

University of Groningen

## Stakeholder Analysis

Wittek, Rafael

*Published in:*  
Humanitarian Crises, Intervention and Security

*DOI:*  
[10.4324/9780203381533-21](https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203381533-21)

**IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.**

*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Publication date:*  
2014

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Wittek, R. (2014). Stakeholder Analysis: Towards Feasible Interventions. In L. Heyse, A. Zwitter, R. Wittek, & J. Herman (Eds.), *Humanitarian Crises, Intervention and Security: A Framework for Evidence-Based Programming* (pp. 149-170). (Routledge Studies in Intervention and Statebuilding). Routledge, Taylor and Francis group. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203381533-21>

### Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

### Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

*Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.*

# 12 Stakeholder analysis

## Towards feasible interventions

*Rafael Wittek*

### Introduction

In the previous chapter, we discussed a method to arrive at suitable intervention options. Before one can initiate a project, one more step is necessary: assessing which suitable interventions are also feasible given the stakeholder field. This chapter presents a tool for choosing feasible interventions from a set of suitable options.

Humanitarian interventions are usually carried out by humanitarian organizations. In order to successfully carry out their mission, these organizations depend on many other stakeholders. This can be other aid organizations, local governments, companies, political parties or any other influential player at home or in the area of intervention. Some of these players may turn out to be crucial allies in getting a project implemented, whereas others may effectively impede it. As a result, a mission's success crucially depends on the organization's ability to deal with relevant other stakeholders. This chapter introduces a tool that helps humanitarian organizations to do this.

Stakeholder analyses are frequently used in the humanitarian sector (e.g. DFID 1993, 1995, ODI 1999, Schmeer 1999, 2000). They are often required for funding applications, and there are many different ways to conduct them, with some frameworks focusing mainly on the identification of stakeholders and their interests and others proposing more complex analytical steps related to the interdependence between stakeholders. Stakeholder analysis is also a field of scholarly investigation, particularly in the areas of collective decision-making and the study of negotiation processes (e.g. Brugha and Varvasosvzky 2000, Bryson 2004, Mitchell *et al.* 1997, Savage *et al.* 1991, Stokman *et al.* 2013).

During missions, a stakeholder analysis becomes particularly useful in situations of competing stakes or disagreement between two or more actors, or when a collective decision has to be arrived at. A stakeholder analysis is usually carried out on behalf of a specific stakeholder, like a humanitarian organization. It can serve a variety of different purposes. First and foremost, it can help a stakeholder in achieving her policy goals. Second, it can help a particular stakeholder to systematically disentangle the different issues at stake regarding suitable interventions identified previously. Third, it helps to identify the players

who have a stake in the issues involved, and to get insight into the relative effectiveness of different strategies to realize preferred decision outcomes. And last but not least, it is also well suited in situations where decision-making involves organizational security issues.

Stakeholder analyses help to answer questions like: What are the key issues and bottlenecks of an intervention? Who are the key stakeholders involved? How powerful are these stakeholders? What are their preferred outcomes on an issue? How important is a specific issue to particular stakeholders? Which stakeholders are potential ‘allies’ who would be willing to support your own organization in realizing your suitable intervention? These insights can then be used to craft influence and bargaining strategies that help the stakeholder to be more effective in realizing his or her preferred policy outcomes – i.e. to move from a suitable to a feasible intervention.

A stakeholder analysis can be seen as an analytical tool for the reduction of social complexity. Though it results in a highly stylized representation of social reality, this tool and its visualization opportunities have nevertheless proven to be an extremely powerful aide for those who want to get a structured overview over the stakeholder field. For didactic purposes, it is useful to disentangle the tool into eight cumulative steps: issue definition, stakeholder identification, stakeholder description, definition of outcome continuum, stability analysis, stakeholder classification, description of negotiation landscape, relationship analysis. These steps will further structure this chapter, but before presenting them, we discuss the importance of expert information in stakeholder analysis. The section thereafter will briefly introduce a hypothetical example case. In the eight subsequent sections, this case will be used to illustrate each of the eight steps in a stakeholder analysis. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the scope conditions and limitations of the tool.

### **The importance of expert information**

Carrying out a good stakeholder analysis requires the collection of reliable information on the preferences and constraints of all stakeholders. Often, this type of information cannot be gathered from each stakeholder directly, since the party conducting the stakeholder analysis may be in competition with one or more of the involved stakeholders. Therefore, stakeholder analyses usually rely on ‘experts’ to provide estimates of how specific stakeholders view the different issues. Who is an expert depends on the specific situation. It is a knowledgeable individual who has sufficient background information about one or more stakeholders, their context and the problematic issues at stake. Often, such experts are available in one’s own organization. But also local actors (journalists, members of NGOs, researchers) usually have considerable insight into the situation. Much useful information on some stakeholders’ positions may also be gained from scanning the public media on relevant statements.

Some of this information, but also information provided by experts, might be contradictory, and resolving these contradictions is a major precondition for all

subsequent steps in the analysis (see also Chapter 4). Contradictions may have many reasons. For example, informants may have a stake in some of the issues themselves, and may therefore either deliberately or unintendedly misrepresent some information. Likewise, not all informants will be equally well informed about all stakeholders' position, salience and power on all relevant issues. The person or team carrying out the analysis should invest some effort into resolving these inconsistencies before proceeding with the analysis. Since quantification of estimates is an important element of a stakeholder analysis, some effort should be put into how to systematically elicit information from expert(s) during an interview session (see below).

### **Hypothetical case**

After having conducted a comprehensive context analysis, a large Christian Humanitarian Healthcare NGO (CHH) has identified an emergency situation in a remote rural area in Africa. The NGO is already present in this country, but not in this particular area. Members of the NGO's country management team have identified health to be a severe problem in this remote area, based on several indicators as outlined in the chapter on the health context. The health problems are partly due to the fact that the communities in this area are hosting refugees from a neighboring region that is suffering from violence of a rebel group. Many have fled into this remote area and relocated to small villages, where the receiving communities welcomed them warmly. However, this influx of refugees has led to an increasing demand for food, which is not readily available. At the same time ongoing drought threatens agricultural production. Malnutrition is on the rise and is likely to increase further. Due to the fact that now many people live closely together, water and sanitation is also becoming a problem and related diseases are spreading.

