AFRICAN COLLABORATIVE FOR HEALTH FINANCING SOLUTIONS

Process Documentation Approach for Universal Health Coverage in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Step-by-Step Practical Guide

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Abbreviations

ACS	African Collaborative for Health Financing Solutions
AM-ARCH	Assurance Maladie – Assurance pour le Renforcement du Capital Humain - Health Insurance – Insurance for Human Capital strengthening
PD	Process Documentation
UHC	Universal Health Coverage

Before Using This Guide

Who can use this guide?

This guide is designed for country stakeholders who are interested in implementing the process documentation (PD) approach for universal health coverage (UHC) or other processes in their own setting. These stakeholders may be policymakers, policy implementers, public and private health services providers, civil society organization actors, and academics/researchers, among others.

Why should I use this guide?

This guide aims to answer frequently asked questions about the PD approach. It provides an explanation of the PD concept and ***how to*** apply that approach.

How do I use this guide?

To use this guide, browse the table of contents and look for the question you have about PD. Questions in the table of contents are organized into three main sections:

1. ***What is important to know about PD and how to get started?***: This section explains the rationale for performing PD, the specific objectives of the methodology, and the structure of a PD team.
2. ***How do I record events and stakeholders?***: This section discusses the operational definitions of the key concepts of "event" and "stakeholder," among others. It also explains the main items to record for each event and stakeholder and where to collect the information.
3. ***How do I analyze PD records?***: This section addresses questions related to the general principles of analysis in PD and the different types of analysis.

One can also click on the map below to access directly the specific section you are interested in.

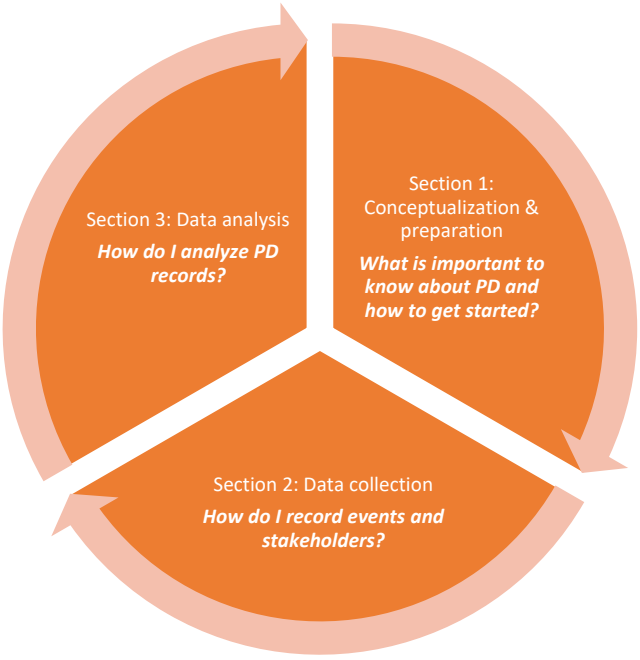

Figure 1: Overview of sections

Section 1: What is Important to Know About PD and How to Get Started?

What is PD for UHC processes?

PD is a prospective policy analysis approach that involves systematically documenting all relevant events and stakeholders that could potentially influence or be influenced by a given UHC process, analyzing them in real time, and using the lessons learned to adapt and improve the overall journey towards UHC.

Why is PD important for UHC processes in sub-Saharan African countries?

There are two main reasons to perform PD for UHC in sub-Saharan African countries. First, the journey toward UHC in sub-Saharan African countries is not just a technical process. It is also highly political and occurs in an open system[a] whereby unpredictable influences from various subsystems impact (and are impacted by) UHC processes. Addressing problems along the journey toward UHC is a complex process. Rigid protocols that do not consider this complexity have limited application or are counterproductive. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to problems; each potential solution has an uncertain outcome and limited guarantee of success. Agreement on what to do and how to do it is limited since stakeholders come to the table with various ideas, interests, networks, and institutional references.

Second, to address complex problems, one needs to adopt a learn-by-doing strategy whereby one collects information systematically about a process at a given period, analyzes the problem to draw lessons, incorporates the lessons into the process, and iterates these steps until achievement of the desired outcome. PD makes learning by doing possible in a systematic way.

What are the specific objectives of PD for UHC?

PD seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- Identify factors that influence the UHC process and understand how these influences shape policies.
- Understand country stakeholders' motivations and decisions to advance toward UHC.

What are the steps of PD?

The PD approach typically has four steps (see Figure 2): (1) preparation, (2) recording of events or stakeholders, (3) periodic desk analysis of a set of records, and (4) in-depth analysis of a set of records to answer a policy question.

[a] An open system is a system that regularly exchanges feedback with its external environment. The external environment includes a wide variety of needs and influences that can affect the system, which the system cannot directly control. Influences can be political, social, economic, etc. For example, health systems are open because there are influenced by many other systems, such as the political environment, economic context, social and cultural context, global context, etc.

