BHARATIYA NEETI ™ SAMVAD KENDRA

भारतीय नीति

DIALOGUE CENTRE

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CONTRIBUTOR GUIDE

BNSK Policy & Field Review

Contributor Guide: Subjects, Formats and Style

Research to Policy, Policy to Practice.

Bridging Academia, Governance and Ground Realities.

FOR CONTRIBUTORS · 10-PAGE MONTHLY

About the Review and this guide

The *BNSK Policy & Field Review* is the monthly, 10-page publication of Bharatiya Neeti Samvad Kendra (BNSK). Each issue carries issue briefs, articles, field notes and data snapshots on governance and development. It follows one idea: **Research to Policy, Policy to Practice**, bridging academia, governance and ground realities.

This guide is for authors. It tells you what we publish, how much space you have, how to structure a piece, and how to write, cite and submit it, so that your work is ready for policymakers, practitioners and researchers with minimal revision.

Every piece must pass three tests:

- **Accurate:** every figure, quotation and claim is sourced and checkable.
- **Brief:** every sentence earns its place, because a 10-page issue leaves no room for padding.
- **Usable:** a reader knows what to decide, do or ask next after reading.

Subjects we publish

We publish on governance and development in India, with priority for work that links evidence to a specific decision. Each issue has a lead theme, and a call for contributions is announced in the previous issue. Pieces outside the lead theme are welcome in the same subject areas.

Subject area	Typical questions
Governance and public administration	State capacity, service delivery, decentralisation, accountability, policy design and evaluation
Health, nutrition and ageing	Maternal and child health, primary care, health data systems, elder care and social protection for senior citizens
Energy, climate and environment	Renewable energy, solar waste and the circular economy, bioenergy, water, urban environment, climate adaptation
Economy, finance and public finance	Fiscal federalism, budgets and subsidies, taxation, inflation, growth, MSMEs, public economics
Labour, skills and livelihoods	Labour codes and governance, informal work, gig and platform work, skilling, women's work
Agriculture and rural development	Farm incomes, markets and procurement, rural credit, land, panchayats, rural infrastructure
Cities and local governance	Urban planning, municipal finance, housing, transport, waste, ward-level delivery
Education, youth and civic life	School and higher education, learning outcomes, youth participation, volunteering, civic engagement
Technology and data in governance	Digital public infrastructure, artificial intelligence in public services, data protection, e-governance
Law, regulation and institutions	New laws and rules, regulatory design, courts and administrative justice, implementation gaps

What we do not publish: party-political advocacy, personal attacks, promotional content, and pieces without a policy question or evidence.

Formats, word limits and the 10-page issue

Word limits include text and endnotes, and exclude the title, standfirst, tables, figures and references. One table or figure takes the space of about 150 words.

Format	What it does	Words	Endnotes
Issue brief	Sets out one policy problem, the options and a recommendation for decision-makers	1,000–1,300	Up to 6
Policy article	Makes an evidence-based argument that links research to a policy question	1,800–2,200	Up to 10
Field note	Reports what implementation looks like on the ground, from visits, interviews or programme data	700–900	Up to 3
Data snapshot	Explains one dataset or indicator with one chart or table, and what it means for policy	300–400	Up to 2
Viewpoint	Argues a considered position on a live policy debate	600–800	Up to 3
Review	Reviews a book, report, law or scheme for its policy value	500–700	Up to 2
Policy watch item	Summarises a new law, notification, scheme or judgment and its implications	150–200	None

Issue at a glance

Page	Section	Usual content
1	Cover and contents	Masthead, contents, editor’s note on the lead theme
2–3	Lead issue brief	The issue brief on the month’s lead theme
4–5	Policy article	One long-form article
6	Field note	Ground report from a district, institution or programme
7	Data snapshot	One indicator or dataset with a chart or table
8	Viewpoint	One or two short position pieces on a policy debate
9	Review and policy watch	One review and short items on new laws, schemes and judgments
10	Contributors and call	Author details, call for the next issue’s theme, subscription information

How to submit

Submit your article or brief by the 2nd of every month, with all the items listed below. By the mid-month of the same month, you will be told whether your piece is accepted, needs revision, or is not taken forward. Accepted pieces are edited, sent to you for approval, and published in the next issue.