By conducting an *ex ante* evaluation of potential suitable ways to address the health problems in the area, the organization has identified the following set of suitable health interventions. First, it seems necessary to support the few local health centers and clinics in order to deal with the increase in numbers of patients due to the refugee influx. These centers and clinics need extension of services and staff in order to help those who fled from violence and got injured (i.e. offer surgery facilities), next to those who suffer from malnutrition (i.e. offer therapeutic feeding facilities) and diseases related to decreasing hygiene and sanitation (i.e. diarrhea). Second, a water and sanitation instruction program seems necessary to inform the local population about the risks of living so closely together in terms of water and hygiene, and how to avoid associated diseases. Third, next to health centers and clinics, mobile health teams should be composed that can travel to patients who cannot travel to a clinic in the most remote areas in the region.

CHH has also detected through its context analysis that the host government has so far not allowed any international aid organization to enter the area and to provide aid. One local NGO is operational in the area, and is of the same

denomination as the government (which CHH is not) but is lacking the resources and expertise to tackle the situation. The government seems to see it as a sign of their own weakness if it would allow international actors to enter the area. However, the government clearly does not have the resources to extend the health services in the region. CHH believes that all three activities – as outlined above – are necessary in order to effectively address the deteriorating health situation in this area. In order to find out whether there are any openings to initiate these three activities simultaneously, the country management team carries out a stakeholder analysis.

A stakeholder analysis consists of eight major steps, most of which can be carried out consecutively (the following description of each step draws on and expands the short but highly useful practitioner oriented article by Allas and Georgiades 2001). (For a more in-depth discussion of the scientific background behind the whole approach, see the work of Stokman *et al.* 2013.) The first two steps – issue definition and stakeholder identification – are of course strongly intertwined, since issues arise due to (conflicting) interests between different stakeholders, and the definition of issue requires some background knowledge concerning which stakeholders are involved. At the same time, when identifying stakeholders, it is important to keep in mind which issues are relevant: though there may be a large number of potential stakeholders involved in a complex emergency, only a small subset of them might be relevant for a specific decision situation. Hence, the first two steps may best be conducted simultaneously.

## **Step 1: issue definition**

### *Main elements*

Any stakeholder analysis stands and falls with the quality of the first step: the identification and definition of relevant issues. An issue is relevant for a stakeholder analysis if it is controversial. That is, at least two parties diverge with regard to the decision outcomes they prefer concerning this issue. In relation to intervention design, which is the main focus in this chapter, an issue represents a set of suitable intervention options as identified by an aid organization, of which one knows that controversy exists with other parties, such as local authorities, rebel groups, village communities or fellow agencies.

Issues can also be related to controversies internal to an aid organization. A simple example for such an issue could be a conflict within the project management team of a mission about the percentage of the budget for a mission that should be allocated to a specific activity. This could be reflected in, for example, the number of staff that should be sent out to a mission. Some members of the decision-making body may prefer not to be involved in the mission at all and opt for sending out nobody (preferred decision outcome: ‘zero’). Other members may favor full involvement of their organization, and opt for sending out the maximal number of staff (say 20). Finally, a third faction may be in favor of involvement, but prefer a more cautious allocation (say, ten staff).

Issues are defined correctly if they meet at least two conditions. First, all possible decision outcomes regarding it can be specified as concrete decision alternatives. In the example above, the range of possible decision outcomes is defined by the two possible extremes: a maximum number of staff that can be sent out, and no staff. In theory, any number (0–20) along the continuum between these two extremes represents a possible outcome.

Second, all decision alternatives can be ordered on a one-dimensional scale. In the example, the number of staff defines this dimension, but any other meaningful dimension is possible. For example, the allocation decision in the above example could be discussed in terms of percentages of the total budget, or in terms of maximal amounts of euro of a total budget. Other issues might involve outcomes like the amount of time (e.g. days) to be spent in a location. But it is also possible to scale issues containing ‘non-numerical’ outcome alternatives. For example, an issue relating to the degree of collaboration between two NGOs may contain the following qualitative option on the outcome continuum: no collaboration; partial sharing of transport facilities; full sharing of transport facilities. In such cases, one would still allocate numerical values to these options (e.g. 1, 50, 100, respectively).

It is important to keep in mind that the numerical representations are supposed to reflect the relative strengths between the different outcome alternatives. Hence, what counts is not only the fact that an outcome alternative is higher or lower on the scale, but also how close an alternative is to another one (see the issue specification below for an example). Note further that to facilitate analyses, it is useful to normalize the outcome continuum of all issues to a scale ranging from one to 100, with ‘100’ representing the most extreme position taken by a stakeholder, and ‘one’ the lowest position taken by a stakeholder. This normalization step is presented in detail in step 3.

Often, what seems to be one single issue (e.g. set up a water and sanitation installation in a remote area) with a binary outcome space (yes vs no) in fact hides a multidimensional set of more complex issues. Since their conflict potential may vary, carefully disentangling such sub-issues often is a fundamental first step towards successful negotiations. In the water and sanitation example, sub-issues might be the location of the watsan (water and sanitation) installations and the type of watsan installations. For example, a local population might be used to a certain type of latrine, but these are not very resilient to storm or earthquakes. An aid organization may therefore prefer a more resilient installation, while at the same time it has to be sure that these facilities will also be used.

For a stakeholder analysis to be effective, it is also essential that all relevant issues are covered. Which issue is relevant and which one is not usually emerges during the issue definition phase. Usually, in order to unravel all relevant issues and the related outcome alternatives, it is necessary to also first identify the involved stakeholders. Hence, the first two steps (issue definition and stakeholder identification) in a stakeholder analysis are usually closely intertwined.

**Case illustration**

The country management team in our fictitious case decides to carry out a stakeholder analysis. To do so, the team first carries out some informal discussions with people in the NGO's professional network: direct colleagues working in a project in a neighboring region, government representatives and representatives of other NGOs in the capital. Based on these discussions, the team realizes that the desire to initiate the three health related activities simultaneously in fact touches upon at least the following four core issues that need to be taken into consideration if CHH would decide to enter into any lobbying and negotiation efforts with relevant stakeholders:

*Size of the remote unit ('size')*

Currently, the plan is to supply the remote area with 70 humanitarian workers, including physicians, para-medics, and support staff, of which ten locally hired. Consequently, two possible outcomes on this issue are zero staff in the case of failure to get access and '70' in the case full access is achieved. But it may also be possible that one or more of the involved stakeholders actually may prefer that even more staff is allowed to work in this region, for example to double its size.

