

Monitoring and Evaluating Advocacy: A Scoping Study

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I. Preface

NGOs are increasingly recognising that ‘projects’ alone are not going to solve the problems of long-term poverty. Greater democracy, transparency and the work of civil society groups to hold decision-makers accountable are more likely to achieve long term sustainable change for poor people. ActionAid, along with many international agencies, is increasingly refocusing its work to support civil society, strengthen social capital and support excluded groups in their efforts to hold decision-makers accountable. All of this work currently falls beneath the vague banner of ‘influencing and advocacy work’. But how do we assess the value of this work? Does it really make a difference?

This Scoping Study marks the beginning of a large body of work that will be carried out by ActionAid to explore and develop ways in which we can best monitor and evaluate different aspects of this work. This Scoping Study is literally the first step. It sets out to document the various frameworks and approaches that international agencies are using to assess the value of their advocacy work. The report draws on a large body of literature as well as, where possible, on first hand interviews and discussions. The report does not attempt to evaluate the various frameworks. It sets out to draw together a body of knowledge without passing judgement on the merits or demerits of various approaches.

What next? During the course of putting together this Scoping Study it became clear that we, in the development community, still have some way to go in developing appropriate systems to monitor and evaluate influencing and advocacy work. The last five years have seen a rapid change in the types of work that fall beneath this banner. Among them are “people centred advocacy” and “participatory advocacy” as well as global advocacy initiatives carried out by large and rapidly changing coalitions. The dearth of empirical analysis of local level influencing and advocacy work, or of different forms of national and international advocacy has become very clear. There is much work to be done.

ActionAid has received a grant from the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and Comic Relief to explore some of these areas in more depth over the next three years (2001-2003). The action research will be carried out jointly with partners in Ghana, Uganda, Brazil and Nepal. The work will explore different ways of assessing the value of local and national level influencing work. Ways that will hopefully encourage learning increase accountability and help improve the effectiveness of advocacy initiatives. We look forward to working and collaborating with many of you on this venture.

Thanks to Amboka Wameyo and Jenny Chapman for writing this Scoping Study and getting us started!

Rosalind David
Head of Impact Assessment
January 2001

II. Executive Summary

ActionAid's new strategy, *Fighting Poverty Together, (1999-2003)* gives a high priority to participatory policy making which emphasises people-centred influencing and advocacy work. At the heart of this strategy is the perspective that 'projects' alone are not going to overcome long term poverty, but that greater democracy, transparency and the work of civil society to hold decision makers accountable are more likely to achieve long-term sustainable changes for poor people.

As ActionAid and ActionAid's partners develop participatory policy work and people centred advocacy work, there is a critical need to develop culturally appropriate methodologies for:

- a) assessing the value of this work
- b) improving on the on-going learning and quality of this work
- c) ensuring that advocacy and influencing is indeed improving the lives of the most poor and marginalised people.

The monitoring and evaluation of advocacy and influencing work is critically underdeveloped¹. So too is the ability of the development sector to monitor or evaluate the role of civil society in bringing about sustainable change through its influencing and advocacy activities.

Current 'project focused' monitoring and evaluation systems and methods are inadequate for assessing the value of influencing and advocacy work where the emphasis is on the development of civil society and its ability to hold decision makers accountable.

Furthermore, enabling conditions, resources and incentives for local partners to add monitoring and evaluation to their day-to-day activities are often lacking. Consequently, partner NGOs often perceive the need to monitor and evaluate as burdensome and extraneous requirements, rather than an opportunity to learn and improve the on-going quality of their initiatives. In addition there is a lack of culturally appropriate, gender-sensitive methods for monitoring and evaluation which have been developed by Southern based organisations and which emphasise the values these organisations consider important in their own work.

This scoping study has attempted to identify and document how various agencies and institutions have approached the assessment of advocacy. The work was limited in scale, and focused in particular upon the approaches of NGOs. The insights and ideas from this study will contribute to a three-year action research project to be undertaken by ActionAid and partners in Africa, Asia and Latin America. This research aims to develop appropriate methodologies for assessing the value of advocacy work, methodologies that reinforce a transparent and co-operative way of working, and strengthen external agencies' role in helping to create space for marginal groups to have a voice in decision-making fora.

¹ For example see Miller, Valerie (1994) *NGO and Grass Roots Policy Influence: What is success?* IDR Report Vol 11 no 5, USA. Edwards, M and Hulme D (1995) *NGO Performance and Accountability: Beyond the Magic Bullet*, Earthscan, London.

This scoping study also sets out ActionAid's approach to rights based development and the central role of advocacy work in supporting and enabling people to better negotiate, on their own behalf, for their basic needs and basic rights.

The study explores a number of frameworks that organisations have been developing that suggest what could be looked at when monitoring and evaluating advocacy work. It stresses that these frameworks are merely tools that help us gain an overview of advocacy work. They are not intended to be rigorously filled in. For this reason, instead of promoting one framework as the 'correct' one, the study sets out a number of frameworks that look at similar issues from different perspectives for the reader to pick and choose what elements are most useful to them. Again though many frameworks talk about work at different levels, the study does not give any weighting for the different levels. This weighting will vary depending on the specific advocacy goal.

The study identifies a number of aspects that need to be taken into account when analysing advocacy work:

- Identifying the different dimensions of advocacy work and their outcomes.
- Recognising that advocacy can work at different levels which may, but do not necessarily reinforce each other.
- Monitoring processes as well as outcomes.
- Frameworks should not be straitjackets. Frameworks should only be seen as tools for facilitating creative thinking. The challenge is to remain open to unintended outcomes that fall outside the framework of assessment that may have been adopted.
- It is important to monitor not only policy change but also implementation.
- There is a need to acknowledge the collective nature of advocacy work and focus less on questions of attribution, realising that there is need to establish a balance between who takes credit and when to take or not to take credit. Our value base should inform this balance. Advocacy is increasingly being carried out in networks or coalitions. We need to look at how organisations are working together for a common purpose and monitor and evaluate ActionAid's most appropriate role in this.
- The values we espouse as ActionAid should also determine what we look for in our monitoring and evaluation, which in turn determines who participates and who does not.

This scoping study also identifies various gaps in our knowledge on how to effectively monitor and evaluate advocacy work. These include:

- The need for more information on networks and movements. How they develop, how they work, the sort of accountability structures that work best, and how ActionAid can best support them.
- The need to understand better how to work at different levels and in different arenas in order to reinforce the work of others in the most effective way.
- The need to understand the way the work of different actors adds to the process, without falling into the trap of trying to claim attribution at the expense of co-operation.

- In the dimension of people centred advocacy there is little understanding on how to best support civil society in the longer term to both advocate for pro-poor policies and monitor implementation.
- Understanding of how to monitor and evaluate social capital in different contexts is very limited.
- Understanding the conflictual aspects and political consequences of advocacy work.
- There is little information on what ‘space’, ‘political space’ or ‘democratic space’ might look like in different cultures and at different levels, from the micro to the national and international.
- Information on how gender issues can be incorporated into these frameworks is very limited.

The study looks at a broad range of approaches for analysing advocacy work but very few in terms of methods and tools that might be used to assess change with different stakeholder groups. This again highlights the gaps in current practice. Currently, standard methodological approaches involve semi-structured interviews, group-based discussions, surveys and questionnaires.

As international NGO advocacy slowly evolves, there are more examples of innovative, evaluative practices to draw upon. Work has already begun in ActionAid to develop methods, approaches, structures and behaviours that will facilitate the participation of poor people and their representatives in shaping policy. A critical feature of this work will be to develop the appropriate tools and methods to ensure meaningful involvement and representation of these same groups of people in assessing the value of this work. The ultimate indicator of success is that the people whose lives are most affected recognise and value their own work.²

² Barry Coates and Ros David, Draft Article on Monitoring Advocacy, 2000.

III. Advocacy in ActionAid

In the past, ActionAid's objectives for doing advocacy work were primarily to scale up its operational work for greater impact, raise its profile for fundraising purposes and to address the structural causes of poverty, although this latter objective was never in practice a central objective³. There has since been a significant shift in ActionAid's advocacy approach.

ActionAid's new strategy *Fighting Poverty Together (1999-2003)* gives a high priority to participatory policy making which emphasises rights based and people-centred advocacy. At the heart of this strategy is the perspective that 'projects' alone are not going to overcome long term poverty, but that greater democracy, transparency and the work of civil society to hold decision makers accountable are more likely to achieve long-term sustainable changes for poor people.

The rights-based approach to development informs all that ActionAid does. What does it mean to be rights based? There are two aspects to the rights based approach. First, adopting a rights based approach means that ActionAid engages people in their own development, not as a privilege, but as a right. Second, we advocate for the rights of the poor. ActionAid recognises that facilitating the empowerment of the poor and vulnerable to benefit from morally and legally enshrined rights is the only lasting way to eradicate poverty and ensure social justice and equity.⁴ This calls for ActionAid to work with communities to identify chronic and systematic denial of rights, analyse the sources and causes of such denial and develop strategies to resist, combat and address the situation.

What is meant by being people centred? The ActionAid people centred approach prioritises empowering people to advocate for pro-poor policies themselves. Simply put, its goal is to help poor people discover and secure their rights. For this to happen people need to become empowered, organised and mobilised – able to express their basic needs and negotiate them with outside actors. From ActionAid's point of view, advocacy work that supports and enables people to better negotiate, on their own behalf, for their basic needs and basic rights is what is becoming known as people-centred advocacy. Such advocacy need not just be local, and can strike to the heart of national – even international – policy making. With people centred advocacy, people become powerful⁵. The people centred approach challenges the notion that the poor cannot formulate or understand policy, arguing instead that the gap between the poor and policy makers must be decreased and that states, governments and policy makers should be responsive to the voices of the excluded.

ActionAid differentiates between 'participatory advocacy' and 'people centred advocacy'. 'Participatory advocacy' describes work that helps draw other civil society groups into the debate and create the 'space' in which people can hold decision-makers accountable. It is concerned with supporting and strengthening networks, movements and civil society groups and helping create the space in which southern voices can be expressed and heard. 'People centred advocacy' is work that directly involves people

³ ActionAid 1997

⁴ ActionAid Kenya, 1999

⁵ Koy Thomson 2000

negotiating better, on their own behalf, for their basic rights. People centred advocacy is often, but not always, associated with local level work in which people are supported to analyse their own situations, identify their rights, make their views heard and hold decision makers accountable.