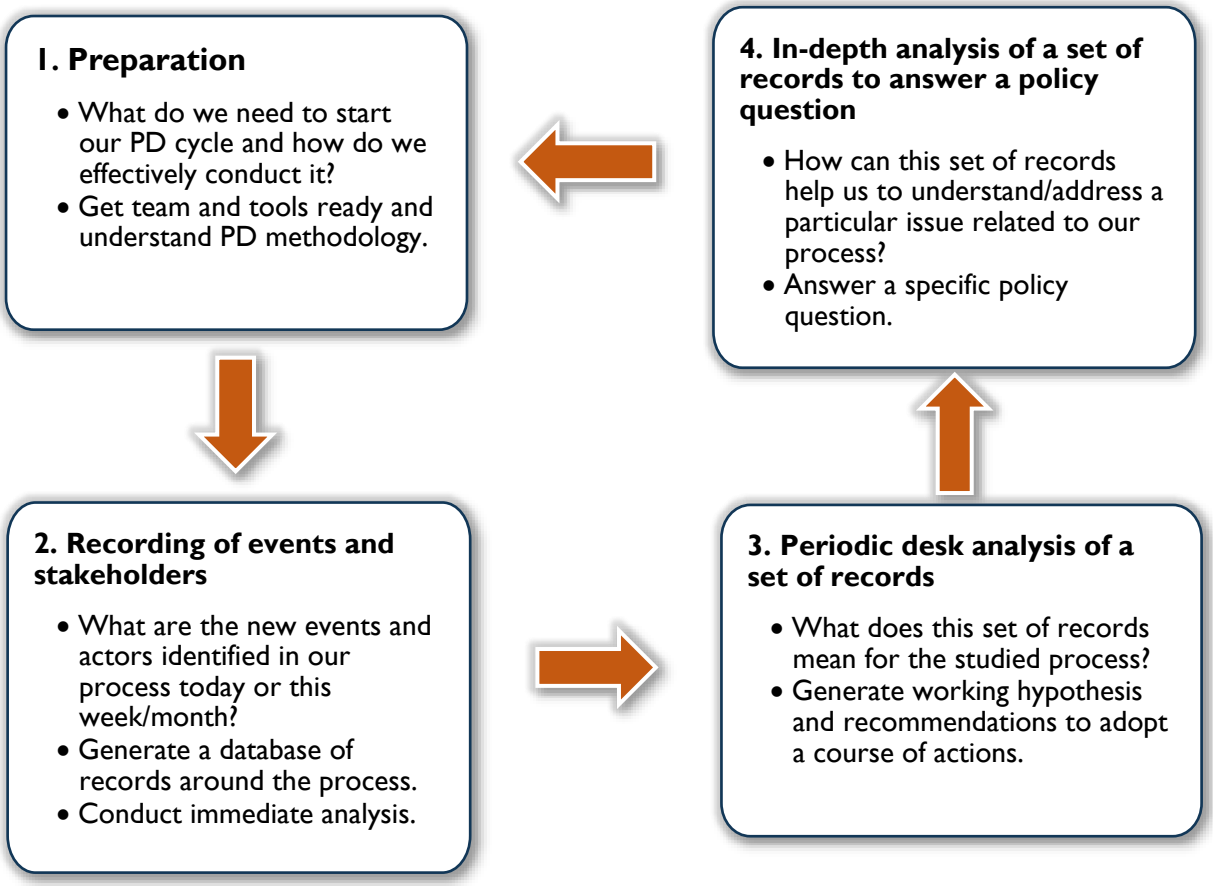

Figure 2: Steps of process documentation

Preparation

The first step of PD is to identify the specific process to be documented. A documentation team is then put in place and trained on the approach. The tools to be used are made ready and updated if needed. This step is crucial since it ensures that all that is needed to well conduct a PD cycle is in place and that all PD team members clearly understand the methodological approach.

Recording of events and stakeholders

This is a systematic, descriptive, and timely recording of the key features of events and stakeholders in a given process. This step makes it possible to have a database of records, which can be saved on an online platform. Furthermore, the first level of analysis (immediate analysis) occurs during this data collection. This first level of analysis allows good reflexivity at the individual level and a quick response when needed. It also prepares the PD team for the broader analysis of a set of events.

Periodic desk analysis of a set of records

The second level of analysis occurs during the periodic review of events and stakeholders that have been recorded by the PD team. This review aims to better understand the choices made by various actors throughout the process studied, to draw lessons, and to determine the adaptation needed to improve the process. The periodicity is defined by the team members according to the context (quarterly, for example).

In-depth analysis of a set of records to answer a policy question

In this step, the PD team choses a policy question based on its relevance to the country context. PD data are then used, alone or in combination with other data sources, to answer this question.

The analysis is a qualitative process with the following principles: continuity, iteration, and cumulation. It is greatly supported by the two previous levels of analysis.

Who are the PD actors?