*Type of services ('services')*

The health NGO ideally would like to initiate a range of medical services, as outlined above. For the moment, the country management team considers the support to health centers and clinics (on site services) as most relevant, compared to the mobile health teams that visit remote households. The outcome continuum could be specified as follows: (1) 'no services', (50) 'on-site only', (100) 'on-site and household visits'. Note that in this case, on-site visits and household visits are considered as part of one dimension of increasing 'intensity of services', because the NGO would not be able to carry out household visits without having a site in the remote area. Hence, household visits require the existence of a site, and would constitute an additional service. Note further that the distance between each pair of outcomes is chosen to be the same (50 points). This implies that the NGO considers the extra investment or effort that is necessary to add household visits to on-site services as equally strong as setting up and maintaining a new on-site facility. Of course it would be possible to adjust these figures if the estimates regarding the relative investments change. For example, if adding household visits would be perceived as requiring comparatively less investments once a site has been established, the analyst could opt for allocating the value '75' to the outcome on-site only. As a result, the distance between this outcome and the outcome on-site and household visits (100) would decrease to 25 points, whereas the distance from no services (1) to on-site only (75) would increase to 75 points, reflecting the fact that the relative investment for setting up a site is higher than the additional effort needed to add household visits to the set of services.

*Degree of collaboration with other NGOs ('collaboration')*

Since CHH is not used to working with local partners, it does not have any formal collaborative arrangements with the one local NGO in the area. Yet the government might prefer more cooperation with the other NGO operational in the area in order to reduce the visibility of the fact that the government cannot cope and needs international assistance. Also, the government might see cooperation as a way of controlling the international NGO, which amongst others, is of a different denomination than the government and the local NGO. Cooperation can of course take many forms. In this particular area, one option to cooperate with the local NGO would be to jointly implement the watsan hygiene instruction campaign. Given the budget constraints and other tasks with higher priority of both missions, setting up an effective campaign is only possible if part of a joint effort. The normalized outcome continuum here ranges from '1' in case no investments are made ('0\$') and the campaign is not realized, to 100 (i.e. the sum of the budgets that are maximally available in both missions, let's assume 100,000\$).

*Duration of the health program ('timing')*

It could be that the length of the project activities might matter for some stakeholders. Possibly the government would agree with a short-term emergency intervention (one month) or a medium-term intervention (six to nine months), whereas the Christian NGO and maybe also other stakeholders believe an 18 month intervention is needed to fully address the problems. Hence, the non-normalized outcome continuum for this issue spans any period between one and 18 months.

**Step 2: stakeholder identification***Main elements*

Along with the definition of the issues, the relevant stakeholders need to be identified. These are players who might influence decisions or their outcomes on the issues. Examples for stakeholders in humanitarian crises are (local) governments, local NGOs, other humanitarian organizations, representative bodies of the local population, but also other groups with power or influence (e.g. rebels). Note that since organizations often consist of several subunits with decision-making power and resources, a stakeholder analysis may require disentangling these units as different stakeholders (e.g. departments). Deciding whether to disentangle the units as own stakeholders is a matter of feasibility (the higher the number of stakeholders, the more complex the stakeholder analysis). The easiest way to reduce the number of stakeholders to be considered in a stakeholder analysis is to look at their goals and their decision-making procedures. If all goals and decision-making procedures converge, then the respective stakeholders can be 'merged' into a single one (e.g. all ministries could in some cases be represented as one stakeholder – the government). If all goals converge but

decision-making procedures do not (e.g. the UN does encompass the UNDP, but the UNDP has its own independent governing board of state representatives), then we advise against merging them into a single stakeholder.

### ***Case illustration***

Based on the informal explorations, the country management team identifies the following five key stakeholders:

- A The mission of the health NGO CHH ('Mission'), represented by the country management team, located in the capital of the country.
- B Churches in the area, which are of the same denomination as the NGO and represented by a coordinating council representing them ('Churches').
- C Government of the host country ('Government'). Located in the capital, close to the offices of the mission/country management team.
- D The local NGO operational in the area ('Competitor'). This is also an NGO working in the medical sector, and providing limited but similar services. This local NGO is of another denomination than the international NGO.
- E An association of village heads ('Villages'). This association represents the interests of all villages in the area of operation.

## **Step 3: stakeholder description**

### ***Main elements***

After the stakeholders have been identified, four crucial characteristics of each stakeholder need to be determined: position, salience, power and effective power. We refer to this operation as the stakeholder description step. It consists of allocating numerical estimates for each stakeholder's position, salience, power and effective power for each issue. The estimates are derived from discussions with the experts.

First, a *position* denotes the stakeholder's preferred outcome on a specific issue. This position needs to be quantified using the outcome space that defines the possible decision alternatives for this issue. For example, stakeholder A's position on the issue 'budget for mission X' may be 50,000 euro, whereas stakeholder B's position may be 100,000 euro and stakeholder C's position may be '0'.

Second, it is necessary to estimate the *salience* of a stakeholder's position with regard to a specific outcome on a specific issue. The key question here is: how important is the issue to the stakeholder, compared to all other issues and compared to all other stakeholders? For example, would the stakeholder be willing to lose all other issues in order to realize his or her preferred outcome on this issue? A stakeholder's estimated salience is expressed on a scale from zero to 100. A salience of '100' means that the issue represents the most important issue for the stakeholder. A salience of '50' means that it is one of several issues

that the stakeholder considers to be important, but is not the most important one. A salience of '0' implies that the stakeholder has no interest in this issue. The salience values reflect the relative importance of an issue – compared to all other issues in the analysis – to the stakeholder. This implies that in stakeholder analyses involving more than one issue, a single stakeholder will attribute maximum salience to only one issue.

Third, the *power* of a stakeholder with regard to a specific issue needs to be assessed by asking: compared to other players, how much power the stakeholder has to affect the decision on this issue? Again, an estimate can range from '100' for the stakeholder with the greatest power on an issue to '0' for the stakeholder with least power. Since this is a relative rating, there can only be one stakeholder who is allocated maximum power on a specific issue. The degree of a stakeholder's power can be based on formal decision-making power, material power (money, facilities, other resources) or immaterial influence (e.g. expertise or ability to mobilize public opinion). For example, in organizations, a workers' council may have the formal right to give advice in some decisions, but might need to give its consent in other decisions, like reorganizations. At the same time, workers' councils may have much informal power to enforce some outcomes, e.g. through influencing the opinions of employees. An extreme form of power is coercion based on (physical) violence.