ActionAid is already exploring methods, approaches, structures and behaviours which will facilitate the participation of poor people and their representatives in shaping policy and using the innovations of others. The list of examples is long and exciting: Citizens' Juries on genetically modified crops in India; participatory poverty assessments; Somaliland's experiments with the computer model Threshold 21; adapting *Reflect*⁶; using participatory theatre and video to tackle policy issues and analysis; people's budgets; policy relevant action research; roundtables; national citizens' fora; participatory planning; and many more. The added bonus is that bringing people-centred advocacy and participatory policy work together will represent the closing of the gap between what ActionAid now calls programme and policy work.

Rights based and people centred advocacy almost always challenges power structures and can therefore be very difficult and risky work. A key concern for civil society organisations is how to deal with threats that often have to be faced by the community in the face of vibrant people centred advocacy. For example, in the case of the campaign against insecure land tenure in Nepal, bonded labourers advocated for their liberation under constant threat from landlords.

The other challenge facing ActionAid is the degree to which we engage in direct advocacy. Our advocacy strategy, although committing us to empowering communities to engage in advocacy themselves, recognises that in certain situations direct advocacy is essential. In many instances an ideal advocacy strategy incorporates both people centred and direct advocacy.

⁶ *Reflect*: a participatory and empowering learning and planning process used by over 250 organisations in more than 50 countries.

IV. The Monitoring and Evaluation of Advocacy

Introduction

Challenges and complexities of monitoring and evaluating advocacy work

A recent survey found that in general evaluation of advocacy by UK based international development NGOs is very limited, with most of the organisations interviewed struggling to get to grips with it.⁷ Indeed, developing systems to monitor and evaluate advocacy is particularly challenging for a number of reasons:

- i. **Causal relationships:** The complexity of issues makes it difficult to determine cause and effect between NGO advocacy initiatives and outcomes. This is hard enough when undertaking targeted lobbying for a specific change in the law, but even harder when attempting to influence more general attitudes and values in society. In complex human systems cause and effect tend to get separated by time and distance as the impact of an action provokes a 'ripple effect' of different changes and responses over time. Consequently, it will remain difficult to pin down exactly what caused a certain impact, or the full effect of any action, even after the event.⁸ The influence of external factors are also unpredictable – i.e. the political situation, disasters, or opposition tactics may account for outcomes more than anything within the advocate's control.
- ii. **Compromise versus outright victory:** Outright victory, in the sense of achieving all the objectives of a campaign, is rare - often compromise is necessary, with some objectives being jettisoned or modified. This introduces an element of subjectivity in determining whether gains were significant, whether small gains were consistent with the wider objectives of the campaign, or whether the campaign was co-opted.⁹ There are likely to be a variety of opinions among different partners and stakeholders in a campaign.

Similarly, campaign goals not only shift because of differing perceptions of what is possible in the 'realpolitik', but also develop as the advocates' understanding of the issues deepens and widens. This means that pre-set outcomes may not be the best yardstick by which to measure. Research on advocacy in the Philippines¹⁰ found that actual outcomes were often incongruent with stated objectives. Others have suggested that, although ultimate goals might be clear, it is often difficult to know what the objectives are until a long way into an advocacy process.¹¹ Thus indicators of success may also need to change: an indicator that was relevant at the start of the campaign may lose that relevance as the campaign widens or changes its focus.¹²

⁷ Alan Hudson, 2000

⁸ Dave Harding, 1996

⁹ Binu Thomas, 1998

¹⁰ Edna Co, 1999

¹¹ Conversation with Alex Bush

¹² Chapman and Fisher, 2000b

Advocacy at different levels

Not only do goals shift but the main action may also shift between international, national or local levels during the course of a campaign, making it unclear where policy success should be sought. It is possible that success at one level can actually work against success at another level. One example is the International Campaign to Ban Landmines which, according to one activist, became a 'victim of its own success' when the decision to ban mines actually led to decreasing public pressure on governments to provide resources for mine-affected populations.¹³ This can be seen as a negative indication of the ability of the organisations concerned to 'follow through'¹⁴, but could also be seen as success at one level (international) being given priority over success at another (the local level).¹⁵

- iii. **Advocacy can mean many things:** Within the term advocacy we include a whole range of tactics such as influencing, lobbying, campaigning, demonstrations, boycotts etc. Different organisations work in different ways and advocacy increasingly takes place through networks and coalitions. Indeed, positive results may often reflect the sum of a variety of approaches, such as insider and outsider strategies. It may be difficult to assess which approach makes the difference; even harder to isolate the impact of a particular organisation.
- iv. **Long term policy work:** Furthermore, much advocacy work is long-term. Policy reform can be slow and incremental and implementation, seen in terms of changes in people's lives, often lags significantly behind it. This poses a challenge in measuring impact as opposed to outcomes.
- v. **Limited accumulation of knowledge:** Finally, advocacy work is often unique, rarely repeated or replicated, so that the gradual accumulation of knowledge by repetition does not happen.¹⁶ This does not mean that learning is impossible, but that reflection in order to make tacit knowledge explicit is even more important if lessons learnt from one advocacy initiative are to be carried through to the next.
- vi. **A conflictual process:** Advocacy can be a conflictual process. Engaging in advocacy work can have political consequences in terms of groups' relationships with each other. These consequences are hard to predict at the outset and difficult to map.

¹³ Scott, 1999

¹⁴ Freres, 2000

¹⁵ Jennifer Chapman, 2000

¹⁶ Chris Roche, 1999

Combined with these issues specific to advocacy work are other challenges that cut across all monitoring and evaluation:

- Who and what is the monitoring and evaluation for?
- How can monitoring and evaluation be participatory, involving stakeholders at all levels?
- How can gender issues be fully taken into account?
- How can monitoring and evaluation be a basis for organisational learning?

The above poses a real challenge in developing useful methods to support meaningful learning in the area of advocacy work.

Setting clear and realistic objectives

Some of the challenges facing monitoring and evaluating advocacy can be overcome to a limited extent by setting realistic and clear objectives. The danger inherent in this, however, is that NGOs may opt to aim for what they feel they can achieve rather than what is necessary or desirable.¹⁷

In itself objective-setting can be a difficult exercise as NGOs often work both individually and as part of a coalition or coalitions to effect policy change. These may bring together organisations that are not all trying to achieve the same thing. Some are merely looking for specific policy changes and may be content to become professional lobbyists, speaking out on behalf of the poor. Others include wider ideological and structural aims as an integral part of their policy work. Similarly, different coalition members may favour different strategies and wish to establish different relationships with those in power.

Coalitions that comprise members with such widely differing perceptions and approaches tend to have difficulty in defining clear objectives, making evaluation a difficult proposition.¹⁸ Indeed, some experienced campaigners claim that where precise objectives have been defined and made into a central aspect of campaign planning and evaluation, campaigners may experience them as unhelpful and inappropriate.

Involving key beneficiaries in setting objectives

There also remains the major issue of who should set objectives if the advocacy work is being carried out on behalf of others. The need to place renewed emphasis on the opinion of the beneficiary regarding what constitutes impact was highlighted in a study by Oxfam and Novib.¹⁹ ActionAid takes this issue further in its people centred advocacy approach, where the 'beneficiary' becomes the actor and is not only involved in defining impact, but also in actually carrying out the advocacy initiative (see Section II. Advocacy in ActionAid).

The need for clarity in long-term goals

All of these issues are compounded when organisations are unclear about what they want to achieve. Intermediate objectives or indicators may need to be flexible, but an

¹⁷ Binu Thomas, 1998

¹⁸ Binu Thomas, 1998

¹⁹ Elsa Dawson, 1997

NGO must nevertheless be clear about its long-term goals, vision and political understanding of advocacy, as this affects both the approaches taken and what is looked for in assessing impact.²⁰

At first it might seem obvious what the goal of a particular campaign should be. However, as the following passage on campaigns targeting the World Bank points out, this is not necessarily the case:

It is easy for coalition members to focus on a few campaign goals – change the policy, stop the project, enhance the resettlement program – to measure success. Such criteria, however, obscure important complexities and possibilities. In these campaigns ‘success’ definitions often shifted over time as new strategies came into play or new actors joined the fray. The more effective coalitions recognised that the campaigns could succeed or fail on several dimensions – including strengthening local organisations, building links for future campaigns, increasing awareness and skills for policy influence, evolving strategies and tactics for policy participation, shaping public awareness of critical issues and encouraging target institution reforms – in addition to shaping specific project and policy outcomes.²¹

Incorporating different dimensions of success

A campaign's success is frequently evaluated against a single short-term goal, such as winning immediate legislative or policy victories – a definition of success that ignores the long-term means to sustain such gains. Without strong systems or NGOs/grassroots groups able to hold government accountable, policy victories can be short-lived. Incorporating other dimensions of success, such as gains in the strength of grassroots organisations or increased opportunities for civil society to get involved in future decision making, allows a more complete analysis and understanding of a campaign's effectiveness and potential for long-term impact.

Valerie Miller, who has carried out considerable research into campaigning for the Institute of Development Research (IDR) in the USA, describes this complexity:

One serious dilemma in policy work is that while a campaign may be successful in getting policies changed or adopted, the process may diminish strength of the very institutions that help generate ‘social capital’ and which are necessary for achieving policy reform in a pluralistic society over the long term. This concern ... raises important questions about the need to place a higher priority on institutions and constituency building activities when designing policy influence efforts. If such activities are not incorporated and understood as a vital integral part of the process, policy work may actually undermine the institutional basis of civil society and the potential for promoting long-term social accountability and responsible government.²²

²⁰ Advocacy is a political act though Jordan and van Tuijl, 1998 claim that this political role of NGOs is not yet well understood by either academics or by NGOs themselves.