PD actors include (1) the PD team, which is led by a team lead, (2) the PD coaches, and (3) the PD mentors. An organigram of these actors is represented in Figure 3.

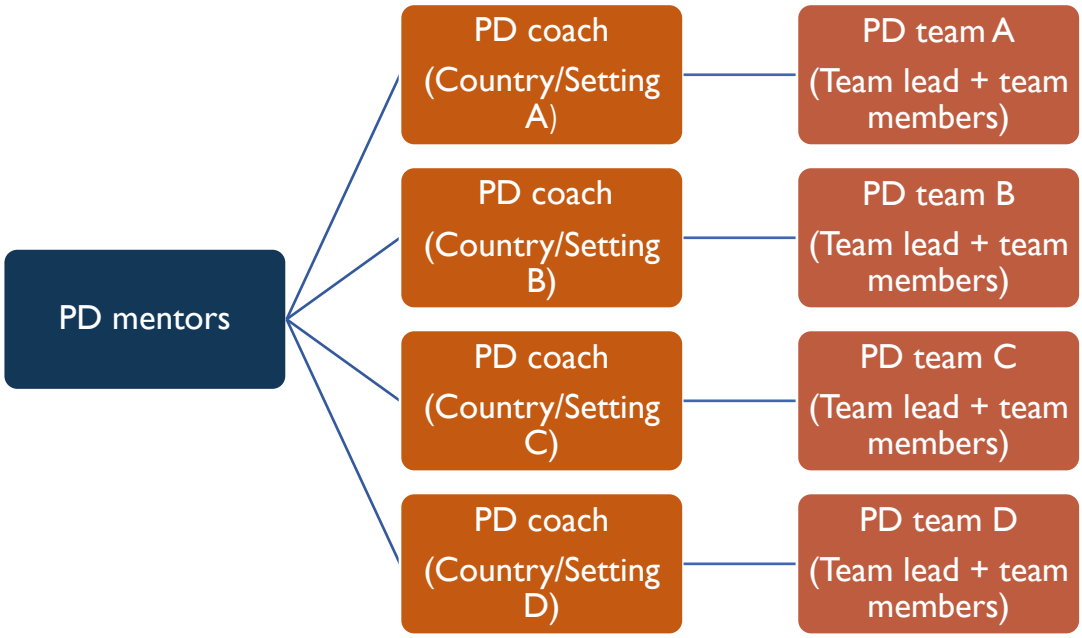

Figure 3: Organigram of PD actors

PD team

The PD team is responsible for implementing the PD approach in their given setting. They ensure data are collected and analyzed periodically. This team is made up of various members who are involved as documenters, analysts, and data quality insurers, among other roles.

The team is led by a **team lead** who is responsible for ensuring that PD is implemented in their setting. The team lead's responsibilities include:

- Organizing the implementation of PD in their setting.
- Ensuring key events and stakeholders are regularly recorded.
- Identifying relevant events and stakeholders for the documenters to record.
- Conducting periodic analysis of events and stakeholders.
- Providing quality checks on captured events and stakeholders (to ensure data are well recorded and valid).
- Organizing periodic learning review meetings.
- Contacting their team's PD coach in case of questions and concerns.

PD coach

The coach serves as the initial touchpoint for the PD team. Their responsibilities include:

- Supporting the PD team in their various tasks.
- Resolving questions and concerns raised by the PD team.
- Joining periodic learning review meetings.
- Determining when issues from country teams should be elevated to the appropriate PD mentor.

PD mentor

The mentor provides strategic support and guidance to the PD team. Their responsibilities include:

- Ensuring consistent application of the PD methodology across settings.
- Providing strategic guidance when questions and issues from country teams are elevated from the PD coaches to the mentors.
- Joining periodic learning review when necessary.

How does the country PD team work?

Under the responsibility of the team lead, the PD team checks key events weekly and record these events in the database. Over a given period, they organize a periodical review in order to analyze a set of records and to draw lessons which may help them to adapt their work and the studied process. The frequency of this PD review can vary; however, it is important to do it regularly in order to foster learning and adaptation. The experience of the African Collaborative for Health Financing Solutions (ACS) project indicates that it is useful to conduct a quarterly review with each country team to analyze documented events and stakeholders as well as discuss activity-specific results.

What is the role of external stakeholders in PD?

External individuals can support the PD team, especially in documenting second- and third-level events.[b] These external people might include staff from various government ministries; managers of UHC-related organizations, programs, and projects; journalists; researchers; and others. They can identify and describe the context of events that have a potential effect on the process being studied. External people can also support the PD team in immediate and periodic analyses of records.

How can I align stakeholders' documentation with ethical clearances in countries?

The data collected for a process include stakeholders' personal information. The following procedure aims to protect stakeholder-specific data in order to maintain trust and transparency. In the stakeholder recording form, an individual's name is not requested and is instead represented by a code. The PD team lead creates a separate file (anonymity file) that links the names, contact, and code (see Figure 4). This restricted file will be accessible only to the team lead. Moreover, stakeholders who are interviewed should provide informed consent before being interviewed.