Fourth, based on a stakeholder's salience and power, it is now possible to calculate a stakeholder's *effective power* as a product of both salience and power (divided by 100 for the resulting variable to stay in the range of 1–100). The reasoning behind this multiplication is that if stakeholder A has no interest in an issue, he or she is also indifferent about the possible outcome on this issue. Consequently, such a stakeholder is unlikely to invest much effort into realizing this outcome.

### *Case illustration*

With the help of the experts in her network, the country management team carries out the stakeholder description step. For each of the five stakeholders, she determines, per issue, their position, salience, power and effective power. For the purposes of this example, we limit the description to the first issue, the size of the unit (see Tables 12.1 and 12.2).

## **Step 4: outcome continuum**

### *Main elements*

With the first three steps carried out, it is now possible to summarize the data in matrix form and enter it into a spreadsheet (see Table 12.2). For each issue, the rows contain all stakeholders, and the columns contain each stakeholder's position, salience and effective power (salience times power) for this issue. This data enables calculation of a theoretical compromise position for each issue, i.e. a hypothetical outcome that could come about by a simple vote without negotiation. There are of

Table 12.1 Stakeholder description for issue 1: 'size of remote unit'

	<i>Position</i>	<i>Salience</i>	<i>Power</i>
Mission	Prefers to go ahead as planned with 70 staff or even more. Considers a 10% decrease in size as the critical threshold to ensure quality of the services and guarantee safety (70).	Compared to the other 3 issues, this one is the most important one for Mission, because any substantial reduction in size would threaten the success of the NGO's project plans (100).	Mission reports to Headquarters, and has to respect the laws of the host Government. Nevertheless, the services are vital to the region, and Mission has built up good informal relations with low level Government officials, the Churches and Village Heads (40).
Churches	Would on the one hand welcome an NGO of the same denomination to operate next to the local NGO of the other denomination, but also are aware that too much support might lead to troubling relationships with the Government. Considers a 20% decrease in size as acceptable (46).	The Churches are of the same denomination as Mission, but belong to the more conservative groups therein, whereas the NGO is known for its quite progressive methods regarding abortion, HIV/AIDS and therefore are reluctant to attach too much of a priority to this issue (50).	The Churches have good relationships and access to their members, who predominantly live in the most remote areas in this region. They can influence to what degree their members will be open to the services of the international NGO (60).
Government	The dominant faction of the ruling party prefers complete closure of the remote site for ideological reasons (0).	Realizes the important role the NGO plays for medical care in the region. Since it also anticipates resistance from Village Heads, this issue has not highest priority (60).	Can forcefully evict the NGO if necessary, and is therefore clearly the most powerful player (100).
Competitor	Since it is a local NGO of the same denomination as the Government, it has good connections to the Government. Would prefer to be the sole NGO in the area, but also benefits from CHH's presence, e.g. in logistics. Would therefore prefer a much smaller CHH unit (35).	Since it also to some degree benefits from CHH's presence, this NGO has no strong interest in CHH leaving (20).	Having entered the country later, informal relations to government are less well-developed, so informal power still is limited (20).
Villages	Health care in the region has significantly decreased since the refugee influx. They therefore prefer an expansion of the services by means of this international NGO, eventually to double its current capacity (140).	Collaboration with CHH and the related health improvements can significantly strengthen the position of the Village Heads in the population. Hence, this issue is relatively important to them (80).	Village Heads are subject to the national legislation, but given their strong moral influence on the population, they have considerable informal power (60).

Table 12.2 Summary of each stakeholder's position, salience, power for issue 1 ('size')

	<i>Position</i>	<i>Salience</i>	<i>Power</i>	<i>Effective power</i>	<i>Distance*</i>
Mission	55	100	40	40	22
Churches	46	50	60	30	13
Government	1	60	100	60	32
Competitor	33	20	20	4	0
Villages	100	80	60	48	67

## Notes

Values have been normalized (and rounded up to the whole number). The following example illustrates how to conduct this normalization, using the values for stakeholder 'position' on issue 1 as they are given in Table 12.1. Here, the numbers represent the preferred size of the remote unit in terms of staff (Mission: 70, Churches: 56, Government: 0; Competitor: 35; Villages 140). The following steps normalize the scale (which now ranges from a minimum of '0' to a maximum of '140' staff) to a scale from 0 to 100:

- 1 Determine the lowest value and label it 'A', and determine the highest value and label it 'B'.
- 2 For any value N between A and B in the original scale, calculate  $X = (N - A) / (B - A)$ .
- 3 The normalized result is  $Z = 100 * X + 1 * (1 - X) = 90 * X + 10$ .

For example: the normalized value for 'Mission' (preferred staff size: 70), is calculated as follows:

- 1  $A = 0, B = 140$ .
- 2  $X = (70 - 0) / (140 - 0) = 70 / 140 = 0.5$ .
- 3  $Z = 90 * 0.5 + 10 = 55$ .

\* Distance = the absolute distance between a stakeholder's preferred position and the theoretical compromise position (see Step 4: outcome continuum).

course many different ways to determine a theoretical compromise. A good start may be to take the *weighted average* by summing up all stakeholders' positions, multiplied by their salience, divide it by the number of stakeholders and standardize the outcome value by dividing the result by 100. Once this is repeated for each issue, it may be useful to draw a graphical representation of the resulting outcome continuum for each issue by denoting the positions, the stakeholders representing each position and the compromise position. This graphical representation gives a useful first visual overview per issue.

### Case illustration

Based on the data, the country management team calculates the theoretical compromise position. For the issue 'size', this yields 33.04. In detail, the calculation leading to this value looks as follows: ((Mission's position \* Mission's salience =  $55 * 100 = 5,500$ ) + (Churches' position \* Churches' salience =  $46 * 50 = 2,300$ ) + (Government's position \* Government's salience =  $1 * 60 = 60$ ) + (Competitor's position \* Competitor's salience =  $33 * 20 = 660$ ) + (Villages' position \* Villages' salience =  $100 * 80 = 8,000$ )) =  $16,520 / 5 = 3,304 / 100 = 33.04$ .