²¹ Brown and Fox, 1999

²² Valerie Miller, 1994

It is important to clarify the approach and ideology of the NGO, as the other dimensions of advocacy success are *not* an automatic result of all policy work. If NGOs act as intermediaries for a grassroots base who are merely clients, policy work can lead to the evolution of a civil society with a strong professional advocacy sector and a weak and disorganised grassroots base; this may do nothing to reduce the power of those being lobbied. Indeed, there may be tensions inherent in a campaign that attempts to influence both policy and civil society dimensions:

It often appears that trade-offs must be made, at least in the short term, between policy gains and strengthening grassroots associations. Lobbying actions sometimes can't wait for slower-paced grassroots education and participation efforts. Sometimes the strategies preferred by the grassroots frame the issues so that they are hard to win.²³

Jane Covey cites the case of the Urban Land Reform Task Force in the Philippines as a campaign that had positive policy and civil society outcomes. She concludes that effectiveness in both dimensions is possible but only likely if:

- this is an explicit aim
- the campaign includes the appropriate social groups
- it has access to the necessary resources.

She suggests that the most important success criterion is whether the alliance actively seeks both policy outcomes and increased citizen participation.

More often NGOs are criticised for concentrating only on policy success. For example, Emery Roe²⁴ has criticised international environmental NGO advocacy as a debating exercise between members of a 'New Managerial Class' in which NGO professionals debate with other members of the same global class in the international financial institutions. The critique raises the concern that NGO staff based in the industrial capitals, with class origins and academic training similar to those of World Bank staff, can force policy-making processes open to their own participation, without ensuring access for excluded communities.

Looking at advocacy in this way means that impact cannot be assessed merely in terms of policy change. Equally relevant is whether the effort has increased the influence of disenfranchised groups such as women in debates and decision-making, or strengthened the accountability of state institutions to civil society groups. This is the approach now taken by ActionAid in its recognition of the need to open up space for others to become involved.

²³ Jane Covey, 1994

²⁴ Emery Roe, 1995

V. Exploring the Dimensions of Advocacy Work

Various organisations have been experimenting with frameworks to help them define what they should be looking for when monitoring and evaluating advocacy work. This section examines several of these.

The IDR Framework²⁵

IDR have suggested that the impact of development NGOs' advocacy work should be measured against three criteria: policy, civil society and democracy.

1. Policy

The *policy* outcome is the degree to which policy objectives are achieved. That is, specific changes in the policies, practices, programs or behaviour of major institutions that affect the public, such as government, international financial bodies and corporations. Changes in this dimension arise from influencing decision-making structures and are fundamental to ensuring that public policies and practices improve people's lives.

2. Civil Society

The *civil society* outcome is the degree to which the capacity of civil organisations is strengthened to continue the work, or to undertake new advocacy. They are more able to engage in advocacy, participate in public decision-making and follow up on a campaign in the long run, including monitoring the implementation and enforcement of reforms and holding public and private institutions accountable.

Another important aspect of strengthening civil society involves increasing 'social capital' – the relations of trust and reciprocity that underpin the cooperation and collaboration necessary for advocacy and for working collectively.

3. Democratic

The *democratic* outcome is the extent to which the work has opened up channels for civil society organisations to be involved in decisions in the future, to 'create footholds that give a leg up to those that follow'.²⁶ This might be by providing mechanisms for the participation of disenfranchised sectors in policy dialogue, increasing the political legitimacy of civil society organisations, and improving the attitudes and behaviours of government officials and elites towards NGOs and grassroots groups. It includes broadening overall tolerance and respect for human rights and increasing the accountability and transparency of public institutions.

²⁵ IDR, 1999

²⁶ Brown and Fox, 1999

Table 1: The IDR Framework: Charting Advocacy Impact

Dimension	Impact
I. POLICY	<i>Change in public policy, program, practice or behaviour</i>
NATIONAL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive • Agencies/Ministries • Legislature/Parliament • Military/Police • Courts • Other PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT LOCAL GOVERNMENT INTERNATIONAL BODIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN • IMF • World Bank • Multilateral Development Banks • Other OTHER	
II. PRIVATE SECTOR	<i>Change in policy, program, practice or behaviour</i>
NATIONAL/LOCAL INTERNATIONAL/ MULTINATIONAL OTHER	
III. CIVIL SOCIETY	<i>Strengthen and expand civil society's capacity, organisation, accountability & clout (power), expand members' skills, capacities, knowledge, attitudes & beliefs; and increase overall social capital, reciprocity, trust and tolerance</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGOs • Popular organisations • Community-based Organisations • Ally Organisations • Others 	
IV. DEMOCRACY (Political system & Culture)	<i>Increase democratic space, expand participation & political legitimacy of civil society, as well as accountability and transparency of public institutions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic space • Participation of Civil Society • Political Legitimacy of Civil Society • Accountability of Public Institutions • Transparency of Public Institutions • Other 	
V. INDIVIDUAL	<i>Improve material situation such as concrete living conditions and opportunities for health, education and work; expand attitudes, beliefs and awareness of self as protagonist and citizen with rights and responsibilities.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Material • Attitudinal • Other 	

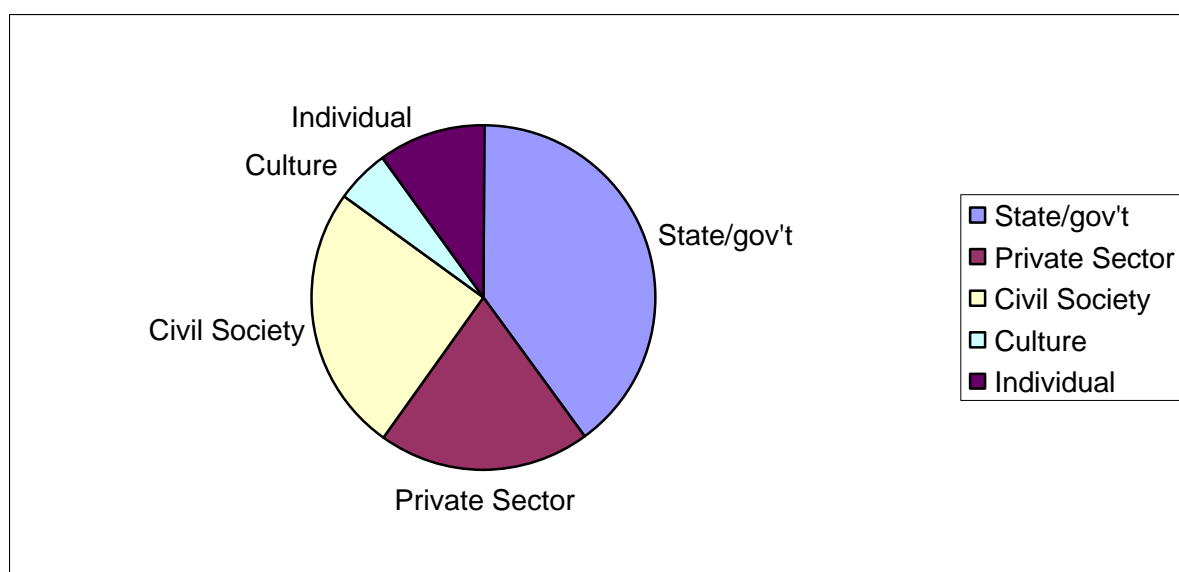
IDR subsequently separated out the **private sector** from the policy dimension and added the **individual** as a further dimension. They then developed these ideas into a framework that they use as a basis for charting advocacy impact (see Table 1). This framework opens the door to exploring the tension between ‘speaking for’ partners and beneficiaries and strengthening their own ability to defend their own interests. Yet, as some point out, it does not distinguish between northern and southern outcomes as clearly as it could.²⁷ Neither does it distinguish between stages of policy impact, although it recognises that strong civil society organisations are necessary to ensuring the implementation of changed policies.

Valerie Miller and Lisa VeneKlasen have worked further on the IDR framework to incorporate the specific knowledge of women’s organisations working on political participation and the ideas of gender theorists. In particular they amplified the idea of **democracy** or **political culture** to include social aspects of culture, specifically changes in gender and family relations. This would include shifts in the way society views women’s and men’s roles and responsibilities, accepting women as legitimate and credible political actors and protagonists. This might be shown through changes in the way media portrays women or more equitable family relations.

Similarly, changes at the **individual** level were expanded beyond material benefits to emphasise results related to psychological and attitudinal changes, especially those related to political awareness, analysis and personal self-worth. They suggest that such changes occur when the passive and paralysing attitudes of self-blame and ignorance, so common to many powerless and disenfranchised groups, are transformed into proactive attitudes and concrete capabilities that allow people to become active protagonists in the defence and advancement of their own rights.

They use a pie chart that reflects proportional impacts or activities of advocacy work, and use it to provoke discussion around programme impacts or activities and their relation to political context or social change goals (see Figure 1).

²⁷ Baranyi et al, 1997

Figure 1: Pie Chart reflecting proportional impacts of advocacy work

The CIIR framework²⁸

CIIR builds on Jane Covey's work²⁹ (which distinguished between two dimensions of policy impact and capacity building impact) and develops it to look at two stages of policy impact. The focus is on the impact of *northern* voluntary organisations (NVOs). The framework also distinguishes impact in the North and in the South in order to look at the effect of NVO advocacy on northern institutions and the effect which NVOs' advocacy has on the situation in the South.

The framework has three types of impact, each assessed for both northern and southern outcomes: declaratory, implementational, and capacity building.

Declaratory impact is the degree to which advocacy has produced changes in the rhetoric, policy or legislative outputs of decision-makers (which could include government, international organisations and transnational corporations).

Implementational impact is the extent to which new legislation or policy has been translated into administrative procedures or institutional practice, particularly by northern or southern elite institutions.

Capacity building impact is the extent to which organisations have accumulated the necessary skills, infrastructure, policy information, contacts, allies and resources to carry out effective advocacy. It also represents the extent to which they have translated these resources into realistic policy objectives, careful planning, sensible divisions of labour, appropriately-timed interventions in decision-making processes, and dialogue with elites, without compromising their own values.

CIIR used this framework on case studies from East Timor and Angola where it decided on one of three levels of impact for each indicator: 'low' where there was

²⁸ Baranyi et al, 1997

²⁹ Jane Covey, 1994

little discernible impact; 'moderate' where there had been some impact, and 'high' where there had been considerable impact.

