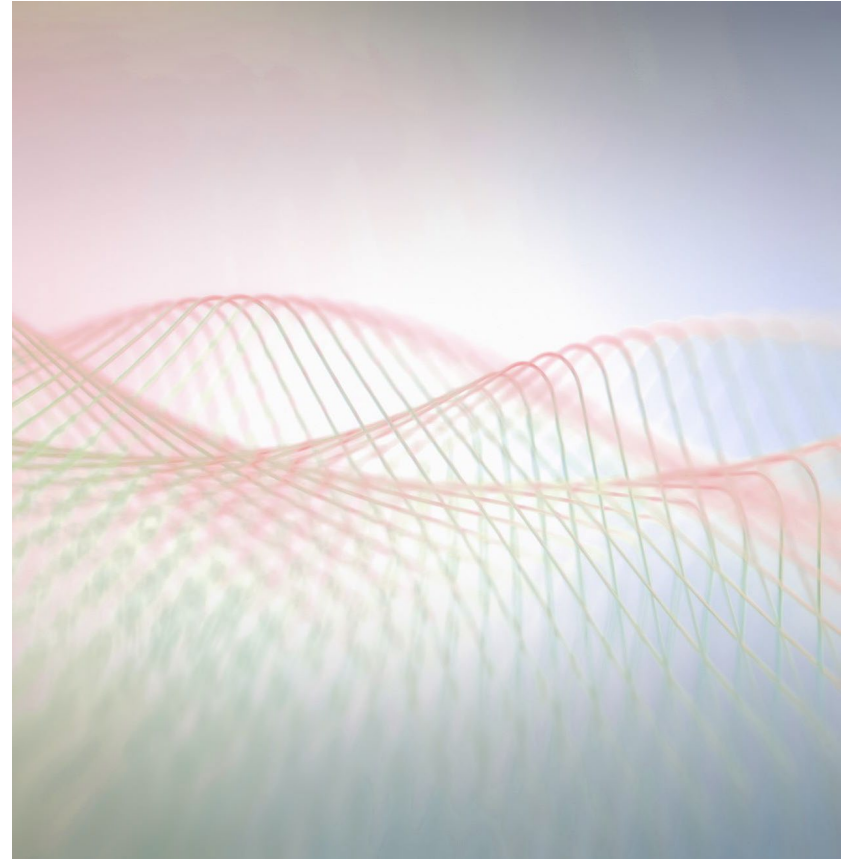
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- Writing: Concise sentences, active voice, jargon-free (define terms).
  - A note on jargon – some executive summaries need to define terms or acronyms upfront for clarity.
  - You can do this in a text box or right inside of the writing.



# Executive Summary

- Short Conclusion:
  - Can be a call to action --
  - Why is this good for the client?
  - How will your solution make people's lives better?





# GAO example:

Solution

Purpose

  
**Highlights**  
Highlights of GAO-05-323, a report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Science, State, Justice, and Commerce, and Related Agencies, House Appropriations Committee

**Why GAO Did This Study**

The war on terrorism has focused attention on the important role U.S. public diplomacy plays in improving the nation's image. The United States has undertaken efforts to "win hearts and minds" by better engaging, informing, and influencing foreign audiences; however, recent polling data show that anti-Americanism is spreading and deepening around the world. GAO was asked to examine (1) to what extent U.S. public diplomacy efforts have been coordinated and (2) whether the private sector has been significantly engaged in such efforts.

**What GAO Recommends**

GAO recommends that (1) the Director of the Office of Global Communications fully implement the role mandated for the office in the President's executive order, including facilitating the development of a national communications strategy, and (2) the Secretary of State develop a strategy to guide department efforts to engage the private sector in pursuit of common public diplomacy objectives. The State Department, Broadcasting Board of Governors, and U.S. Agency for International Development generally concurred with the report's conclusions and recommendations.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-323](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-323)

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Jess T. Ford at (202) 512-4128 or fordj@gao.gov.