Submit to: editorials@bnskbharat.org

- **File:** send a Word file, single-spaced, with tables in editable form and figures as separate high-resolution files (chart data in Excel).
- **Name the file** Surname_ShortTitle_Month Year, for example Sharma_MaternalHealthAudit_November 2026.
- **Send with your submission:** a title of up to 12 words, a one-sentence standfirst, a key message of up to 25 words, a bio of up to 40 words, and a working email address (printed only with your consent).
- **Originality:** submit only original, unpublished work. If part of it appeared elsewhere, tell us when you submit.
- **Editing:** we may shorten, retitle or restructure a piece to fit the space, and will consult you on any change of substance. Errors found after release are corrected online and noted in the next issue.

How to structure each format

Open every piece with its finding or recommendation, not with background.

Issue brief

1. **The issue:** what the problem is, who it affects and how large it is (about 150 words).
2. **The evidence:** what research and field data show, with sources.
3. **The options:** two or three realistic courses of action, with costs, risks and trade-offs.
4. **The recommendation:** who should do what, by when, and how progress will be measured.

Policy article

1. **Abstract** of up to 60 words, with abbreviations spelt out.
2. **Introduction:** the question, and the argument in two or three sentences.
3. **Evidence and analysis:** no more than two levels of subheadings.
4. **Policy implications:** specific actions addressed to a named institution or level of government.

Field note

1. **Where and when:** district, institution, dates, and how many people you spoke to or what you observed.
2. **What was observed:** facts first, opinion second.
3. **What it means:** one lesson for policy design or implementation.

Data snapshot, viewpoint, review and policy watch

- **Data snapshot:** lead with the number that matters, then the chart or table, then two sentences on what it means and one on its limits.
- **Viewpoint:** state your position in the first paragraph, give the strongest counter-argument fairly, and end with a proposal.
- **Review:** say what the work argues, judge its evidence, and say who should read it and why.
- **Policy watch item:** what changed, who is affected, from when, and what to watch in implementation.

Writing for policy readers

Write in plain, direct British English that a district official and a professor can both follow. Prefer short sentences, active verbs and concrete nouns.

- **Spelling:** British (programme, labour, centre, urbanisation). Keep the official spelling of an organisation’s name even when it is American, as in Department of Defense and World Trade Organization.
- **Tone:** analytical and constructive. Criticise policies and programmes with evidence, never persons.
- **Recommendations:** name the actor, the action and the timeframe (for example, “the state health department should notify the protocol by March 2027”). Avoid “should be strengthened”.
- **Sentences:** aim for fewer than 25 words. Recast any sentence that starts with a figure.
- **Jargon:** explain each technical term once, in plain words, at first use.
- **Latin terms:** use the English equivalent (“other things being equal”, not *ceteris paribus*). Write “for example” and “that is”, never eg and ie. Never use ibid or op cit.
- **Honorifics:** omit Mr, Ms, Dr and similar titles before names (D Subbaiah, not Dr D Subbaiah).
- **Time:** avoid “last year” and “recently”; give the year or period.
- **Gender:** use gender-neutral wording where the sense allows.

Headings

- Use at most two levels of heading. For a third level, use a bold run-in head in sentence style followed by a colon.
- Write the title in headline style (capitalise each major word) and subheadings in sentence style (capitalise only the first word and proper nouns).

- Do not put endnote numbers or parenthetical abbreviations in headings. Well-known abbreviations such as UN, WHO, US and MGNREGA may be used.
- Break a long heading at a natural point, never between a preposition and its noun.

Lists: keep items parallel in grammar. Separate items with commas, or with semicolons if any item contains a comma. Use numbers only when the order matters.

Abbreviations and capitalisation

Use as few abbreviations as possible, and capitalise sparingly.

Abbreviations

- Spell out at first use with the abbreviation in parentheses, then use only the abbreviation: operation and maintenance (O&M).
- Do not spell out abbreviations better known than the words they stand for: IIT, JNU, UNICEF, MP (member of parliament), HIV, AIDS, PDF, URL. Write ATM, not “ATM machine”, and PIN, not “PIN number”.
- Avoid press shorthand such as PM, CM, DM, CJ, HC and SC for Supreme Court. Write the full term.
- Avoid ampersands in abbreviations: SPD, not S&PD. Accepted exceptions are R&D, M&E and M&A.
- Do not abbreviate the names of governments. After the first mention, write “the government”. GoI may be used in references only.
- Form plurals with a lowercase s (MoUs). Rewrite the sentence to avoid a possessive abbreviation.
- Do not abbreviate India’s Five Year Plan (no hyphen); afterwards write “the plan”.
- In headings and abstracts, do not add abbreviations in parentheses.
- Artificial intelligence may be shortened to AI after first use.
- List every abbreviation used in a table in a note below that table, in alphabetical order.

