

Example of a priority setting exercise for a policy brief

Five potential policy brief topics were identified after consultations with policymakers in the Ministry of Health and other key stakeholders. These topics were scored and discussed independently by four people; a decision was then taken to focus the policy brief on improving access to skilled attendance at delivery. The exercise demonstrated that it would have been more helpful to discuss the suggested topics with the policymakers first in order to clarify the problems and why they were a priority. Variations in the scores given, as shown in the table below, reflected uncertainty about the proposed topics and a lack of information, particularly related to the third criterion ("Is there an opportunity for change?").

The scoring ranged from:

1 = Lowest priority (i.e. not important) to 3 = Highest priority (i.e. very important).

Criterion	Access to family planning products	Access to post-abortion care	Deliveries without a skilled health worker	Poor quality newborn care	Access to contraceptives for adolescents
Is the problem (or goal) important?	3 3 3 3	3 1 2 2	3 3 3 3	3 2 3 1	3 3 2 2
Are viable options available that address the problem and/or strategies for implementing options that may have an important impact on the problem?	3 3 3 3	3 2 3 1	3 3 2 1	2 2 2 1	3 3 2 2
Is there an opportunity for change?	? 2 3 3	? 1 1 1	3 3 3 1	? 2 1 2	? 1 1 3
Is there important uncertainty about the problem and potential solutions?	2 3 2 3	2 3 3 2	3 3 3 1	1 2 2 3	3 3 3 2
Is relevant research evidence available?	2 3 3 3	1 2 2 3	3 3 2 2	2 2 1 3	1 2 3 3
Is there interest in informed deliberation about the problem and potential solutions?	? 3 3 3	? 2 2 1	3 3 3 2	3 1 2 2	? 2 2 1