April 2005

## U.S. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

### Interagency Coordination Efforts Hampered by the Lack of a National Communication Strategy

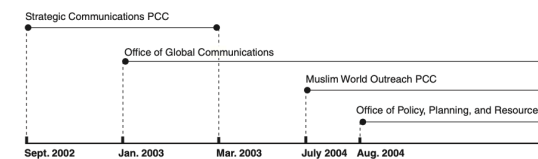
#### What GAO Found

The White House has launched several recent initiatives designed to promote the coordination of U.S. public diplomacy efforts, but the government does not yet have a public diplomacy communications strategy. In 2002, a Strategic Communications Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC) was created to help provide central direction to communication efforts. The committee drafted a national communication strategy, but the committee was disbanded in 2003 and no strategy was issued. In 2003, an Office of Global Communications was created to facilitate White House and interagency efforts to communicate with foreign audiences. According to a recent report by the Defense Science Board and comments by agency officials, the office has not implemented this role. Although a national communications strategy has not yet been developed, the White House established the Muslim World Outreach Policy Coordinating Committee in 2004 to coordinate public diplomacy efforts focused on Muslim audiences. The group is in the early phases of drafting strategic and tactical communications plans. In addition to White House efforts, the State Department created an Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources in 2004 to help coordinate and direct the department's wide-ranging public diplomacy operations. Further, the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Department of Defense are redefining their public diplomacy roles and operations in response to the increased attention given to U.S. outreach efforts.

Problem  
(plus findings)

The State Department has had some success involving the private sector in the area of international exchanges. However, other efforts to engage the private sector have met with limited success. For example, in 2003 State formed a panel of outside advisors to recommend areas where the department and the private sector could coordinate their efforts. The panel's July 2003 report suggested a number of possibilities; however, none of these suggestions was acted upon due to a lack of resources, bureaucratic resistance, and limited management commitment.

#### Key White House and State Initiatives Launched to Improve Public Diplomacy Coordination



Source: GAO, based on White House and State Department data.

# Let's skim some executive summaries...

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**STRENGTHENING U.S. PERFORMANCE  
IN INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATION**

The Potential Contributions of a Negotiation Support Team

PREPARED FOR THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE'S POLITICAL TRAINING DIVISION

The PAE reflects the view of the author and should not be viewed as representing the views of the PAE's external clients, nor those of Harvard University or any of its faculty.

MARCH 28 2017

## STRENGTHENING U.S. PERFORMANCE IN INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATION

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U.S. State Department is responsible for leading the development and implementation of U.S. foreign policy. Through the efforts of various bureaus and offices, its employees undertake thousands of negotiations on the most pressing global problems in a range of settings. The Bureau of International Organization Affairs (IO) supports the U.S. Mission to the United Nations (USUN) and engagement with other multilateral organizations such as the African Union and diplomatic posts in Geneva and Rome. The Bureau for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES) and the Economic and Business Affairs Bureau (EB) craft comprehensive agreements on wildlife protection, biodiversity, and agricultural subsidies. These examples are simply a snapshot of the ongoing negotiations undertaken every year.

U.S. negotiations are also becoming increasingly complex. They involve multiple parties, interests, and issues in combination with historical, cultural, and relational factors. Dr. Larry Crump, lecturer and researcher, defines complexity in negotiation when,

*"too many variables interact...such variables include: too many parties, roles, issues, norms, and/or linked negotiations. Because these variables are managed through communication channels and decision processes that themselves contain varying degrees of transparency and clarity, complexity increases...[negotiators] confront a two-fold management challenge in complex negotiations. Dependence and independence, competition and cooperation, strategy and*

*tactics, communication and decision making, power and ethics..."*

Understanding and managing these factors becomes essential to a negotiation's analytical process.

Civil and Foreign Service Officers may not always have the proper resources and time to sufficiently prepare for or build momentum towards a successful outcome. Due to the nature of State Department employment and rotational service, the State Department needs more robust negotiation frameworks and should capture lessons learned to institutionalize best practices as new diplomats join the Department and rotate between positions.

#### CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Where and how would a Negotiation Support Team (NST) intervention be most advantageous and effective for U.S. diplomats?
2. What institutional design, processes, and resources are required to create and sustain a high-value NST capability at the State Department?

This report explores the range of assistance that a Negotiation Support Team (NST) might offer U.S. State Department negotiators in the context of real-time, ongoing negotiations. An NST is defined as an advisory team of practitioners, academic experts, or U.S. diplomats that provides support and expertise upon request to U.S. negotiators and offers creative solutions for resolving impasse. It seeks to identify where and how a support team intervention can be most advantageous for Civil and Foreign Service Officers. In this effort, it identifies patterns and symptoms that are indicative of impasse, also known as deadlock, in foreign affairs.

The Policy Analysis Exercise (PAE) offers a set of recommendations for the design and implementation of an NST to ensure a successful launch. Using a methodological framework focused on academic research, best practices of the United Nations' (UN) Standby Team (SBT) of mediation experts, and individual interviews with State Department employees, this project explores where U.S. negotiators encounter particular challenges and how the State Department can strengthen its capacity to resolve intractable disputes.