Figure 12.1 gives a graphical representation of the outcome continuum with the compromise position. As can be seen, the theoretical compromise position happens to be identical with the position of the local NGO, i.e. the competitor. The other stakeholder who is relatively close to this outcome (13 points) is the association of

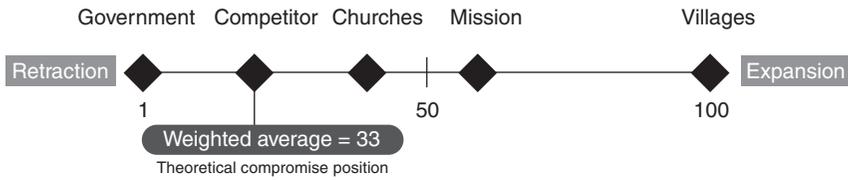


Figure 12.1 Graphical representation of the outcome continuum for issue 1 ‘size’.

Churches. However, this outcome is pretty far from Mission’s position (22 points), and even farther from the position of the village heads (67 points).

### Step 5: stability analysis

#### *Main elements*

The next step assesses to what degree the theoretical compromise would indeed represent a feasible – stable – outcome. This is done by analyzing how far from the theoretical compromise each stakeholder’s preferred outcome on an issue is located and how much effective power these stakeholders have to actually block or support the theoretical compromise. The higher the number of stakeholders whose position has a high distance from the theoretical compromise position and the more effective power stakeholders have, the less likely it is that the latter represents a stable outcome, and the more likely it is that the stakeholders will engage in bargaining.

The visual tool for a stability analysis is a two-dimensional space per issue, in which the horizontal axis maps the product of salience and power of each stakeholder, and the vertical axis represents the absolute distance of each stakeholder’s original position on this issue from the theoretical compromise position. The resulting two-dimensional space helps to classify stakeholders into four distinct categories, depending on which of the four cells they occupy:

- 1 Quadrant I (high distance from compromise, low effective power): these ‘unhappy’ stakeholders do not have enough effective power to influence the outcome.
- 2 Quadrant II (high distance from compromise, high effective power): these are stakeholders who are likely to challenge the outcome. They are powerful and have a strong interest in the issue.
- 3 Quadrant III (low distance from compromise, high effective power): these stakeholders have the incentive and the power to support the compromise outcome.
- 4 Quadrant IV (low distance from compromise, low effective power): these stakeholders either do not care enough or do not have enough power to exert active influence.

It is important to carefully choose the cut-off point on both dimensions. Though straightforward, simply dividing both dimensions at the 50 percent between the theoretical maximum and minimum of the scale (i.e. between zero and 100) may not always be the best option. This holds in particular for situations in which the distance between the stakeholder with the highest score and the stakeholder with the lowest score is relatively small, but where these small differences in position may still represent significant potential for disagreement or conflict. In such cases, choosing a 50 percent cut-off value on the absolute scale would cause most stakeholders to cluster into the same cell, though their positions would in fact conflict. To solve this problem, the analyst can choose a cut-off point in between the highest and lowest *realized* values. For example, if '80' represents the stakeholder with the highest position on an issue, and '50' represents the stakeholder with the lowest position on this issue, the cut-off value could be chosen half way between the two. This can be done by taking the absolute difference between the two values, divide it by two and add it to the lowest value. In our example this would yield 65 percent as the cut-off value ( $80 - 50 = 30/2 = 15 + 50 = 65$ ).

### *Case illustration*

The country management team draws the stability landscape by inserting each stakeholder on the respective coordinates for effective power (x-axis) and distance (y-axis). As cut-off points she chooses the 50 percent between the lowest and the highest score on each of these dimensions. For effective power, the highest value is 60 (for Government) and the lowest is 4 (for Competitor), see Table 12.2. This yields a cut-off point of  $(60 - 4)/2 = 28 + 4 = 32$ . For distance from compromise, we saw in step 4 that the theoretical compromise position is at 33.04. The stakeholder furthest away from the compromise is the government with 67 points. The stakeholder with the position closest to the theoretical compromise is the Competitor (33). Hence, the Competitor's distance from compromise is 0.4 points. The cut-off point is then  $(67 - 0.4)/2 = 33.3 + 0.4 = 33.7$ .

The graph (see Figure 12.2) immediately shows that Mission and Government fall in quadrant III, which means that they are likely to support the compromise outcome. Whereas they do not differ much in terms of their distance from the compromise outcome, there are considerable differences in effective power. For Mission this means that there might actually be room for a compromise with Government. However, the stability analysis also shows that the outcome is likely to be challenged by the stakeholder in quadrant II: the Villages. The graph shows that the Villages have both the interest and the power to affect negotiations on this issue. Finally, the Competitor and the Churches occupy quadrant IV: these stakeholders are close to the theoretical compromise position, but they have neither the incentive nor the power to affect the negotiations with regard to this issue. This implies that they have comparatively little influence over this issue. Note that the Competitor and the Churches, though both in this quadrant,

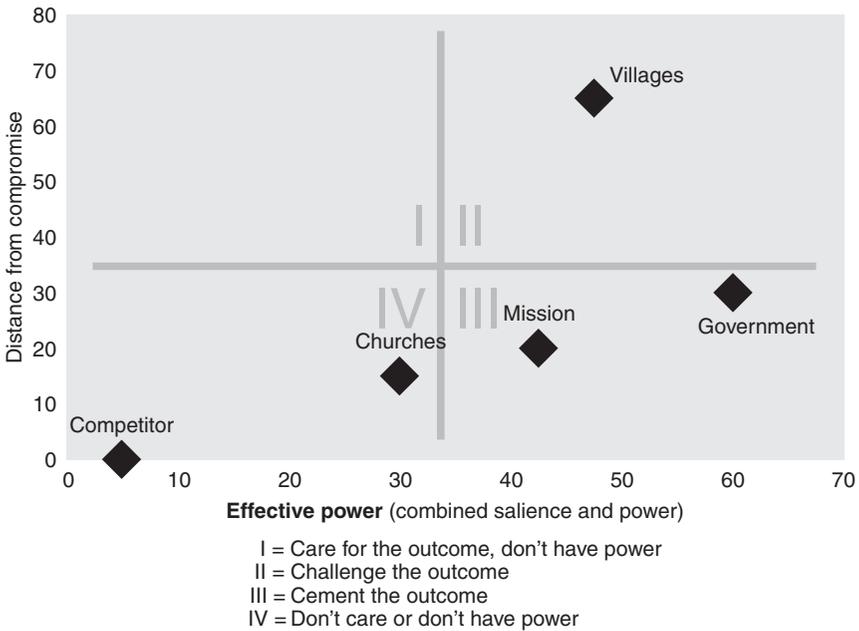


Figure 12.2 Stability analysis for issue 1 'size'.

differ considerably in effective power: the Churches are actually relatively similar to the Mission both in terms of distance from the theoretical compromise and effective power. Hence, Mission may eventually consider approaching the Churches for support at some stage in the negotiations. The position of the Churches in this figure also demonstrates that the classifications of stakeholders in such a figure should be interpreted with great care. In particular those stakeholders occupying a position close to the cut-off points deserve some closer scrutiny. The analyst should keep in mind that the classification is just an aid to support interpretation.