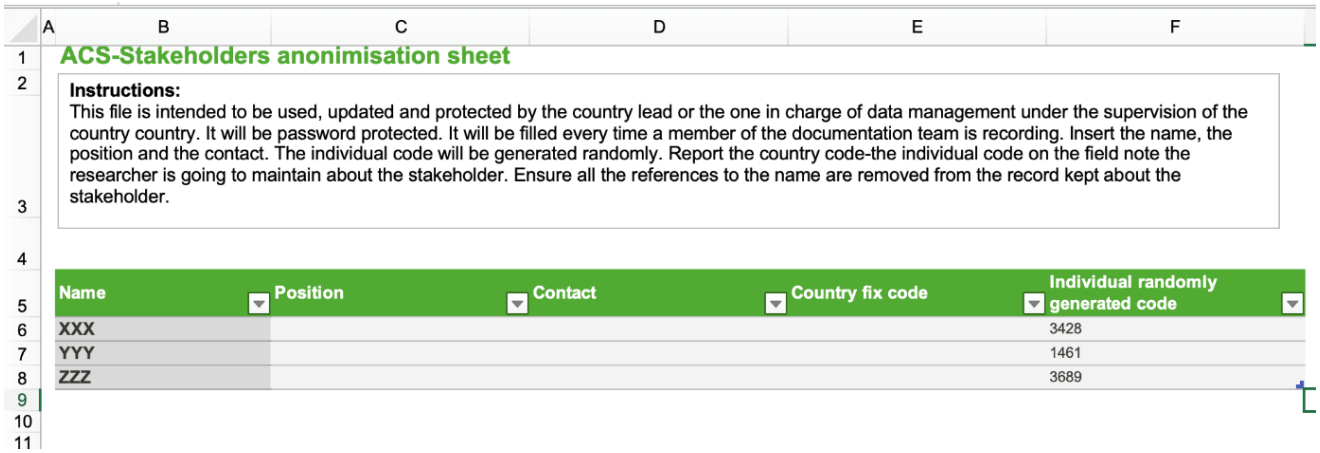

Figure 4: Stakeholders anonymization sheet template

[b] The various levels of events are described below, under Section 2.

What will happen to the data collected?

Data, with the exception of the anonymization stakeholder sheet, can be stored in a database that is under the legal responsibility of the PD team. Recorded data are analyzed and used exclusively to achieve the investigation objectives and not for any other purpose. PD mentors manage the database, as well as facilitate and regulate access to and use of the data.

Who can access the data collected?

Access rights to documented events and stakeholders are organized in Table 1 below. Access rights depend on the actors' profiles. Actors external to the PD team cannot have access to the database or the country anonymity file. They can have access only to anonymized reports and products.

Table 1: Organization of access rights to PD documents and files.

Profile	Access	Comments
PD mentors	PD files Anonymity file Discussions on events and stakeholders Anonymized reports and products	For follow-up and comparative desk analysis
PD coaches	PD files PD anonymity file—only on request Discussions on events and stakeholders Anonymized reports and products	
PD team lead	PD files PD anonymity file for maintenance and updates Discussions on events and stakeholders Anonymized reports and products	
PD team members	PD files Discussions on events and stakeholders on request, if necessary Anonymized reports and products	PD team members should not have access to the PD anonymity file
Others	Anonymized reports and products	

How can I easily access the data collection tools?

Events and stakeholder recording tools are online forms that can be accessed from any electronic device. A template of the country stakeholders form can be accessed here. As for the country events one, it can be accessed here. You may adapt these tools according to your own context. We recommend bookmarking these pages to make them more easily accessible in the future. To read more on how to bookmark a web link, click here.

If there are any challenges in accessing a link to the tools, the PD country team lead is expected to reach out to their PD coach for support (refer to Figure 3).

Section 2: How Do I Record Events and Stakeholders?

What is an "event?"

An event is an elementary unit of the process studied, about which a structured set of information can be collected to shed light on a step of the process of interest. Examples of events are meetings, decisions relating to the process being studied, changes in key actors intervening in the process studied, and contextual events such as presidential elections.

There are three levels of events:

- **First-level events** are directly linked to the process being studied, are a step in this process, or have a direct impact on the process. For example, if we consider the process of the implementation of the Benin national health insurance scheme (AM-ARCH), examples of first-level events include the launch of the pilot phase and the creation of a learning agenda for this pilot phase with the support of the ACS project. First-level events are evident and straightforward. The documentation team should track all of these events.