In analyzing past and present negotiations, there are credible ways an NST can provide valuable assistance for multilateral negotiations, trade deals, environment and climate change agreements, and in improving the overall institutional memory of negotiation strategy.

This PAE recommends that the State Department create an NST to advise on process design, negotiation and conflict analysis, and impasse resolution. This would not be an operational unit involved in the actual negotiations; rather, it would provide discrete internal support on an as-requested basis to U.S. negotiating teams to explore new approaches and break through impasses. The recommendations are not overly ambitious and provide internal and external options to ensure that U.S. diplomats would be receptive to the assistance. The NST's overall goal is to provide State Department bureaus, offices, and overseas posts with significant competitive advantages in preparing for challenging bilateral and multilateral negotiations.

#### USEFUL ACRONYMS

##### U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT (DOS)

NST - Negotiation Support Team

IO - Bureau of International Organization Affairs

CA - Bureau of Consular Affairs

CSO - Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations

USUN - United States Mission to the United Nations

USTR - United States Trade Representative

PPSN - Peace Process Support Network

NGO - Nongovernmental organization

OES - Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs

TTIP - The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

##### UNITED NATIONS (UN)

DPA - UN Department of Political Affairs

SBT - Standby Team of mediation experts

MSU - Mediation Support Unit

SRSO - Special Representative to the Secretary-General

2018

Child Protection in Conflict and Post-Conflict Regions

A Global Evaluation of the International Rescue Committee's Families Make the Difference Parenting Program

POLICY ANALYSIS EXERCISE

Sophie Feintuch, Master in Public Policy Candidate  
March 27, 2018

Expected Graduation Date: May 23, 2018  
Client: International Rescue Committee  
Faculty Advisor: Professor Jacqueline Bhabha  
PAC Seminar Leader: Professor Ryan Sheely

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# A Global Evaluation of FAMILIES MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

### The Problem

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has developed a standardized parenting program called Families Make the Difference (FMD) to **ensure that children living in emergency and post-conflict contexts are safe in their homes** and reach positive developmental outcomes.

Evidence from randomized control trials (RCTs) indicates that the program is feasible and impactful in three post-conflict countries. The IRC has little evidence, however, of its performance in the other fourteen countries where they have implemented FMD since 2009, many of which are contexts of conflict or displacement. The challenges and costliness of RCTs make it difficult to assess the program's effectiveness in every location, and to date no one has analyzed collectively the monitoring data from all interventions.

**The IRC must determine how to focus limited resources, which requires understanding the program's overall impact and necessary factors for its success.** This Policy Analysis Exercise aims to fill the research gap so the IRC can improve the program's effectiveness and decide where and how to scale up.

### Research Questions

1

What is the overall outcome of FMD on parents and children across post-conflict and emergency contexts?

2

What factors enable or hinder FMD's success?

3

How can the IRC improve FMD generally and in certain contexts to better impact parents and children?

### Methodology

- Quantitative analysis of pre- and post-questionnaires from 77 interventions in 7 countries
- Qualitative analysis of interviews with IRC staff in 12 countries and Focus Group Discussions with participants, facilitators, and officials in 3 interventions in Cote d'Ivoire.

### Findings

Outcomes

FMD has a significant effect on reducing harsh punishment, increasing positive parenting strategies, and improving parents' psychosocial wellbeing.

The impact is high for parents of children of all ages, both male and female participants, and for families with different levels of risk of child maltreatment in a range of settings.

Factors for Success

FMD is feasible in both post-conflict and long-standing conflict/displacement environments. It is unsuccessful in new conflict/displacement areas and with transient populations.

Programs in camps face fewer barriers to implementation than in urban or rural areas. Outside of camps, partnerships can mitigate logistical challenges.

Reaching more men has additional benefits for families and communities, but it requires greater effort.

### Recommendations

The IRC should continue to offer and scale up FMD.

To develop a strategic plan, they must consider tradeoffs between reaching the greatest number of children, reaching children with the greatest need, or having the greatest impact on each child reached. While not mutually exclusive, each priority has implications for where to implement and whom to train.

The IRC should invest in conducting further research into the durability of the program impact and its spillover to other family members.

### Conclusion

FMD protects children and strengthens families in post-conflict as well as conflict and displacement settings. If research corroborates qualitative accounts suggesting the program has an enduring impact, the IRC will have a strong case that this program dramatically reduces violence against children and should be a global model of child protection.