## Step 6: stakeholder classification

### *Main elements*

The major objective of the stakeholder classification step is to determine, for all stakeholders and across all issues, which stakeholders are allies, enemies or in-betweens for the focal stakeholder. A stakeholder is an ally (enemy) if the preferred position is close to (far from) the focal stakeholder's position. In order to classify a stakeholder into one of these three roles, it is necessary to define a cut-off criterion for the maximum distance within which a stakeholder still would 'qualify' as an

ally. One possible procedure could be to first determine the distance to the most distant stakeholder, and then divide this figure by three in order to derive who is among the allies, enemies and in-betweens. Stakeholders falling in the first 33 percent would then be classified as allies, those in the second 33 percent would be in-betweens and those in the last 33 percent would qualify as enemies.

The resulting stakeholder classification provides two types of useful information. First, it shows the degree of likely support (or resistance) that the focal stakeholder may expect from each other stakeholder. For example, a stakeholder may be classified as an ally on all issues or only on some. Second, the stakeholder classification shows which issues are likely to be difficult or easy to realize. For example, the focal stakeholder may have no enemies on some issues, but many enemies on others.

### Case illustration

The country management team now fills in the stakeholder classification table (see Table 12.3), using the position values from the stakeholder description step. For the first issue, it is evident that the Village Heads, though deviating from Mission's position in that they would prefer a larger unit, actually are allies, because Mission would not be against expanding the size of the unit. So Mission takes its own preferred position (55 on the normalized scale, as elaborated in Table 12.2) as the starting point for classifying the remaining stakeholders into enemies, in-betweens and allies. The category of enemies covers the first 33.33 per cent of the scale and therefore ranges from 0 to  $(33.33 * 55/100) = 18.3$ . There is one stakeholder in this range of the scale: the Government who has a position of 1 (see Table 12.2). The 'in-between' category ranges from 18.4 to  $(2 * 18.3) = 36.6$  on the scale (i.e. the second 33.33 per cent). It contains one other stakeholder: the Competitor who has a position of 33 (see Table 12.2). And two stakeholders fall into the category of allies, covering the final 33.33 per cent of the scale (from 36.7 upwards): the Churches and Village Heads. The country management team repeats this operation for the remaining three issues (not elaborated in this example). The resulting picture table already allows some preliminary conclusions (see Table 12.3).

Table 12.3 Stakeholder classification (from Mission's perspective)

	Issue 1 size	Issue 2 services	Issue 3 collaboration	Issue 4 timing
Headquarters				
Churches				
Government				
Competitor				
Villages				

Note

White=enemy; grey=in-between; black=ally.

First, analyzing the columns, it shows that there is no single issue on which Mission does not have at least one enemy. But it also shows that there might be some room to maneuver: there is at least one ally on each issue, and three issues have also at least one in-between.

Second, analyzing the rows, the table shows that there is no stakeholder who would qualify as an ally across all issues – the Churches who are opposed to Mission’s position on issue 3. Collaborating with the local NGO of the other denomination will not be supported by them. However, the table also demonstrates that the Government, who is the main enemy for the first two issues, actually is an ally for issue 3 and an in-between for issue 4. The strongest allies are the Village Heads, who share Mission’s position for three issues, and are an in-between for one issue (issue 3). This stakeholder classification shows that none of the outcomes desired by Mission will be easy to realize.

## Step 7: negotiation landscape

### *Main elements*

The stakeholder classification is used as an input for the seventh step, in which the negotiation landscapes are mapped. The purpose of this step is to find out, for each issue separately, which negotiation strategy the focal stakeholder should use vis-à-vis each other stakeholder. Again, two dimensions are used to define the landscape. The horizontal axis represents power – the power of each stakeholder (see Table 12.2). The vertical axis represents salience (see Table 12.2) – the importance each stakeholder attaches to the issue under investigation. Based on the stakeholder classification carried out in the previous step, stakeholders are marked with a symbol or color identifying them either as an ally (black), an in-between (gray) or an enemy (white). All stakeholders – including the focal one – are then placed in this landscape, using their respective coordinates.

As during the stability analysis, also the negotiation landscape can be subdivided into four cells, for example by using a 50 percent cut-off value for both power and salience (for how to determine cut-off values, see the explanation in the section on Step 5: stability analysis):

- 1 Quadrant I (low power, high salience): these stakeholders have a strong interest in the issue, but lack the power and influence to have a strong impact on the negotiations concerning the issue. Allies falling into this quadrant are potential followers, and the focal stakeholder may want to bring them into the *coalition* if this can be achieved with comparatively little effort.
- 2 Quadrant II (high power, high salience): stakeholders falling into this category are labeled *shapers* because they are the ones who have both the interest and the power to have an impact on the negotiation. If there are

allies in this quadrant, attempting to develop a joint strategy with these allies may be a fruitful tactic for the focal stakeholder.

- 3 Quadrant III (high power, low salience): these stakeholders are potential *influencers*, because they have power, but they attach too little importance to the issue in order to translate their strong position into effective power. If there are allies in this quadrant, the focal stakeholder could gain some leverage by lobbying to increase their salience and support for this issue.
- 4 Quadrant IV (low power, low salience): since stakeholders in this quadrant are relatively powerless and disinterested with regard to the issue, not investing energy or ignoring these *bystanders* is the best option for the stakeholder. However, it should be noted that these stakeholders might nevertheless be very powerful and highly interested in one of the remaining issues. Hence, in order to determine which negotiation strategy should be used it is necessary to determine how a stakeholder relates to the focal stakeholder across all issues. This is done in the final step, the so-called relationship analysis.