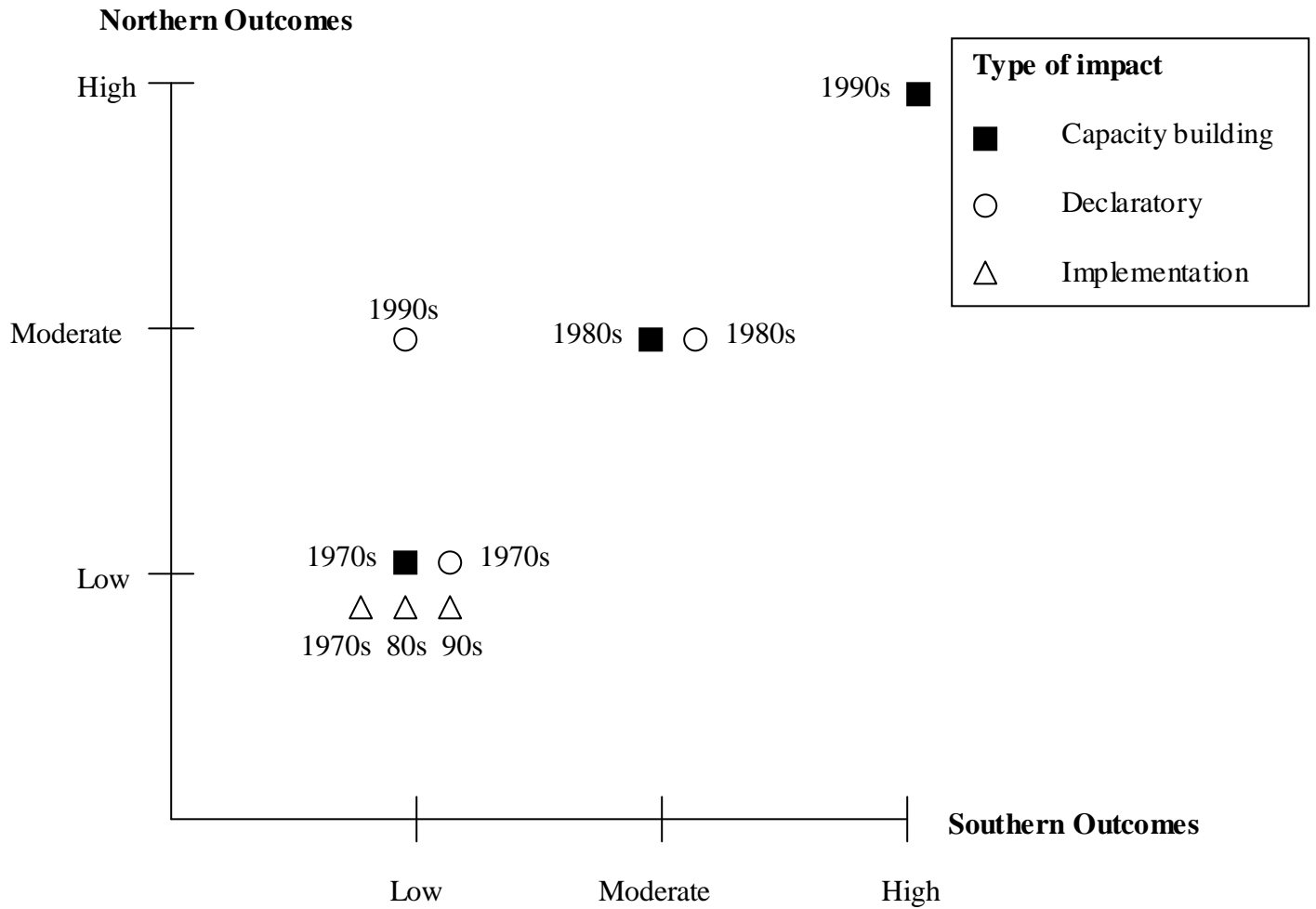
It then plotted these assessments over time against northern and southern outcome axes (see Figure 2). This provided a basis for exploration of the link between the 'advocate' and the 'client', and the degree to which trade-offs between policy change and capacity building might have occurred. In addition it provided a foundation for discussion of change over time and at different levels. The strengths of the framework are described in *Making Solidarity Effective*:³⁰

This enables us, for example, to distinguish between the increasing sophistication of NVOs analyses and lobbying, the shifts this might generate in public statements by Northern government and the change this might produce in the behaviour of military personnel in particular Southern countries, without assuming that advances in one area necessarily lead to progress in another. Indeed, distinguishing between these types of impact should help us detect when declaratory policy changes are used to mask the absence of change on the ground. They also serve to highlight our belief that the ultimate test of NVO advocacy work is its effect on the situation, at the field level, in the South³¹.

³⁰ Baranyi et al, 1997

³¹ Baryani et al, 1997

Figure 2: Impact of NVO Activity on East Timor 1970s-1990s



However, the report also highlighted some problems with the framework and the way it was applied:

- The criteria against which NVOs' work was assessed were set by CIIR, not by other NVOs;
- The criteria were set after the fact and not before advocacy work was undertaken;
- the data on which the assessment was based was not strong. In many cases the authors admit that assessment rested on a hunch about whether or not NVOs had been responsible for policy change.

USAID conceptual framework

Another variation on the same theme is that used by USAID in its conceptual framework, which is used to identify and evaluate advocacy support initiatives. This identifies three different components of a comprehensive advocacy strategy, conceived of as loosely correlated with stages ranging along a continuum, moving from citizen empowerment (transformational), to civil society strengthening (developmental) and concluding with policy influence (instrumental).

*Depending on where a country falls along this continuum – **from** those with a politically-empowered citizenry and a politically-active civil society **to** those where the majority of citizens have little or no say in public matters and where civil society is weak or non-existent – will determine, to a large extent, which components are incorporated into a given advocacy strategy.*

The authors of the report³² define **citizen empowerment** and **citizenship building** as:

- the ability of the marginalized or disadvantaged to challenge the status quo by gaining a sense of their own power, including the capacity to define and prioritise their problems, and then acting to address and resolve them.

Advocacy as **strengthening civil society** and **building social capital** is seen as:

- the ability of citizens to organise themselves collectively to alter the existing relations of power. They do this by providing themselves with a lasting institutional capacity to identify, articulate and act on their concerns, interests and aspirations, including the ability to achieve specific and well-defined policy outcomes.

Advocacy as influencing key **policy outcomes** and achieving a reform agenda:

- is the process in which a group or groups apply a set of skills and techniques for the purpose of influencing public decision-making.

The authors have identified a long list of indicators for each of these dimensions, which can be found in *Advocacy Strategies for Civil Society*.³³ The report suggests that in the majority of USAID country programs, a holistic strategy, working on all three components simultaneously, is the most appropriate approach. There is a hint in the report that the pursuit of an instrumental advocacy objective automatically contributes to the empowerment of citizens, the strengthening of civil society, and the building of social capital:

*Not only does the pursuit of an instrumental advocacy objective contribute to the empowerment of citizens, the strengthening of civil society and the building of social capital; it is a true indication of the legitimacy with which people view their political system.*³⁴

The work of IDR, however, contradicts this, suggesting that more attention needs to be paid to **who** is involved.

³² Fox et al, 1997

³³ Fox et al, 1997

³⁴ Fox et al, 1997

The NEF Framework

The New Economics Foundation (NEF) has undertaken research into what makes campaigns effective. Their approach was to look at the history and impact of campaigns as a whole, rather than trying to isolate the effects of any particular actors.

A key finding was that to bring about desired change in people's lives, targeting one group of actors alone, be it the private sector or the government, is not enough. Instead, work has to be conducted at many different levels (the international, the national, regional and local) and must target a variety of groups (UN bodies, government, officials, industry, the press, consumers, the judiciary, market-traders, health-workers, parents, villagers etc.)

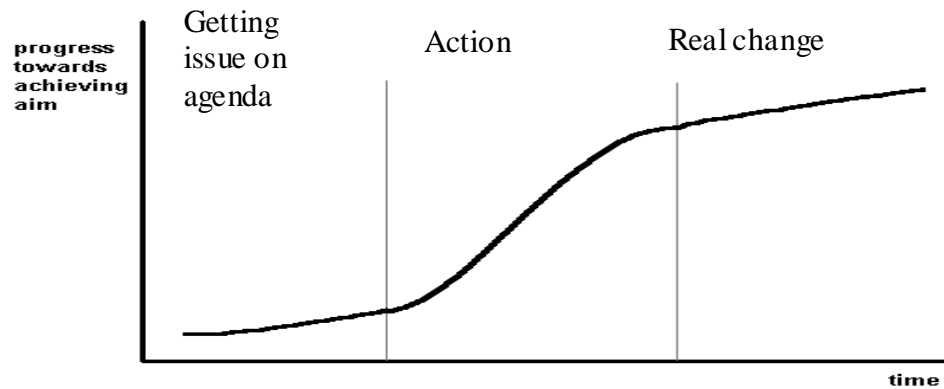
Work at different levels may lead to a broadening of the campaign (e.g. from child labour to education, from marketing of breast milk substitutes to promotion of better health for babies.)³⁵ This work is interlinked, affecting work at other levels often, but not always, positively.

NEF has developed a framework reflecting this need to work at different levels, and recognises also that different types of success are likely at different stages of a campaign (see Figure 5). Working at all these levels is an immense challenge. Work may start in only a few of the arenas and expand as the timeline progresses; it is not necessary to work in all of the arenas at the same time. The challenge is to select the arenas which will be most effective in moving the timeline forward at different times, and to link up with appropriate organisations. What is happening at different levels at different times can be set out in a matrix. Again this is only a partial model of one aspect of a campaign; it can be useful to separate out the different levels at which work can be done, but it should not be forgotten that these are interlinked, and work at one level will affect work at other level.

Work is unlikely to be carried out at different levels by one organisation and does not necessarily have to be simultaneous, but the framework is intended to aid discussion on how work by different organisations might fit together and be mutually reinforcing. The authors point out that the framework is intended as a tool to guide and stimulate discussion, rather than boxes to be rigorously filled in.