Capitalisation

Category	Write	Not
Constitution, Parliament, courts	the Constitution of India; Parliament; the Lok Sabha; the Supreme Court and the Court	the constitution of India; the supreme court
Governments	the Government of India (formal); the government (informal)	the Government (informal)
Ministries and bodies	the Ministry of Finance; the ministry	the Ministry (generic)
Acts, schemes, programmes	the National Agricultural Policy; the policy; the programme	the National Agricultural policy
Titles	Minister of Finance Arun Jaitley; the finance minister	Finance Minister (generic)
Heads of state and government	the Prime Minister of India signed	the prime minister of India signed
Castes, tribes, communities	Dalits, Adivasis, Scheduled Castes, Other Backward Classes	dalits, adivasis
Compass terms	the North East; north-west India; travelling south	the northeast; North-West India
Political orientation	left, right, centre	Left, Right, Centre
Degrees, diseases	a master’s degree; tuberculosis	a Master’s Degree; TB
Parts of a document	Table 2; Figure 1; Section 4; but paras 15–17; note 34	table 2; Para 15
Plan expenditure	plan expenditure; non-plan spending	Plan expenditure
Company names	Tata Motors	Tata Motors Ltd

Keep the extension in a company name where it is part of the established name (Steel Authority of India Ltd) or needed to tell two companies apart.

Titles: capitalise a professional title only when it comes immediately before a name, or after “the” with a comma before the name, or when it is the title of a head of state or government.

Numbers, currency, dates, percentages and ranges

Be accurate and consistent. Every figure needs a source in the text, in a table note or in the references, and units must never be mixed within a piece.

Topic	Write	Not
Small numbers	three villages; 27 villages; 11 towns and four cities	3 villages; twenty-seven villages
Start of sentence	The project covered 27 villages.	Twenty-seven villages were covered by the project.
Exceptions to spelling out	Rs 5 crore; 5%; 2 hectares; ranges; Table 3	Rs five crore; five percent
Percentages	Of the respondents, 80% had a bicycle.	Eighty percent of the respondents had a bicycle.
Change in a rate	fell 1 percentage point, from 4.2% to 3.2%; a cut of 50 basis points	fell 1%, from 4.2% to 3.2%
Decimals	0.6; 2.3, 3.0 and 5.2	.6; 2.3, 3 and 5.21
Negative numbers	–6.9%; ±15%	-6.9% (hyphen)
Ordinals	the third year; the 12th meeting; 1 January 2008	the 3rd year; 1st January 2008
Long numbers	3,000,000; but 2024 and page 1250	3000000; 2,024

Currency

- Use symbols and no space for the dollar, euro and pound signs ($238 million, €238 million). Write Rs and other letter codes with a space (Rs 238; THB 238). The dollar sign means US dollars.
- Write million, billion and trillion in full at first use; mn, bn and tn may follow.
- Use lakh and crore only for Indian financial data, and write them in Indian comma style (Rs 30 lakh is Rs 30,00,000). Give all other quantities in figures or in million and billion: 500,000 anganwadi workers, not five lakh.
- Lakh and crore take no plural s. An amount of money is singular: Rs 10 crore was spent.
- Write currency names in lowercase (rupee, taka).

Dates and periods

- Write dates as 26 January 2001, with no comma and no ordinal, and never 05 July 2009.
- Write ranges with an en dash and no spaces: 12–28 February 2005. After “from”, use “to”: from 12 to 28 February.
- Write financial years as 2023–24 and calendar ranges as 2019–2024.
- Write decades as the 1990s and centuries as the 20th century, with no superscript.
- Never write “last year” or “over the past two years”. Give the year.

Ranges, ratios and rates

- Repeat a symbol on both sides of an en dash: 12%–14%, $125,000–$150,000. Place a unit of measure only after the second number: 15–20 kWh.
- Avoid “between … and” where precision matters. Write “from 1992 to 1999” or “during 1992–1999”.
- Write ratios with a colon and no spaces (78:22). Use an en dash for a relationship between two elements (debt–equity ratio, cost–benefit analysis).
- Distinguish ratio, proportion and percentage. In public health, write the maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births) and the infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births).