### *Case illustration*

The country management team now draws the negotiation landscape for each issue. Using the coordinates for power (x-axis) and salience (y-axis) as they were determined during the stakeholder description step, all stakeholders are placed on the landscape. To identify allies, in-betweens and enemies, the symbols and colors from the stakeholder classification step are used to denote each stakeholder. Again, the country management team determines the cut-off values by taking the midpoint between the highest and the lowest value in each of the two dimensions. Figure 12.3 shows the result for the first issue. Three stakeholders fall into the second quadrant, and two of them are allies (Churches and Village Heads). These ‘shapers’ have a high salience and comparatively much power. Developing a joint strategy with these two stakeholders therefore appears a viable option. The third stakeholder in this quadrant is the host Government. It has high power and the issue is relatively salient, but at the lower end of the quadrant. The graph further reveals that Mission itself is comparatively powerless with regard to this issue, though salience is high. She needs other stakeholders to support her. Occupying the fourth quadrant, the Competitor is a bystander who might be ignored. However, since the Competitor is an in-between and has low salience for this issue, Mission might consider to influence the Competitor in such a way that he attaches higher priority to this issue, and provide arguments that would lead the Competitor to endorse Mission’s position. In case this succeeds, the Competitor would become a follower (quadrant I), who might add some extra weight to the coalition with the Village Heads and Churches.

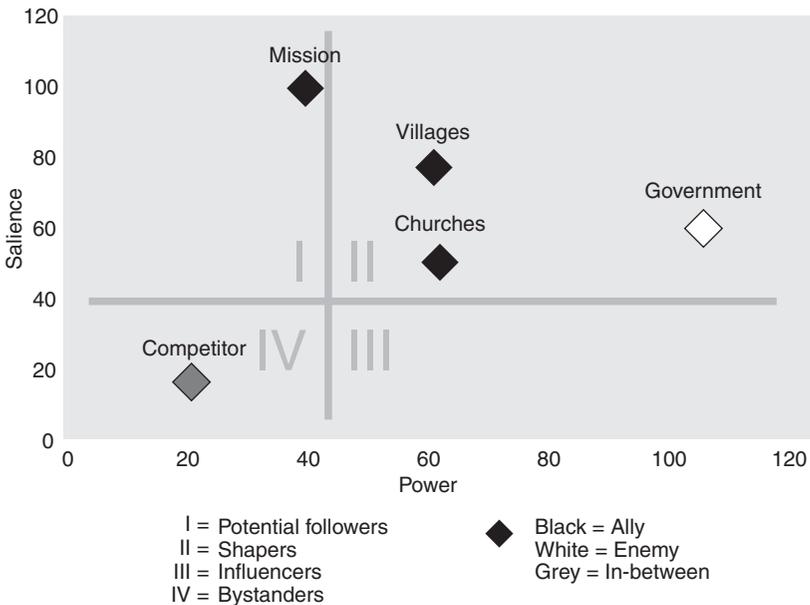


Figure 12.3 Negotiation landscape for issue 1 'size'.

## Step 8: relationship analysis

### Main elements

The objective of this step is to detect, for each stakeholder separately, potential bargaining opportunities, in which the focal stakeholder may exchange support for some issues of low importance to her for the other stakeholders' support on issues that do have a high salience for her. Again, a two-dimensional map is used to visualize this step. The horizontal axis represents the salience of the focal stakeholder; the vertical axis maps the salience of the specific stakeholder. Using the outcomes of the stakeholder classification step, symbols or colors are used to indicate whether the stakeholder is an ally, an in-between or an enemy with regard to each issue. Subsequently, each of the issues that are part of the stakeholder analysis are placed on their respective coordinates in one of the four quadrants:

- 1 High salience focal stakeholder, high salience other stakeholder: issues in this quadrant for which the other stakeholder has been classified as an enemy are potential *deal breakers*. Both have a strong interest in this issue, but their preferred outcome positions are relatively distant. Three negotiation strategies may be useful in this case (Allas and Georgiades 2001: 92): bargaining, lobbying and disaggregating (see also Bazerman and Neale 1994, for a more in-depth discussion of negotiation strategies). Bargaining

implies exchanging support for this or another issue for the other stakeholder's support on this or another issue. Lobbying implies attempts to lower the other stakeholder's salience concerning this issue, for example through interpersonal influence attempts. Disaggregating means to find possible sub-domains for an issue: an opponent may be willing to make concessions on some of these sub-issues.

- 2 High salience focal stakeholder, low salience other stakeholder: issues in this quadrant can be *easy wins*, since the other stakeholder will invest comparatively little energy into their realization.
- 3 Low salience focal stakeholder, high salience other stakeholder: these issues are potential *bargaining chips* if the other stakeholder is an enemy. Since the other stakeholder has a much stronger interest in this issue, the focal stakeholder can offer to support her on this issue, in exchange for support on another issue.
- 4 Low salience focal stakeholder, low salience other stakeholder: these issues are of relatively low importance to both stakeholders and can therefore be ignored in the negotiation with this stakeholder.

### Case illustration

In four separate graphs, the country management team maps Mission's salience against each other stakeholder's salience across all four issues. Colors or symbols mark whether the stakeholder is an enemy (white), an in-between (gray)

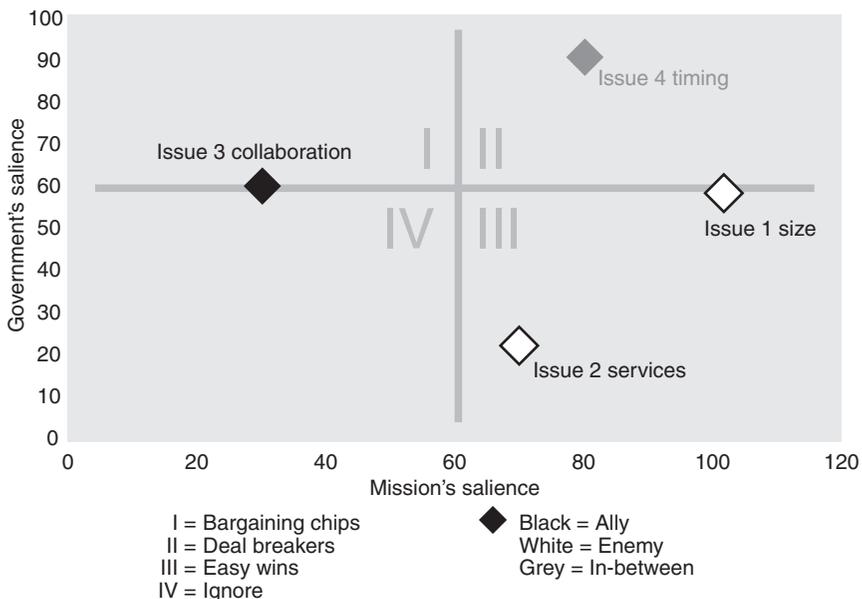


Figure 12.4 Relationship analysis for stakeholder 'government'.

or an ally (black) for a specific issue. Again, she divides the map into four quadrants for easier interpretation, using half of the distance between the lowest (20) and the highest (100) salience of both stakeholders as the cut-off value (i.e. 60). Figure 12.4 illustrates this map for the host Government. The map reveals the following.