- **Second-level events** are not directly linked to the process being studied but have or can have a direct impact on the process. Second-level events are less straightforward but can be determined if one adopts a systemic approach in the observation and analysis of the process studied. In the AM-ARCH example, an example of a second-level event is the COVID-19 epidemic. Although this event does not belong directly to the health insurance project, it has a potential impact on the implementation of this insurance scheme (e.g., inclusion of a COVID-19 test or vaccine in the health insurance benefit package). Documenting this second-level event might reveal how investing in health insurance or the health system is a global security issue or strategic investment; thus, it can increase resources allocated to the health system in general and eventually to AM-ARCH.

- **Third-level events** are contextual events[c] that do not have a direct effect on the studied process but may have an impact on, or may elicit underlying determinants of, the decisions made or the results of the process studied. Third-level events are difficult to circumscribe, and the data collector may need support to document these events. An example of a third-level event is the terrorist attack that happened in northern Benin in February 2020. This did not have a direct impact on the health sector itself; however, this event influenced the country in general and could have led to certain restrictions due to insecurity undermining the AM-ARCH implementation. Since all sectors are interlinked, it is important to record third-level events to document and understand how eventually they might lead to other events that have a direct link to the process being studied/documented.

[c] Contextual events are systematic events—political, economic, social, or cultural, and both national and international—that may have an effect on a policy or process.

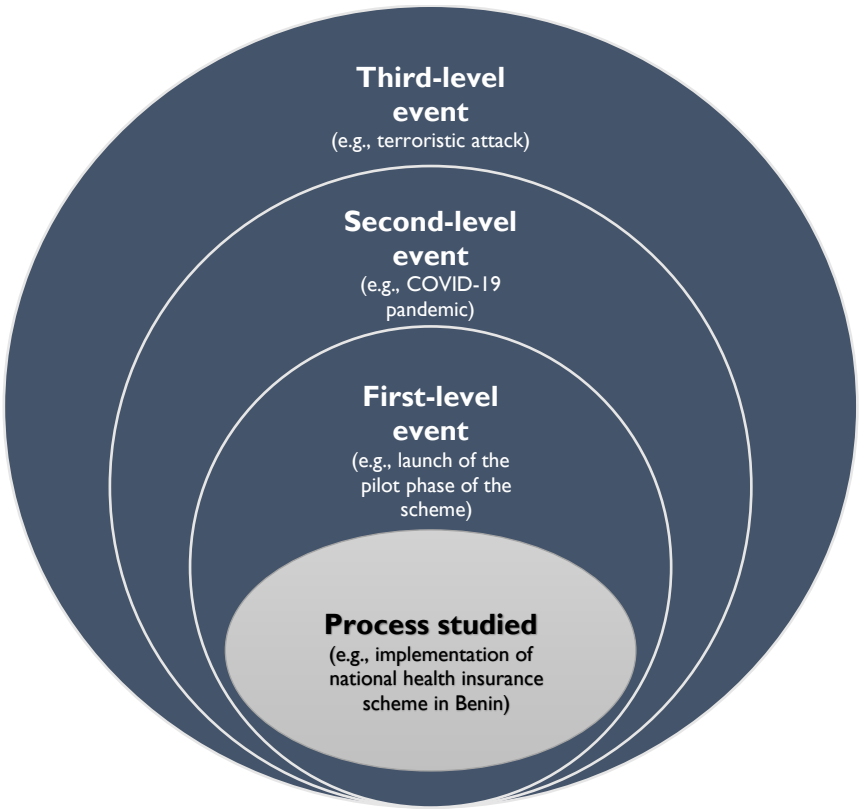

Figure 5: Representation of the various levels of events.

How can I record an event?

Events can be recorded using the specific event recording form. A template of this form, as used during the ACS project is accessible here (or copy and paste the following link in an internet browser https://forms.gle/4KjMK9XZnWnFa97bA). The country events log guides the recording of each event related to the process using a systematic and consistent structure that captures the key dimensions of an event. Below are short descriptions of the dimensions requested in the log and tips on completing them.

- **Short name of the event**: The name of the event should be concise and clearly reflect the action, decision, problem, or other aspect being reported.
- **Description of the event's context**: Describe the general context in which the recorded event occurs, which can help to better understand the event. If relevant, the data collector will also link this event to previous events that were recorded.
- **Description of the content of the event**: Describe the event, including key facts and key decisions, if any.
- **Description of the event's different steps or processes**: Describe the key steps that led to the event. This tab is important in order to elicit the procedures and/or the situational factors that can lead to such events.
- **Description of the roles of the different actors/group of actors that have a stake in the event**: Describe each actor and/or group of actors who played (or should play) a role in the event and their role (or potential role).
- **Descriptive memos**: Report any observations made or any information that can help to better understand the event. The documenter describes here how they heard about this event, the methodology used to learn more about this event (for example, the people or documents consulted), and the challenges they encountered when collecting or recording details about the event.
- **Analytical memos**: This entry allows the documenter to provide a basic analysis of the event. The documenter will critically formulate how the recorded event links with other

events and what they personally feel this event means. Following are possible analysis questions that should be considered: (1) Why is this event important? (2) What does this event mean for the process being studied? (3) How can it impact the process being studied? (4) What links can this event have with other events?