# This can fit in 1-2 pages!

## Concision tips for executive summaries.

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Write concisely: Write short sentences often, not always

- Cut fillers: Actually, generally, practically, very, moreover.
- “Three-line rule”

Write in active voice, use strong verbs:

“Several school aids are **not** working anymore” → “Several school aids **retired.**”

\*

“We need **solutions** to this problem.” → “We must **solve** this problem.”

\*

“This issue **has** continuously **been** on the agenda” → “This issue remains on the agenda.”

Word search for “is,” “being,” “has been” and “not.”

# Tips for writing clear paragraphs inside of executive summaries --

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- Start with the main point in paragraphs
- One idea per paragraph, unless a clear expansion
- Use repetition of terms for clarity {government vs. policymakers}
- Transitional words, especially for ordering {first, second, third}
- Avoid hedging language {it may be possible to consider a recommendation whereby...}

# Writing well with data – Examples from UN report: “Making Data Meaningful”

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Don't peel the onion. Get to the point:

**Poor:** “The largest contributor to the monthly increase in the CPI was a 0.5% rise in the transportation index.”

**Better:** “Higher auto insurance premiums and air fares helped push up consumer prices this month.”

*Don't simply  
insert data.  
Instead, start  
with a sentence  
on what it  
means.*

# Examples from UN report: “Making Data Meaningful”



## BEFORE

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### **Divorces** 2003

In 2003, 70,828 couples divorced, up a slight 1.0% from the recent low of 70,155 in 2002.

The number of divorces has remained relatively stable over the last few years. The year-to-year change has been below two percent for every year since 1999.

The increase in the number of divorces between 2002 and 2003 kept pace with the increase in the Canadian population over this period. As a result, the crude divorce rate for 2003 remained the same as in 2002, at 223.7 divorces for every 100,000 people in the population.

## AFTER

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### **Divorces – 2003**

Repeat divorces, those involving people who had been divorced at least once before, are accounting for an increasing proportion of divorces in Canada, according to new data.

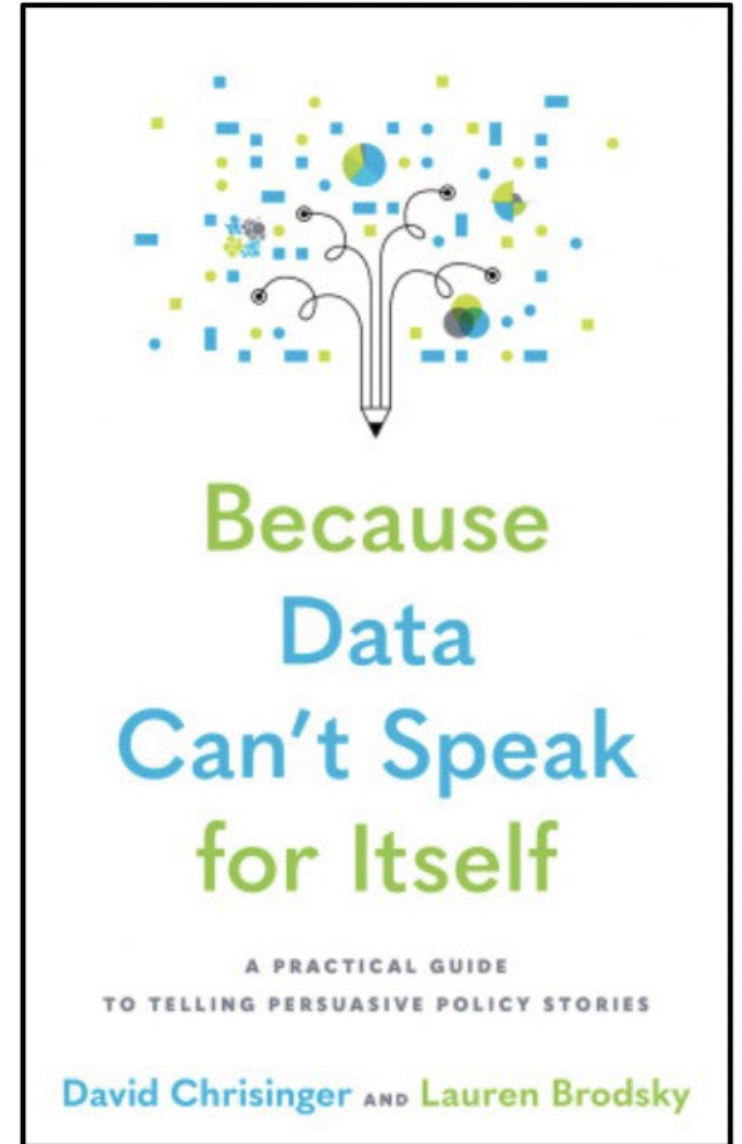
In 1973, only 5.4% of divorces involved husbands who had previously been divorced. Some 30 years later, this proportion has tripled to 16.2% of all divorces. Similarly, the proportion of divorces involving wives who had previously been divorced rose from 5.4% to 15.7% during this three-decade period.