First, since there is at least one issue in Quadrant I on which Government is an ‘ally’, Mission has at least one potential ‘bargaining chip’ that she might use in return for concessions on another issue: while Government attaches much value to Mission collaborating with the other NGO, Mission herself is relatively indifferent towards this issue.

Second, there are two issues in the second quadrant, which represents the difficult cases: size and timing. However, it also becomes evident that Government attaches much more importance to the ‘timing’ issue than to the ‘size’ issue. In addition, according to the stakeholder classification, Government is not an outright enemy on the timing issue but an in-between. Although initially against any outside interference, the Government now seems to be open to consider a short- or medium-term mission, but is not willing to allow a long-term mission.

Third, Government is an ‘enemy’ on the only issue in the third quadrant, ‘services’. This issue is relatively important to Mission, but less so for the Government. The best thing to do for Mission is to keep this issue from the negotiation agenda as long as possible, and concentrate instead on the remaining three issues. More specifically, the map indicates that Mission most likely has to accept that serving the remote areas with mobile teams is not possible, but there seems to be considerable leverage with regard to when this has to be realized. Mission might opt for a bargaining strategy in which it offers to enter collaboration with the other NGO in return for an extended duration of its activities. This would meet the demands of the dominant coalition in Government – who does not want permanent or long-term presence of an international NGO due to ideological reasons – without them losing face, and it would allow the mission to carry on its work for a substantial period of time. Since the ‘type of services’ is relatively less important to Mission than is ‘size’, she may eventually also consider to only offer part of the identified suitable health activities with some of the services that the government approves of (e.g. on-site medical treatment in clinics and health centers) and not propose to conduct household visits, because the government fears losing or lacking control when these teams travel around.

As far as the ‘size’ issue is concerned, since both parties attach relatively much importance to it but find themselves on opposite ends on the position scale, a successful deal on this issue will be very difficult to achieve. If the negotiation strategy with regard to the remaining issues does not yield the desired results, Mission might therefore consider disaggregating the ‘size’ issue further, and build her propositions on the resulting sub-issues. For example, since Mission knows from the stakeholder description that the Government also would like Mission to concentrate on on-site medical care only (‘services issue’), she may offer to appoint more local staff on these sites in order to reduce the visibility of international presence in the clinics.

In sum, this relationship analysis tells Mission that in her negotiations with Government, she should prioritize the timing of the activities, use the ‘collaboration’ issue as a bargaining chip first, and recur on the ‘services’ issue only if the outcome of this exchange is not yet satisfactory.

## **Conclusion**

Technically, a stakeholder analysis is an instrument to map the relations of power and interest among a set of decision-makers. In practice, conducting a good stakeholder analysis is likely to encounter many challenges. The results stand and fall with how these challenges are solved. Two of these challenges are particularly important.

### ***Quantification***

Quantification – assigning numerical values to qualitative judgments about a stakeholder’s power, salience and effective power – is one of the strengths of this approach, because it forces analysts to be explicit and transparent in the assumptions they make, and to be systematic in their reasoning. At the same time, quantification can be one of the tool’s major potential pitfalls. First, numbers can evoke the illusion of precision. There will always remain some arbitrariness in the process of assigning numerical values to the evaluations. Yet, small ‘errors’ in the stakeholder description phase (say, salience of a stakeholder is estimated as ‘10’ rather than ‘30’) may lead to strongly diverging outcomes already during the stakeholder classification phase, and may ultimately result in contradicting negotiation landscapes. Replacing ranges of numerical values with seemingly less demanding ‘qualitative’ ordinal ratings (e.g. ‘low, medium, high salience’) will only partially resolve this problem. Therefore it is essential that the assigned values be carefully calibrated. Two steps may be useful for this purpose. First, instead of working with point estimates (i.e. a stakeholder’s salience is ‘30’), the analyst assumes confidence intervals for each estimate (e.g. one stakeholder’s salience is estimated to lie between, say 20 and 45, and another stakeholder’s salience is estimated between 75 and 85). A downside of this approach is that it further complicates the analysis because it would require calculations carried out with the lower and the upper boundaries. The second option is to invest more effort into the reliability of the assessment, for example by attempting to approach additional experts or collect additional information on specific stakeholders. Of course none of these methods guarantees a ‘correct’ estimate.

### ***Interpretation***

Given the previous two limitations, it is evident that the results of a stakeholder analysis should be used as an instrument supporting a stakeholder in her interpretations that lead to strategy choices, rather than as a tool that delivers

ready-made implementation strategies. As the case illustrations demonstrated, each case is different, and therefore requires careful consideration of the relevant context to avoid misinterpretations. For example, which options are feasible in a negotiation strongly depends on the general context, custom and rules in the setting – conditions that the stakeholder analysis can only indirectly account for in its stakeholder description phase. Hence, anything that goes beyond the dimensions covered and quantified in the stakeholder analysis is part of this context. Consequently, this tool can only be an aid in systematizing situations of complex interdependencies and power asymmetries.

Despite all these potential shortcomings, a systematic attempt to map the stakeholders and their estimated positions, salience and power forces the analyst to explicate his or her underlying assumptions. It shows which kind of information is needed, and therefore contributes to asking the right questions. And since it also can be easily visualized, it is a useful tool for both internal and external communication. Together, these elements make it a flexible and powerful instrument in any aid organizations' attempts to implement their missions in ever changing social and political contexts. Moreover, a stakeholder analysis helps aid organizations to make the step from suitable to feasible (and safe) interventions. In the fictitious case discussed in this chapter, we saw how the NGO started off with a set of three desired suitable interventions. Through the stakeholder analysis it became clear whether these three interventions were feasible given the stakeholder field. In addition, the stakeholder analysis resulted in relevant information as how to achieve the highest prioritized intervention(s) from the perspective of the NGO, by a strategy of negotiation with the government on issues of less importance to the NGO.