- **Lessons learned**: Describe the key lesson(s) learned from the event. A lesson is defined here as *an insight gained by a learner on a previously unfamiliar subject matter*. From these lessons learned, the data collector can also share how the process can/should be adapted.
- **Comments**: Any other comments from the data collector can be reported in this section.

What does "stakeholder" mean in this context?

A stakeholder is a person or an organization that impacts or is impacted by the process of interest. This process can be a country's long, complex movement toward UHC or a time-bound process of developing and implementing a specific policy. Stakes can be material (e.g., finances, equipment, infrastructure) or immaterial (e.g., position, power, influence, motivation) in the short, medium, or long term.

How do I record stakeholders?

Stakeholders can be recorded using a specific stakeholder recording form. A template of this tool, as used in the ACS project can be accessed here (or copy and paste the following link in an internet browser https://forms.gle/SMdJEtkobMnQPt577). The country stakeholders form guides the recording of each stakeholder concerned with the process using a systematic and consistent structure that captures the key dimensions that matter about a stakeholder. Most of the data entry sections in the form have descriptions that provide detailed suggestions of the kind of information to fill in. The form is subdivided into four sections. In the first section, the documenter is requested to provide some general information (basic information on the recorder, the code of the stakeholder, and if the stakeholder is an individual or an organization). The documenter should refer to the team lead to obtain the code that corresponds to this stakeholder.

How do I track repeat stakeholders? Can the stakeholder recording form describe "unique" stakeholders so that I do not double-count people across events?

To avoid double-counting stakeholders, the PD team should discuss internally with the team lead before starting to record a stakeholder. By keeping a unique codebook of stakeholders, the PD team lead ensures team members do not double report. Furthermore, the team lead will check for possible duplication before each periodical analysis in order to combine/delete repeated recorded stakeholders.

How can I access the information required to document events and stakeholders?

Various data collection techniques can be used, including document review, formal and informal interviews, participant and nonparticipant observations, and formal and informal group discussions. For document review, data sources include national health policy and plans, country UHC policy documents, and other national policy documents with a potential impact on UHC (e.g., national development plans), as well as relevant documents and resources, such as project documentation (e.g., work plans and reports, workshop reports, administrative reports from governmental and implementation entities, press clippings). One can conduct interviews and focus group discussions with key informants among the stakeholders involved in the process under study. Meetings, workshops, conferences, seminars, training, and other convenings that happen during the process studied are used as information source.

How can I update an event that has been reported previously?

One can update a previously recorded event or stakeholder (e.g., mistakes were made during the recording) by sending an email or message to their coach. The coach will access the database (the spreadsheet) and add the update. If the update concerns further development of the event, it is recommended to record it as a new event by linking it with the previous event under the point ***"Description of the context of the event."***

Section 3: How Do I Analyze PD Records?

What are the principles of records analysis?

PD analysis is performed through a qualitative process that has the following principles:

- ***Flexibility and adaptation:*** The analysis does not follow a rigid approach. One may adapt the data collection and analysis based on preliminary or previous results.[1]
- ***Iteration:*** This is the cyclic repetition of data collection and analysis with each round informed by previous results and emerging questions.
- ***Cumulation:*** This refers to acquiring as much information as possible until new data do not provide additional information. This principle is also called saturation.
- ***Triangulation:*** This refers to the use of a variety of information sources and analytical perspectives to ensure rigorous analysis and increase the validity of results.[2]
- ***Reflexivity:*** This refers to acknowledging the influence of the analyst's identity on the findings and interpretation due to their experiences, assumptions, and beliefs.[3]

Which conceptual framework guides the analysis of records?

The overall process to achieve UHC in various countries can be considered as policy development. Therefore, documentation of this process can be underpinned by a prospective policy analysis that "*seeks to understand the unfolding political-economy environment of policy change so as to support stakeholders to more effectively engage in policy processes*."[4] The PD methodology is built upon Walt and Gilson's policy triangle framework,[5] which has been used to structure data collection. The policy triangle framework considers not only the content of a policy but also the actors, the context, and the process. This framework is "*grounded in a political economy perspective, and considers how all four of these elements interact to shape policy-making*."[6] We chose this framework because of this clear political economy perspective that has "*influenced health policy research in a diverse array of countries, and has been used to analyze a large number of health issues*."[6]

What are the different steps of analysis in PD?

There are three types of analysis in the PD approach:

- Immediate analysis is performed during the recording of an event or stakeholder.
- Desk analysis of a set of records is performed periodically (quarterly in the ACS project).
- In-depth analysis is performed based on a specific policy question.

Immediate analysis of an individual event/stakeholder record

This subsection presents the process of immediate analysis of both events and stakeholders recorded.

What is the immediate analysis of records? Why is it important?