³⁵ Chapman and Fisher, 2000

Figure 3: Arenas and Timeline³⁶



	Getting issue on agenda	Action	Real change
<i>The Grassroots</i>			
Individuals			
Community			
NGOs			
<i>National level</i>			
NGOs			
Industry			
Government			
Judiciary			
Public Opinion			
<i>International level</i>			
NGOs			
Multilateral organisations			
Consumers			
Industry			

The framework can be used as a tool for both planning and reflection and is useful when exploring the following questions:

- What has happened already, what is happening, what needs to happen?
- How did/can it happen? What were/are the levers of power and how can they be moved?
- Who can exert pressure on these levers of power?

Common Themes

The frameworks and the literature examined so far emphasise the need to examine different dimensions of success. All recognise the importance of looking at policy success (possibly splitting this into more than one stage or differentiating between government and private sector targets), and the strengthening of civil society capacity to carry out advocacy (some seeing individual empowerment as a separate category, others viewing it as part of this dimension). Some also highlight the development of

³⁶ Levels and arena selected will vary depending on issue.

space or processes by which civil society can get involved in decision making, mentioning changes in gender dynamics and attitudes to facilitate the involvement of women.

These dimensions of policy change, strengthening civil society and enlarging space are drawn together in the following framework by Ros David, which attempts to build on the IDR framework (see Table 2):

Table 2: Framework for understanding possible outcomes and impact of advocacy and campaigning work³⁷

Dimension of work	Indicators of progress	Indicators of change and longer term impact
1. Policy change e.g. Legislative change Policy change Change in law	<input type="checkbox"/> Increased dialogue on an issue <input type="checkbox"/> Raised profile of issue <input type="checkbox"/> Changed opinion (whose?) <input type="checkbox"/> Changed rhetoric (in public/private) <input type="checkbox"/> Change in written publications	<input type="checkbox"/> Changed policy. <input type="checkbox"/> Change in legislation <input type="checkbox"/> Policy/legislation change implemented <input type="checkbox"/> <i>(and in the very long term)</i> positive change in people's lives as a result of the policy/legislation change
2. Strengthening Civil Society by working with... NGOs Movements/networks Community Based Organisation Popular Organisations Partner organisations	<input type="checkbox"/> Change in individual members' skills, capacity, knowledge and effectiveness? <input type="checkbox"/> Change in individual civil groups' capacity, organisational skills, effectiveness? <input type="checkbox"/> Greater synergy of aims/activities in networks/movements <input type="checkbox"/> Change in collaboration, trust or unity of civil society groups	<input type="checkbox"/> Increased effectiveness of civil society work <input type="checkbox"/> Civil groups active in influencing decision-makers in ways that will benefit poor people.
3. Enlarging democratic space or the space in which civil society groups can effectively operate in society	<input type="checkbox"/> Greater freedom of expression <input type="checkbox"/> Greater acceptance/recognition of civil groups <input type="checkbox"/> Existence of fora for civil groups to input into a wider range of decisions <input type="checkbox"/> Increased legitimacy of civil society groups	<input type="checkbox"/> Increased participation of civil society groups in influencing decisions <input type="checkbox"/> Change in accountability and transparency of public institutions
4. Supporting people centred policy making	<input type="checkbox"/> Greater awareness of individual rights and the power systems that withhold rights. <input type="checkbox"/> Change in local people's skills, capacity and knowledge to mobilise and advocate on their own behalves.	<input type="checkbox"/> Improved access to basic rights such as health, housing, water, and food.

The next three sections look at the first three dimensions to examine different ways in which organisations have attempted to monitor and evaluate each one.

³⁷ Ros David & Barry Coates Draft Article on Monitoring Advocacy, 2000

The section on the **policy dimension** looks at processes and frameworks that have been developed to help understand policy change and implementation.

The section on **capacity for people-centred advocacy** looks at processes and frameworks developed to help understand the changes in the **ability** of people, organisations and society to become involved in advocacy work. These might be termed empowerment, civil society capacity and social capital.

Finally, the section on the dimension of **political space** looks at processes and frameworks developed to try to understand what changes have been made in the **opportunities** for people and organisations to influence decision-making and implementation in favour of the poor.

Evaluating all dimensions should be carried out in a gender sensitive manner, an area under-explored in most of the frameworks examined so far.

VI. The Policy Dimension

Success in the policy dimension is measured by the degree to which stated policy goals are achieved. This is not as straightforward as it sounds; indeed, a rereading of the challenges facing advocacy evaluation set out in Section III shows that most of these refer to policy. This is not because policy is innately more difficult than other dimensions, but because in the past it has tended to receive the most attention. Various people have come up with ways of addressing these challenges, some of which are set out here in increasing order of complexity.

Process evaluation

Some suggest that the best way to deal with the challenges of monitoring and evaluating the policy dimension of advocacy is to place a greater emphasis on *process* evaluation³⁸ or looking at how well the NGO is carrying out the tasks it has set itself. Process evaluation can be carried out either by the people involved or by external people.

- **Are the techniques being used functioning well?** This may include assessment of the level of media coverage generated by a campaign, of the response rate from the general public to advertisements, of the number of visitors to the campaign stall at a public exhibition, and of the level of support (as measured through telephone calls, letters etc.) from those being directly lobbied, including legislators. Most of this requires no more than simple record keeping on a day-to-day basis.
- **Are the people being reached those at whom the campaign is targeted?** This goes beyond sheer numbers to assess the quality of the campaign effort and whether it is reaching those who matter. Are they being reached at the right time in the right place? Are they taking action?
- **In retrospect, were the targets and channels selected for the campaign the most appropriate?** New targets and channels of influence in the policy making process emerge all the time and should be considered. How are you trying to influence? Do you need to change your strategy?
- **Are you involving, or collaborating with, the right people, organisations or bodies?**

Taken together, all these aspects of process evaluation will give a strong indication of whether the campaign is on course or not.

³⁸ Binu Thomas, 1998

Rick Davies takes a similar approach, but suggests that when the advocate is acting on behalf of another (as opposed to people acting on their own behalf in people-centred advocacy) then that client should also be consulted. He suggests different questions that may be useful for the audience for policy work and the clients:

Audience	Client ³⁹
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who was supposed to hear the message? • Who has heard the message? • How did they interpret the message? • How was it different from other messages? • What did they do in response? • Have they heard of the sender? • How do they differentiate the sender from others who might be sending similar messages? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If clients are not already working with the NGO how are they contacted in order to ensure that the NGO is acting appropriately on their behalf? • To what extent have NGOs who are involved in development projects explained their advocacy activities to poor people they are working with? • Has there been any attempt to get these people to rank advocacy work versus other activities that they might see as more relevant? • What effort has there been made to provide feedback to the same people about the results of advocacy work? • What effort has there been made to seek their assessment of results?

But as Christian Aid point out:⁴⁰

There are however difficulties in assessing the client side of the relationship: intended beneficiaries often do not know they are being advocated for; in many cases they do not have a say about who will advocate on their behalf and have little influence over their advocates. Talking to intended beneficiaries and understanding their perception of impact is even more difficult than in development projects, where they are at least participating in a direct way.

There are times when it is valuable to have an outside opinion on how you are doing. The Third World Network (TWN) has found what they call **participatory external evaluation** useful.⁴¹ TWN asked an external evaluator who was knowledgeable about networking and the issues involved to evaluate its activities during major international conferences. As a participant in the conference, the evaluator also experienced at first hand the difficulties of influencing the outcomes of the conference, and so was in a better position to judge the achievements of TWN's advocacy and lobbying activities as well as to observe how they were carried out.

Pathways of influence

The pathways of influence approach⁴² is similar to the process evaluation approach in that it helps teams develop conceptual clarity about **whom** they are trying to influence, **how** they will go about this (given the activities and strengths of partners

³⁹ If taking the three-dimensional framework advocated by this paper, then some of these questions might be seen as more appropriate in the people-centred advocacy dimension. The table has however been kept together in its original form for easier reference.