- Growth and inflation accelerate and decelerate; growth rates and inflation rates rise and fall.
- Use metric units. Write abbreviated units in the singular with no full stop: 22 kg, 5,960 ha.
- Use the em dash with no spaces to mark a break in thought—like this.

Tables, figures and endnotes

Use a table or figure only when it says something the text cannot say as briefly. Use no more than one per contribution, except in a data snapshot.

Tables and figures

- Cite each one in the text (Table 1) and place it straight after the paragraph where it is first cited. It must fit on one page.
- Label it “Table 1: Title” or “Figure 1: Title”, in headline style, above the exhibit. If a piece has only one, use the title without a number.
- Put the unit in parentheses under the title, without the word “in”: (% of GDP), ($ million).
- Spell out abbreviations in titles, and do not add abbreviations in parentheses.
- Make each exhibit self-contained, because it may be reused on its own. Below it, in this order, list abbreviations (alphabetical), notes, footnotes and sources.
- Give a source for every table and figure, and name the document, not just the organisation: “Source: Ministry of Finance (2024): *Economic Survey 2023–24*, New Delhi.” For your own calculations, write “Source: Author’s estimates.”
- Give every column a heading, and use sentence-style capitalisation in the first column.
- Label chart axes with units, and make the chart readable in black and white.

Endnotes

- Use endnotes sparingly, for a short explanation or an evaluative comment, never for references.
- Mark them with superscript Arabic numerals, numbered in sequence, placed after the punctuation at the end of a sentence. Place the number before an em dash, and never in a heading.
- Do not use two note numbers together. Merge the two notes into one.
- Do not repeat a note. Refer back to it in parentheses: (note 8).
- Spell out an abbreviation the first time it appears in an endnote, if it has not appeared in the text.

Quotations, Hindi and other non-English terms, and in-text citations

Cite every source in the text by author and year, list it in full under References, and quote only when the exact words matter.

In-text citations (author-date)

- Place the author and year in parentheses straight after the quotation or paraphrase: (Drèze and Sen 2013). Add a page after a colon for a direct quotation: (Drèze and Sen 2013: 45).
- If the author’s name is in the sentence, put only the year in parentheses: Drèze and Sen (2013).
- Separate several sources with a semicolon, in date order: (Drèze and Sen 2013; IIPS and ICF 2021).
- Never use ibid or op cit. Repeat the citation.
- For authors with the same surname, add initials: (R Kumar 2019; S Kumar 2022).
- For a source with no date, write nd. For a work awaiting publication, write forthcoming.
- For a source cited in another source, write “qtd in”: (qtd in Sengupta 1999).
- For a government or institutional author, give the body’s name: (Ministry of Finance 2024).
- Write court cases in italics with the year in parentheses: *Vishaka v State of Rajasthan* (1997).

- Do not put full stops after abbreviations such as ed, eds, Vol, No, pp, nd and et al.

Quotations

- Put a short quotation (fewer than four typed lines) in double quotation marks. In a 10-page issue, avoid block quotations. If you need one, indent it, omit quotation marks and cite it after the closing full stop.
- Quote only as much as you need, and fit the words into your own sentence.
- Put words you add inside square brackets. Show omitted words with an ellipsis of three spaced full stops.
- Use single quotation marks for a quotation inside a quotation.
- Reproduce spelling, capitalisation and internal punctuation exactly. Correct obvious typing errors silently.

Hindi and other non-English terms

- Keep them to a minimum. Italicise a term the first time it appears and give the English meaning in parentheses. Use plain type afterwards: *pehchaan patra* (identity card).
- Do not italicise words in common policy use, such as panchayat, gram sabha, anganwadi, lakh and crore, or the names of agencies, schemes and organisations. Italicise and gloss more specialised terms.
- Write Hindi and other Indian-language terms in Roman script, in the form most widely used, and spell the same term the same way throughout.
- For a non-English organisation name, give the English translation first, then the abbreviation based on the original: National Development Planning Agency (BAPPENAS).
- Write scheme names exactly as the government notified them.

References format

List every work cited in the text, and only those, under the heading “References” at the end. Arrange entries alphabetically by the author’s surname, and write the year in parentheses followed by a colon.