Immediate analysis is the first step in analyzing records, which occurs during data collection when completing the "analytical memo" and "lesson learned" tabs in the country events log or the "descriptive or analytical comment" tab in the country stakeholders' form.

Immediate analysis allows for good self-reflection at the individual level and a quick response when needed. Through this analysis, the documenter generates their own interpretation of the event or stakeholder, including the way that this event or stakeholder is relevant to, or may impact, the whole process being studied. This single analysis may lead to a specific or urgent action (e.g., notifying a policymaker of an event's unintended effect or proposing an appropriate way to interact with a particular stakeholder whose influence has been underestimated). It is crucial that the analyst considers their own position when analyzing the recorded events.

Furthermore, immediate analysis prepares the records and team for the broader analysis— the periodic desk analysis (see the next section).

How do I perform an event immediate analysis?

As described above, the immediate analysis of events is documented under the ***"analytical memo"*** and ***"lesson learned"*** tabs.

Analytical memo: In this part, the documenter is expected to share their own analysis of the recorded event. They should interpret the process that led to this event and identify potential causes and implications in the short, medium, or long term. It is also here that the documenter can share hypotheses about the links between this event and other events already recorded and how this event will impact the country's progress toward UHC. In short, this part will generate overall insight into the impact of this unique event on the whole process.

Lesson learned: This tab helps to document the key lessons that have been learned from the event and its analysis. Its objective is to suggest changes at the individual or institutional level in order to improve the process being studied.

How do I perform a stakeholder immediate analysis?

The documenter can conduct immediate analysis through the ***"descriptive or analytical comment"*** tab during the recording of a stakeholder. The documenter should provide their own opinion or interpretations about this stakeholder. Through the descriptive summary and interpretation of the stakeholder's position, interest, and influence, the documenter should gain understanding of the stakeholder's impact on the studied process.

Periodic desk analysis of records

What are the characteristics of desk analysis?

Desk analysis of records is performed on a periodic basis. For example, in the ACS project, it is done quarterly. It aims to answer the question: "What does this set of records (events or stakeholders) mean for the studied process?" It tries to create better understanding of various actors' choices throughout the process studied, to draw lessons, and to determine the adaptations needed to improve the process. Thus, it helps to generate a hypothesis of how this set of records could help with understanding the process or how it may influence the outcome of the whole process. The ultimate goal is to draw out recommendations about needed adaptations to the process.

Periodic desk analysis can be descriptive and/or explanatory. These types of analysis will be outlined below.

Is there any standardized way to analyze a set of records?

ACS developed templates for periodic analysis of events and stakeholders records. These templates provide PD teams with a generic framework to direct them in their analysis. Each template is made up of the following parts: context, methodology, descriptive analysis, explicative analysis, limits of the analysis, and conclusions.

In practice, periodic desk analysis occurs in five classical steps:

1. Ensuring the completeness and accuracy of the data recorded.
2. Performing a descriptive analysis of the data.
3. Performing an explanatory analysis of the results.

4. Identifying lessons learned from analysis of the data collected during the period. Lessons learned are experiences or knowledge gained through the various events. They can inform future decisions, actions, or similar processes.
5. Identifying possible adaptations for future actions of the PD team or the actors in the process studied.

How are data curated prior to the desk analysis?

Data curation is the process of detecting and correcting (or removing) errors in records stored in databases. Database records can have several types of errors, such as typing errors, missing information, or inaccuracies. The improper part of the processed data can be replaced, modified, or deleted.[7] Data curation also helps to identify and remove duplicated event or stakeholder records. The cleaning process is performed by the PD team under supervision of the PD team lead.

What is descriptive analysis and how can I perform it?

Descriptive analysis helps to show, or summarize data points in a constructive way such that patterns might emerge that bring out key information on events and stakeholders from the recorded data.[8] The first part of the analysis focuses on three key questions:

1. What was the timeline of the process?

This consists of identifying events that are most relevant to the process being studied over the specific period, as well as the major decisions made. These events and decisions are classified according to their date of occurrence and summarized through a table or a graphic representation. Figures 6 and 7 are examples of how this summary can be represented.

Start date	Short name of the event	End date

Figure 6: Tabular representation of the timeline.

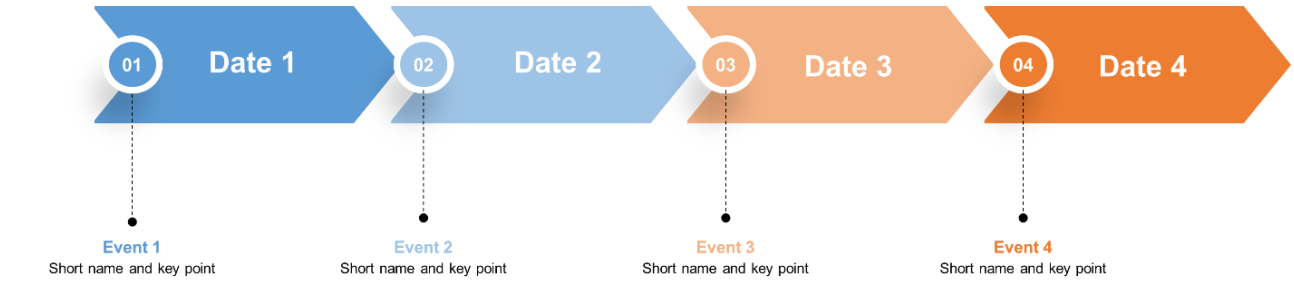

Figure 7: Graphical representation of the timeline.