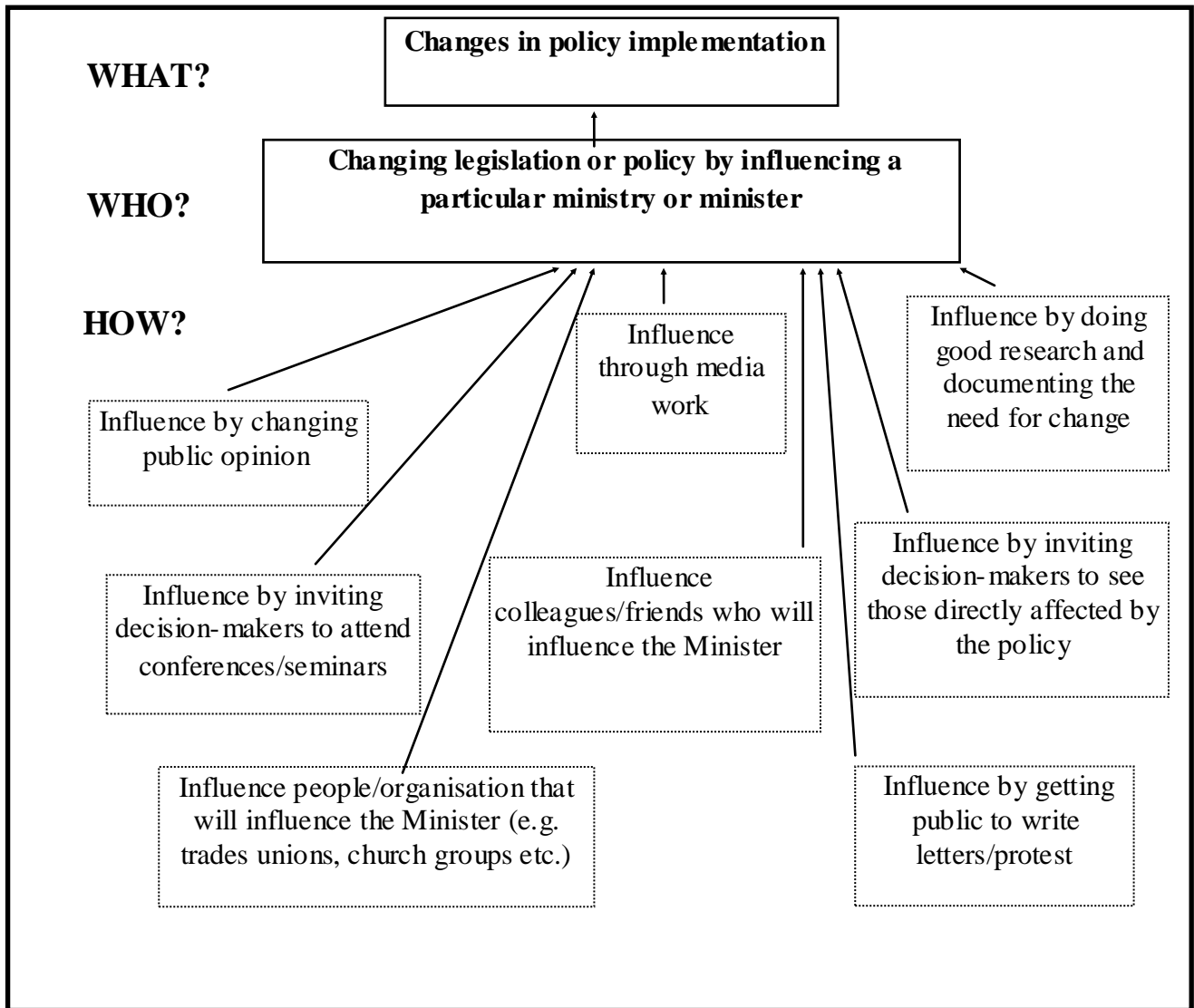
⁴⁰ Christian Aid, 1999

⁴¹ Karl et al, 1999

⁴² Proposed by ActionAid see Ros David 1998

and other agents) and **what** they should monitor to assess progress. The flow diagram below (figure 4) illustrates a hypothetical example of pathways of influence for pressurising decision-makers.

Figure 4: Pathways of Influence



Breaking down the campaign and achieving clarity of objectives in different areas of work makes it possible to select qualitative and quantitative indicators to monitor progress in key areas.

Proximate indicators⁴³

*impact assessment of advocacy is like standing in a court of law: one makes a plausible case with the aim of being believed.*⁴⁴

⁴³ This subsection is mainly drawn from ideas of Rick Davies, 2000b

⁴⁴ Alex Bush, Help Age, conversation

Proximate indicators are conceptually similar to the pathways of influence approach and may be helpful in advocacy work, where the chain of causation is often long and intermingled with the influence of many other actors. The reasoning behind these indicators is that if one knows the organisational and political "ingredients" required for policy change, one can break down the process of policy change into more readily trackable parts.⁴⁵

Those doing advocacy work will need to think through a likely chain of cause and effect that might be expected to take place between their actions and the final expected change in the targeted institution. Indicators then need to be identified for these intermediate changes, not just for the final expected change. For example, NGOs could start by looking at those who have been the immediate recipients of their advocacy communications and ask what types of changes they would expect to find in that person's knowledge and attitudes if advocacy messages were beginning to have an effect. Do the people concerned know more than they have originally been told? In what areas have they developed more knowledge, and what does that signify?

If it turns out that the expected change cannot be seen in these indicators then two possible interpretations can be made:

1. The advocacy work was ineffective. This suggests that the problems with the advocacy strategy are located before this point in the expected chain of causation.
2. The theory of cause and effect is wrong. It may still be that the advocacy work is effective, but that change is happening through a different mechanism. In this case those doing the advocacy need to re-think their theory and identify other intermediate indicators associated with a more plausible chain of cause and effect.

It would be most cost-effective to set up and monitor proximate indicators that were very close at hand in terms of the expected chain of causation. For example, lobbying activities by an NGO in The Gambia around the WTO and targeted at government officials might have the following proximate change indicators:

- Changes in the Gambian officials' knowledge of the WTO, with their knowledge being more up to date and detailed
- The officials know more about the knowledge of other parties further along in the expected chain of cause and effect.

Again it should be recognised that influence might be exerted through a variety of pathways. As Rick Davies puts it:

*When an advocacy campaign is working through multiple channels there may be multiple and parallel chains of cause and effect, some of which are more effective than others. In this case we need to document that plurality and not impose a false homogeneity onto our accounts of advocacy practice.*⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Nelson, 1999

⁴⁶ Rick Davies, 2000b

This makes branching tree structures useful to represent project activities and theories of cause and effect. However, when using such a tool it should be remembered that our understanding of these complex systems and processes is very limited. Tree structures should be used as a basis for creative thinking, rather than as a blueprint of how the world works.

Binu Thomas⁴⁷ suggests that impact can be measured by matching process evaluation results with information on a target's behaviour. Public education aspects of a campaign can be measured by carrying out opinion surveys to assess shifts in public attitudes or behaviour. Similarly, changes in a company's sales or share prices could be taken as indicators to measure the effectiveness of a corporate campaign. In each case an assumption has been made that these changes will lead to further changes up the impact chain.

Paul Nelson again suggests the proximate indicator approach as one of three methods frequently used to monitor the impact of advocacy targeted at the International Finance Institutions (IFIs). The record of advocacy proposals suggest that for the IFIs there are at least four key strategic factors in motivating significant policy change:

- i. support from senior management
- ii. initiative by major shareholders
- iii. active internal leadership and
- iv. external pressure.⁴⁸

In an alternative approach, Nelson suggests another way of choosing proximate indicators to monitor impact on an organisation like the World Bank. He points out that indicators have to be carefully selected to distinguish incidental changes from significant changes, or to separate window dressing and public relations from substantive trends. He suggests three critical features to watch:

- "core technologies" that are central to the organisation's productive process (for the World Bank, examples of these might be project cycle, policy conditionality, patterns of borrowing on international financial markets, and the imperative to disburse loans).
- the patterns of sifting and selecting information that make up the knowledge base for an organisational culture.
- the internal incentives that define achievement and career paths.

Stages of policy success

Selecting proximate indicators relies on clear overall goals, along with some theory of how policy change occurs and then translates into change on the ground. Policy change is in itself a proximate indicator, as we assume it will lead to change in people's lives. However, the more dynamic, interactive views of the policy process that are replacing the linear model suggest that policy change alone will rarely be enough to ensure real change on the ground; these perspectives thus push campaigns towards working in a more holistic and interactive manner.⁴⁹

Even when policy victory has been achieved, constant vigilance is required:

⁴⁷ Binu Thomas, 1998

⁴⁸ Paul Nelson, 1999

⁴⁹ for a good summary see Rachel Sutton, 1999

Hard won gains can be dissipated unless there is constant vigilance over the law's application and interpretation. Legal reform strategies work best, after all, when the social value base is in concordance with the desired new norms. As long as the old regime of values is in effect, the tasks of making the new norms operative, or activating the educative function of law to change values, will be difficult and require action on many fronts.⁵⁰

There are a number of different frameworks of 'stages in the policy process' which can help us to set proximate indicators. Two are presented here.

In the past the Oxfam Policy Department has tended to focus on the policy outcomes of its work, distinguishing between six different stages of the advocacy process which appear as a rather linear progression:⁵¹

1. Heightened awareness about an issue
2. Contribution to debate
3. Changed opinions
4. Changed policy
5. Policy change is implemented
6. Positive change in people's lives

Keck and Sikkink⁵² have developed a similar framework to look at changes in the policy dimension. They evaluate impact in terms of various 'stages':

1. Issue creation and agenda setting;
2. Change in discursive positions or policy commitments of states and international organisations;⁵³
3. Institutional procedural change;
4. Influence on policy change in 'target actors' which may be states, international organisations, or private actors;
5. Actual behavioural change in target actors.

Keck and Sikkink stress that care is needed to distinguish between policy change and change in behaviour, and suggest that meaningful policy change is more likely when the first three stages of impact have occurred, but do not see this as a linear progression. Work by 'The Advocacy Working Group'⁵⁴ in the Philippines came up with a similar list.⁵⁵

Some of these stages of policy impact, such as changes in opinion, are particularly hard to assess. Chris Roche suggests that it is useful to seek out the views of non-project respondents and compare them with those of people involved in the project. In the case of advocacy, this might include⁵⁶:

⁵⁰ Schuler, no date

⁵¹ Roche, 1999

⁵² Keck and Sikkink, 1998

⁵³ Discursive positions change when states and international organisations support international declarations or change stated domestic policy positions.

⁵⁴ The Advocacy Working Group was made up of: Oxfam Great Britain; Oxfam America; National Center for Cooperation in Development; Christian Aid; Action for Economic Reform; and, Freedom from Debt Coalition.

⁵⁵ See Edna Co, 1999

⁵⁶ Chris Roche, 1999

- Comparing the views of decision-makers, politicians, or journalists targeted by advocacy work with those of their peers who were not targeted
- Comparing the opinions of members of the general public targeted by campaigning work with those of people who were not targeted
- Comparing the positions of individuals in countries where specific policy change has occurred with those in countries where it has not.

Project-out or Context-in

Although process evaluation and proximate indicators are useful, they tend to start with the advocacy activity and work outwards from it, and can thus miss larger trends, external influences or unintended consequences. They can be usefully complemented by context-in approaches that look at change in people's lives, try to trace the reasons for it and then situate the work of external actors within that context. This approach is equally valid for the other dimensions of advocacy success.

One way of doing this is to ask various stakeholders open-ended questions such as:⁵⁷

'During the past year, what do you think was the most significant change that took place in?'

Stakeholders' responses to the above questions are in two parts:

- a) **Descriptive** (what, who, when, where etc.) and
- b) **Explanatory** (stakeholders' subjective assessment of the significance of the changes during the reporting period).

Project-out and context-in approaches should complement and balance each other. For example, Chris Roche of Oxfam is currently looking at ways of moving monitoring and evaluation away from exclusively project-based assessment, and suggests the following elements of a framework:

- A multi-level approach including annual judgements of impact by partners and project managers, facilitated peer reviews, independent evaluations and infrequent long-term impact research.
- Tracking and correlating change occurring at the level of individuals (especially changes in people's lives), at the level of organisations (changes in capacities and skills as well as in policies and practices) and at the level of communities or societies as a whole (particularly changes in ideas and beliefs, values and ethics), and relating these to the costs involved in achieving them.
- Expanding the possibilities for collecting evidence of what is changing in people's lives (and why) from other actors, including partners but also from a wider range of actors, possibly using the Internet.