Type	Format	Example
Book	Surname, First name (Year): *Title*, Place: Publisher.	Drèze, Jean and Amartya Sen (2013): *An Uncertain Glory: India and Its Contradictions*, London: Allen Lane.
Chapter in an edited book	Surname, First name (Year): “Title,” *Book*, Editor (ed), Place: Publisher, pp.	Surname, First name (Year): “Chapter Title,” *Book Title*, First name Surname (ed), Place: Publisher, pp 24–34. (illustrative)
Journal article	Surname, First name (Year): “Title,” *Journal*, Vol, No, pp.	Surname, First name (Year): “Article Title,” *Journal Name*, Vol 15, No 1, pp 41–50. (illustrative)
Government or institutional report	Body (Year): *Title*, Place: Publisher.	Ministry of Finance (2024): *Economic Survey 2023–24*, New Delhi: Government of India.
Survey or dataset	Body (Year): *Title*, Place: Publisher, URL.	International Institute for Population Sciences and ICF (2021): *National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), 2019–21: India*, Mumbai: IIPS.
Act or law	*Title of Act* (Year): Ministry or legislature, Place.	*The Digital Personal Data Protection Act* (2023): Government of India, New Delhi.
Newspaper article	Surname, First name (Year): “Title,” *Newspaper*, Day Month, p.	Surname, First name (2026): “Headline,” *Newspaper*, 21 May, p 8. (illustrative)
Unpublished thesis	Surname, First name (Year): “Title,” PhD thesis, University.	Surname, First name (2025): “Thesis Title,” PhD thesis, University. (illustrative)
Web page or online document	Author (Year): “Title,” *Website*, full URL.	Body or author (Year): “Page Title,” *Website Name*, https://www.example.org/page. (illustrative)
Court judgment	*Case name* (Year): Reporter, Court, p Page.	*Vishaka v State of Rajasthan* (1997): AIR, SC, p 3011.

Rules for entries

- Write the surname first for the first author only: Gillespie, Paula and Neal Lerner (2000). For more than three authors, name the first followed by “et al”.
- Do not list titles or degrees (Dr, PhD) with names.
- For more than one work by an author, order the works by title and replace the author’s name with an em dash after the first entry.
- For more than one work by the same author in one year, add a, b and c to the year: (2021a), (2021b).
- Capitalise each major word in a title. Italicise books, reports and journals; put articles and chapters in double quotation marks, with the comma inside the closing mark.
- For a work with no known author, start with the title and use a shortened title in the text.
- For a web source, give the author, title, date, website and full URL with the protocol (https://). Delete default endings such as index.html.
- Cite the printed version of a work if it exists, and add the URL as an extra. Check every link just before submission. Give an access date only if the date matters to the argument.

Ethics, permissions and field work

- **Consent:** get informed consent from every interviewee. Anonymise anyone who has not agreed to be named, and do not include details that could identify them.
- **Children and vulnerable groups:** do not publish photographs or identifiable details of children, patients or beneficiaries without written consent from the person or guardian.
- **Method:** in every field note and data-based piece, state the place, dates, sample or source, and any limits of the data.
- **Data and images:** use only published or permissioned data. Send written permission for any third-party table, figure, photograph or long quotation, and credit the source.
- **Conflicts of interest:** disclose any funding, employment or institutional interest in the subject.
- **Neutrality:** keep evidence separate from opinion, and present opposing views fairly.
- **Use of AI tools:** you may use them for drafting or analysis, but you are responsible for every fact and reference. Tell us if AI tools were used for substantive analysis, and verify every citation they suggest.

Checklist before you submit

[ ] The piece opens with the finding or recommendation.

[ ] The format, subject area and word count are stated and within the limit.

[ ] Every recommendation names an actor, an action and a timeframe.

[ ] Every figure has a source, and units are consistent throughout.

[ ] Abbreviations are spelt out at first use and absent from headings.

[ ] Numbers, dates, currency and percentages follow this guide.

[ ] Each table or figure is cited in the text, self-contained and sourced.

[ ] Every in-text citation has a matching entry in References, and no unused entry remains.

[ ] Links are checked and quotations are exact.

[ ] British spelling is used throughout, except in official names.

[ ] Consent, permissions, conflicts of interest and use of AI tools are disclosed.

[ ] Title, standfirst, key message, bio and working email are attached.