2. What contextual factors may have interfered with the studied process?

The answer to this question fosters understanding of the contextual factors that have been identified as potentially influential on the process. These can be political, economic, sociocultural, or other factors.

3. Who are the stakeholders involved in the process?

Here, the identified stakeholders are classified according to their roles, positions, interests, and influences on the process studied. This can also be summarized through a table or a graphic representation, as shown in Figures 8 and 9.

Stakeholders	Influence on the process (low, moderate, high)	Interest (low, moderate, high)	Position (in favor, neutral, against)	Impact of the stakeholder on the process (positive, negative)	Interaction with the stakeholder (engaged, consulted, informed, ignored, avoided)

Figure 8: Tabular representation of stakeholder analysis

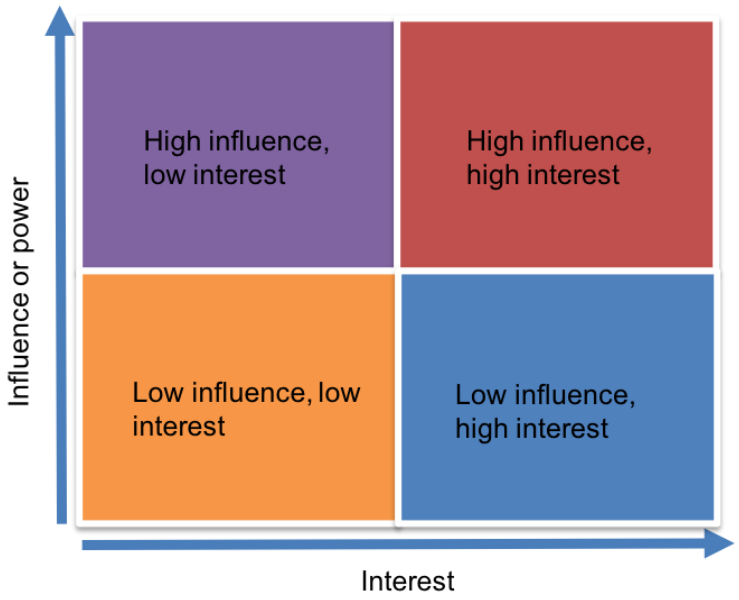

Figure 9: Graphical representation of stakeholder analysis

What does explanatory analysis mean and how do I perform it?

Explanatory analysis is the step in which the data surfaced during the descriptive analysis are interpreted and put into the context of the whole process. It helps to understand the "how" and "why" behind event and stakeholder records, decisions made, and their (expected) results. In practice, it consists of:

- Identifying links between events, between stakeholders, between events and stakeholders, as well as between events, stakeholders, and the context.
- Identifying the successes and challenges of the process over the studied period, and drawing hypotheses of factors that could explain them, as well as their (potential) consequences.

This process will lead to identification of key lessons that could be gleaned through the analysis. It also will lead to the formulation of potential adaptations needed for the process.

In-depth analysis based on a research question

What is in-depth analysis?

This type of analysis is done on demand when a specific policy or research question emerges. This question may emerge from the routine desk analysis or directly from actors (e.g., policymakers, implementers, researchers).

How do I perform in-depth analysis?

The in-depth analysis approach follows classical qualitative research methodology. It starts by identifying a relevant research question. It then builds a hypothesis (or hypotheses) that is a potential answer to the research question and tests it using the PD database as well as other primary or secondary data sources. Therefore, it goes beyond the data collected through the PD approach; other sources may include complementary documents, literature reviews, interviews, and focus group discussions, among others.

What resources are available to know more about qualitative research and stakeholder analysis methodology?

To learn more about qualitative research methodology, we suggest consulting resources such as:

- Gill et al.'s 2008 article titled "Methods of data collection in qualitative research: interviews and focus groups" in the *British Dental Journal*.[9]
- Moser and Korstjens' 2018 articles titled "Series: practical guidance to qualitative research" in the *European Journal of General Practice*.[10–13]
- Kielmann et al.'s 2011 publication titled *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methodology: A Training Manual*.[14]
- Coursera's course on qualitative methods, which may be found at https://www.coursera.org/learn/qualitative-methods.

To learn more about stakeholder analysis, please consult:

- Schmeer's *Guidelines for Conducting a Stakeholder Analysis*.[15]
- Schmeer's *Stakeholder Analysis Guidelines*.[16]

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