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# Bring points up before source :

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- Rather than: *One study probed the relationship between parental education and found that young people from moderate- and low- income families were no less likely to attend college in 2001 than they were in 1993.*
- Try this: *Young people from moderate-and low-income families were no less likely to attend college in 2001 than they were in 1993, according to one study.*



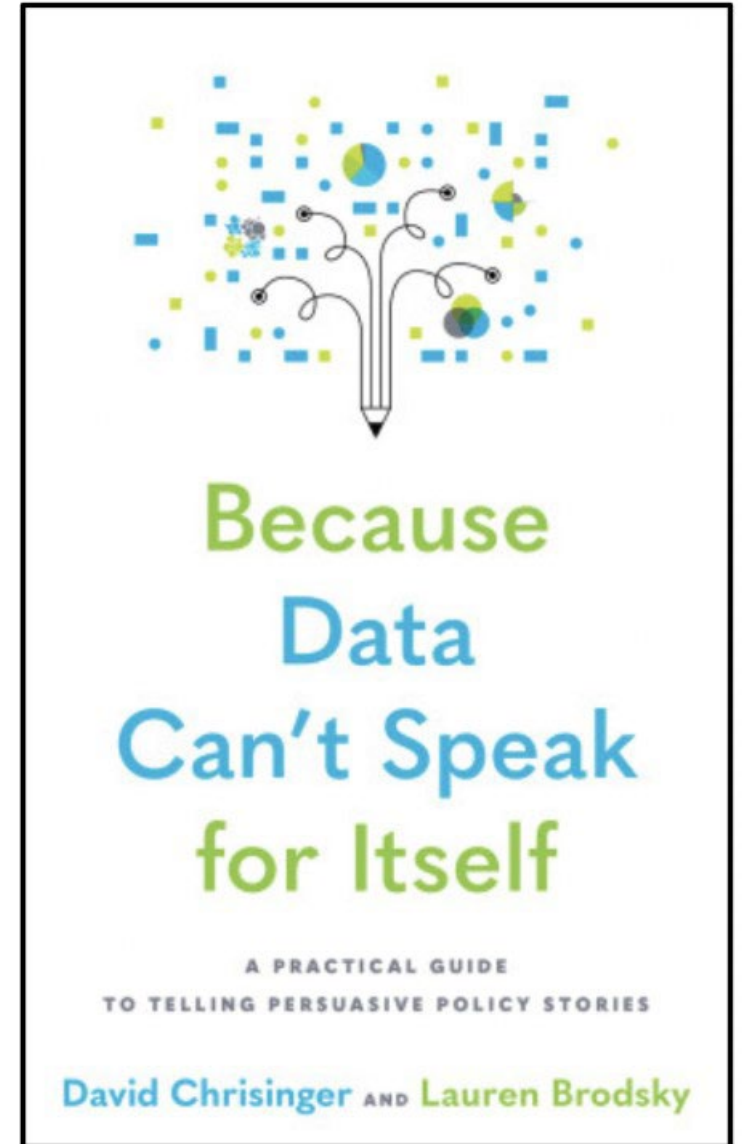


# Contextualize numbers briefly

In a story about water waste in Arizona, for example, we might want to point out that the State's annual groundwater overdraft (the amount taken out of the aquifers in excess of natural recharge) is about 2.5 million **acre-feet**.

*How big is an acre-foot?*

It is enough to fill 1.2 million Olympic sized swimming pools!





# Resources: hkscommprog.org

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How to write an executive summary:

[https://www.hks.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/Academic%20Dean's%20Office/communications\\_program/workshop-materials/How%20to%20Write%20an%20Exex%20Summ%20TO%20USE%204\\_18\\_18.pdf](https://www.hks.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/Academic%20Dean's%20Office/communications_program/workshop-materials/How%20to%20Write%20an%20Exex%20Summ%20TO%20USE%204_18_18.pdf)

UN Report:

[https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/writing/MDM\\_Part1\\_English.pdf](https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/writing/MDM_Part1_English.pdf)