⁵⁷ Davies, 1998

VII. Capacity for people centred advocacy

In order to assess the increasing capacity for advocacy we need to look at a number of different levels:

- At the individual or group level - empowerment to understand one's own situation and to speak out at public meetings
- At the group level - the capacity of civil organisations to engage in advocacy, participate in public decision-making, monitor the implementation and enforcement of reforms, and to hold public and private institutions accountable
- At the level of society - an increase in social capital, creating the conditions under which people and groups can come together to work towards common aims
- At the local, regional, national or international level - an increase in the capacity of networks, movements and coalitions to work together for common aims.

Not all levels will be relevant in every case.

There are a variety of frameworks that have been developed to evaluate or self-evaluate these different aspects of capacity. A few are particularly pertinent to advocacy capacity and are presented here. Other methods (such as Outcome Mapping) focus more generally on changes in behaviour, and though potentially useful are not included here for reasons of space.⁵⁸

Empowerment

Empowerment of the individual or group to speak out and take on an advocacy role can be seen as the start of the advocacy process. For example, ActionAid has developed an approach to literacy, called *Reflect*, which aims to increase poor and marginalised people's basic literacy and at the same time develop their understanding of local power relations as well as to build their confidence to speak out in public. A structured participatory learning process, *Reflect* facilitates people's critical analysis of their environment, placing empowerment at the heart of sustainable and equitable development.⁵⁹

However, despite empowerment having been on the NGO agenda for some years now, Peter Oakley could still write in early 2000:

*It is probably true to say that little progress has been made to date in terms of answering the question: 'In a process of empowerment, how do we know that a previously powerless group has been 'empowered'.*⁶⁰

A consensus does exist that those monitoring and evaluation processes which contribute positively towards empowerment, rather than undermining it, must be participatory. An example of such a participatory process is ActionAid Nepal's work with bonded labourers in Nepal.

⁵⁸ For information on Outcome Mapping see Earl, Carden and Smutylo, 2000

⁵⁹ David Archer, 2000

⁶⁰ Peter Oakley, 2000

“Organising for Rights” was a successful movement supported by ActionAid in Nepal working to liberate bonded labourers (*Kamaiya*) whose families have been in debt to landlords for generations. As part of the activities of the movement, training sessions were organised to provide hands-on skills for advocacy through organising communities for rights. Workshops were held at district and village level to discuss Nepal's constitution as well as other relevant legislation and civic rights against slavery and bondage.

Bonded labourers active in "Organising for Rights" have described the impact that being part of the movement had on them. Table 3 below shows the changes in their awareness and perception levels. The changes have been conceptualised as a shift from traditional perception to naïve understanding and finally to a more critical awareness of their situation, strengths and capacities. This illustrates the point made by Valerie Miller and Lisa VeneKlasen in their discussion of psychological and attitudinal changes related to political awareness and personal self worth (see page 15 in this paper) and the importance of identifying and tracking these changes.

Table 3: Bonded Labourers' changes in awareness and perception levels

Traditional	Naïve	Critical
“We are <i>Kamaiya</i> by age old tradition.”	“We can't repay the <i>Sauki</i> . (debt) How can we be liberated?”	“We can survive freely, We do not want to be bonded like a bull”
“We are <i>Kamaiya</i> by birth and it is our <i>Karma</i> .” (believe in fatalism)	“We are exploited and sold by landlords time and again. What option do we have to be liberated?”	“Slavery is illegal. It must be punished by the law in practice.”
“We will not die of hunger in landlords house being <i>Kamaiya</i> .”	“How to secure our daily wages?”	“Our labour must be valued and be calculated.”
“Without having a piece of land how to cope with survival?”	“We are not interested to be bonded, but we are landless.”	“Government should guarantee our food and shelter.”

A number of other organisations and people have drawn up suggested indicators of the dimensions of empowerment for both individuals and groups. See for example Salil Shetty,⁶¹ who looks at psychological, cultural, social, economic, organisational and political dimensions, or INTRAC, who identify internal and external indicators of group empowerment, along with a scale for quantifying external links and group self-confidence.⁶²

⁶¹ Salil Shetty, 1991

⁶² INTRAC, 1999

Group Capacity for Advocacy

There are a number of approaches that explore group capacity for advocacy. These range from those that look at a group's interaction with its outside environment to those that focus on the group's interaction with its partners or donors, as well as approaches that aim to help groups assess their own capacity in undertaking advocacy work. A few examples are given here.

Stages of group development

A case study from Bangladesh in *Impact Assessment for Development Agencies*⁶³ sets out a model of group change based on the development of group cohesion and the groups' subsequent ability to advocate and push for changes in policies. The following stages in group cohesion are identified and then tracked over time:

1. Group formation
2. Group carries out activities
3. Group sets up or joins a federation beyond the village level
4. Movement is launched which takes on groups with vested interests
5. Groups of poor are involved in framing legislation and have control over resources.

Another study in the same book analysed a programme in terms of:

- first-order change (outputs)
- second-order change (effects)
- third-order change (impact).

First-order change was measured in terms of the numbers and types of groups that were formed as a result of the project, such as village development committees, self-help groups, and forest protection committees and farmers clubs.

Second-order change was assessed in terms of the evolution of these groups through membership drives, formal registration, creating a community infrastructure, and in terms of changes in the growth of community activities, the roles and regulatory of meetings, and the use of community centres.

Assessing the impact at community level (third order change) investigated whether and how groups shared approaches and techniques or used them more widely; how many and what kind of proposals and demands the community made; what changes occurred in community norms and behaviour; and what degree and range of activities the groups believed they could accomplish. How gender issues could be explored through this framework was not examined.

Relationships between NGOs and their Clients⁶⁴

An alternative approach to assessing the development of group capacity looks at the relationship of the group to the supporting NGO, rather than that of the group to the rest of its external environment.

This approach looks for:

⁶³ Roche, 1999

⁶⁴ Rick Davies, 2000

- Differences of opinion
- Differences in behaviour
- Differences in organisational structure.

Rick Davies, for example, suggests that the lack of any overt differences of opinion suggests an unbalanced power relationship between the NGO and its 'client organisation'. The admittance and resolution of significant differences of opinion between an organisation and its clients can be seen as an indication of empowerment of both parties, if both parties agree that the result is a successful resolution. It can also be an indication of the ability of the group to articulate and advocate for changes in the approaches and policy of the NGO. Conversely, the persistence of unresolved differences can be seen as an indication of ineffectiveness or lack of empowerment.

Self-Assessment of group capacity for advocacy

Often organisations are best placed to assess their own capacity for advocacy work, perhaps with the aid of an outside facilitator.

One approach is for an organisation to select the competencies that it feels are important for effective advocacy. The organisation can then assess where it stands in relation to the different aspects it has identified for areas of capacity building. It can judge its initial capacity, changes in capacity and reasons for them against a scale of 0-3:

0 = undesirable level calling for a large amount of improvement

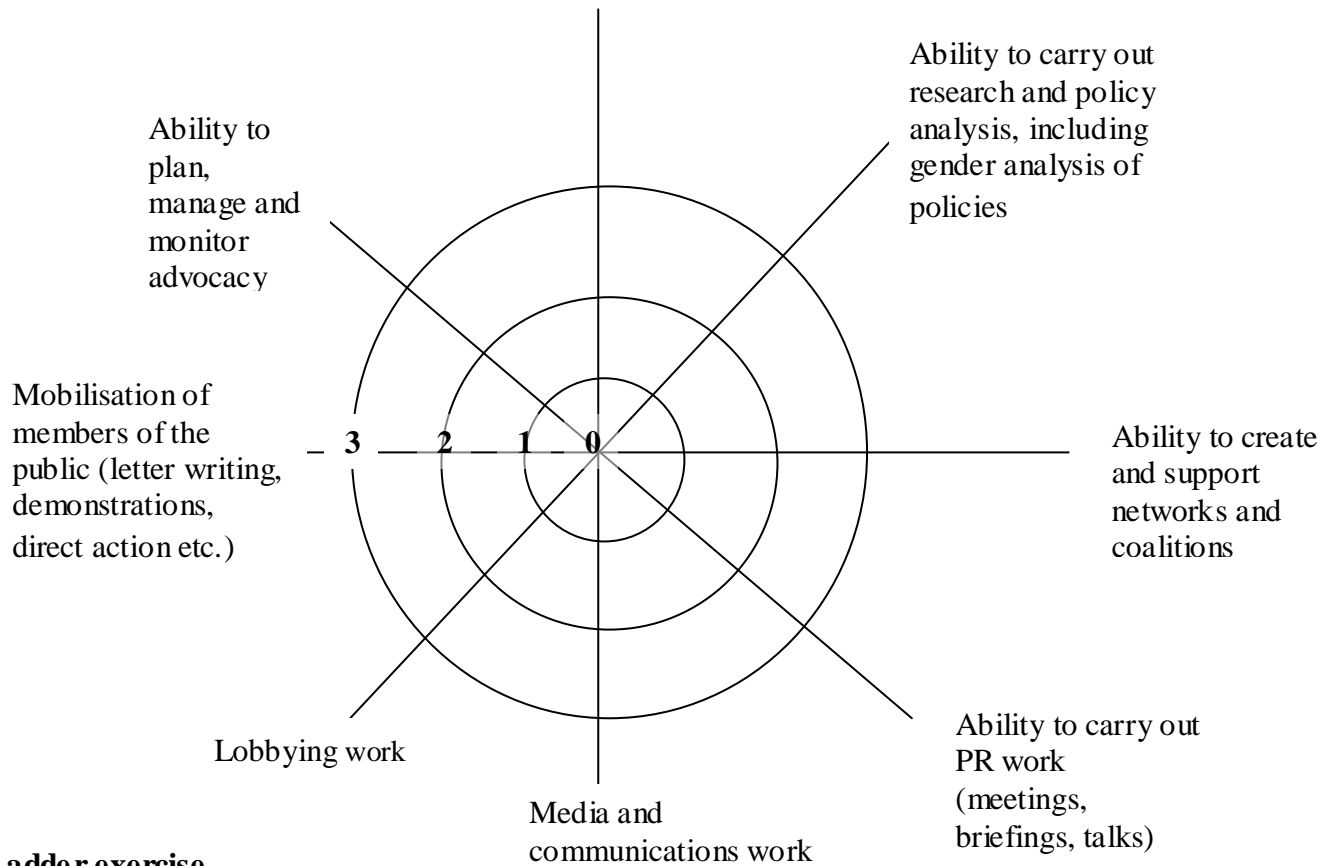
1 = poor level having much room for improvement

2 = good situation with some room for improvement

3 = ideal situation with little room for improvement

The spider diagram below (Figure 5) is one way of representing this assessment diagrammatically. Each aspect of organisational change should be vigorously discussed during participatory monitoring meetings.

Figure 5: Spider Diagram for Capacity Building for Advocacy ⁶⁵




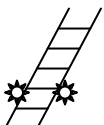

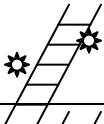

Ladder exercise

A similar way of assessing organisational change is by using a ladder exercise (see Table 4). Once again the organisation sets its own targets and (after a reasonable period) assesses its own performance. The organisation ranks the degree to which it has increased its capacity to carry out its advocacy work on a ladder of changes. It can then assess to what extent the changes (be they positive or negative) are attributable to a particular organisation’s support or to other agencies or external factors. An explanation for these changes can be written alongside the diagram. This gives the support NGO more feedback on what elements of its support are considered most effective and useful.

⁶⁵ Gosling and Edwards, 1995 from Norman Uphoff, 1989

Table 4: Hypothetical Ladder Exercise for Partners of ActionAid⁶⁶

Key		* range
		+ positive support
		- negative factors

	Before After	AA Support	Other Factors	Reasons
Research & policy analysis		+++	----	<i>Progress despite a key researcher leaving the team</i>
Media & communication		++	+++++	<i>Developed mainly through involvement in a particular campaign without AA support</i>
Network and Coalition building		+++++	++++	<i>Progress due to AA capacity building work and involvement with other CSOs.</i>
PR work (meetings, briefings etc...)		++	++	<i>Helped slightly by AA due to secondment of staff</i>

Evaluating support for Capacity Development

Relying exclusively on self-evaluation of capacity can make it difficult for an NGO working to support the capacity of its partners to assess and reflect on this support role.

In a project aimed at strengthening civil society in northern Ghana, ISODEC and Oxfam are experimenting with assessing change at the organisational level. Here ISODEC has undertaken an initial survey of membership which includes basic information on each organisation. The proposal is to train one or two individuals from each organisation in participatory organisational appraisal methods.

⁶⁶ Adapted by Ros David, 1998 from original work by Gosling and Edwards, 1995

These individuals will then go back to their organisations to undertake a fuller organisational diagnosis, which, concentrates on assisting the organisation to explore:

- The character of their organisation
- Their mission
- Where they are
- How they are organised to do what they do
- What they have achieved
- What they could achieve
- What they need to do to achieve that vision.

This process will effectively establish, in a participatory manner, a baseline against which organisational development can be tracked.

Although indicators will be developed in the process and with partners, ISODEC has some of its own indicators of organisational development, notably:

- Clarity of organisational mission/vision and legal status
- Legitimacy derived from broad community support
- Clear aims and clarity about how it can deliver its objectives
- Usefulness of its services
- Clarity of strategic approach to developmental input
- The nature of the interface with its constituency and ability to solicit and internalise the views of its constituents
- Clarity of its accountability mechanisms.

Social Capital

There is little information available on how development agencies are assessing increases in social capital. One exception is the Grassroots Development Framework.

The Grassroots Development Framework (The Cone)

The Grassroots Development Framework (GDF), often referred to as 'the Cone', is a conceptual tool developed to take account of social capital when measuring developmental success (see Figure 6). It is an attempt to analyse complex project results in terms of personal and organisational capacity or increased voice in decision-making. As such it would appear to measure not 'social capital' per se, but increased interaction between organisations, which could be taken as a proxy indicator of social capital. It is also used to assess the policy dimension of work by asking whether recipient organisations contributed to any change in policies, practices or attitudes in the surrounding community.

The premise of the framework is that grassroots development work produces results at three levels -

- i. the individual
- ii. the organisation
- iii. the wider community

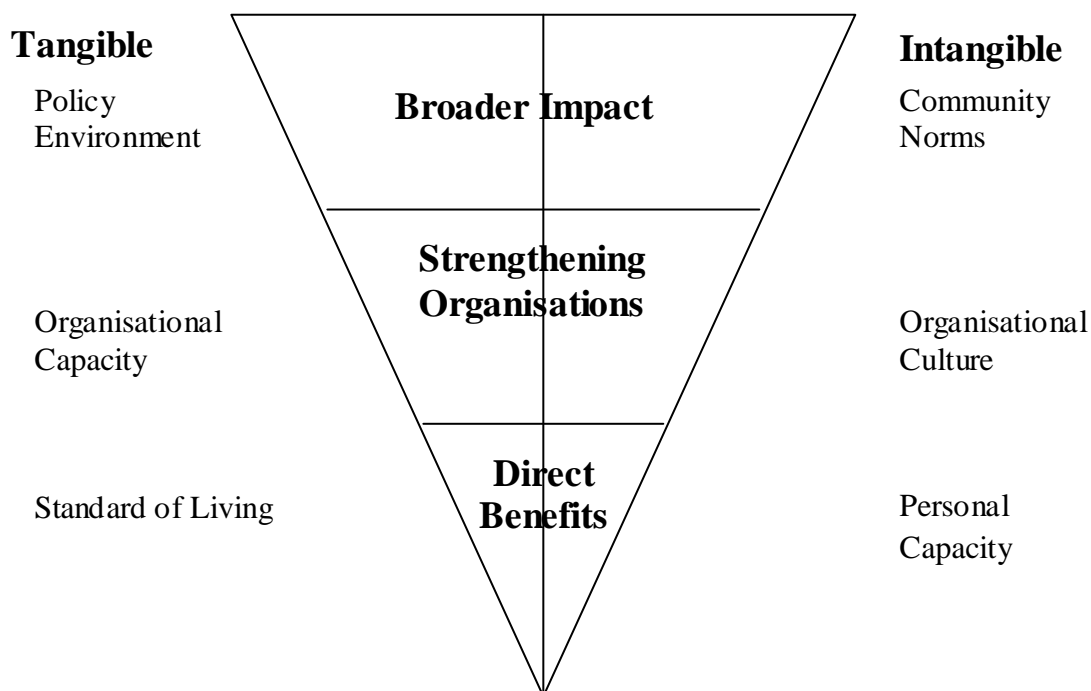
- and that there are important intangible, as well as tangible, results that need to be taken into account. Its conical shape represents the widening impact of grassroots development from the individual through organisations to the community at large.

Every project funded by the Inter-American Foundation (IAF) uses a selected number of indicators from the GDF. The selection is based both on capability to monitor and collect data and on the objectives of the project, and is done by the Foundation's country representative in consultation with the grantee. The number of indicators ranges from 3-10, averaging 7. These become the items on which grantees report to the IAF every 6 months.

The cone has been widely tested in South America, and in general the feedback is very positive. Ritchey-Vance⁶⁷ summarises the attractions of the framework as:

- Conceptual clarity
- Simplicity
- Effective visual presentation
- Flexibility, to adjust for context and adapt methodologies
- Versatility, to apply to an entire grant portfolio or to a specific project
- Vitality, springing from broad participation and a two year dialogue to build the system.

⁶⁷ Ritchie-Vance, 1996

Figure 6: The Grassroots Development Framework (Cone)

There are, however, a number of concerns and operational problems. An understanding of context is very important as a backdrop and basis for interpreting results; furthermore, timeframe continues to be a major question, as results often become manifest well after a grant has ended. Lastly, trying to determine the degree of causality between a given grant and results is not usually practical.

Networks and Movements

This scoping study did not find substantive information on how organisations are monitoring and evaluating the development of networks and movements for advocacy (as opposed to monitoring and evaluating specific activities carried out by networks).

Appropriate monitoring and evaluation methodologies for networks needs to take into account their political nature and the ‘invisible’ effects of much of their work, such as putting people in touch with each other, stimulating and facilitating action and the trust that enables concerted action.⁶⁸

There is some theoretical work which could be useful to draw upon when developing frameworks for monitoring and evaluating networks and movements.

The Strength of the Links

The Open University's GECOU project developed a framework for collaboration methods among environmental NGOs based on the strength of the links between them (see table 5 below).⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Karl et al, 1999

⁶⁹ Eccleston, 1996

Table 5: Global Collaboration Methods among Environmental NGOs

Degree	Style	Methods/Characteristics	
<i>Increasing degree of global contact and organisation</i>	NETWORKING	Decentralised/ unpredictable use of information from elsewhere. Publications, IT 'nets' used passively /occasionally. Open access opportunities to information flows.	<i>Increasing costs of co-ordination, time, people, resources</i>
↓	NETWORKS	More active exchange of info. With co-ordinating secretariat. Less specific tasks, more long-term support boosting morale. More regular personal contacts especially with trusted buddies. Emphasis mostly on info. Sharing rather than joint campaigning.	↓
↓	COALITIONS	Single event joint campaigns often among fairly diverse NGOs. Attempted division of labour into most appropriate tasks. Limited life recognised and accepted, given diverse missions.	↓
↓	ALLIANCES	Long-term allegiance to common ideals among very trusted partners. Northern partners committed to empowering southern NGOs. Very regular consultation by fax, IT and personal meetings. Time investment justified by 'certainty of shared values'.	

This framework is useful in that it stresses different degrees of collaboration and gives precise definitions for words that tend to be used very loosely. It can usefully be extended to apply to collaboration between NGOs working on development issues. What it lacks is an analysis of where the power is centred.

Location of power

Lisa Jordan and Pieter van Tuijl, both experienced campaigners, have looked at the international dynamics of many campaigns, and have drawn up a typology of campaigns which tries to combine elements of power and the strength of links between actors.⁷⁰ This contains four types of campaign: the hybrid, the concurrent, the disassociated, and the competitive. These are described in the table 6 below.

Table 6: Dynamics of Jordan and Van Tuijl's Typology

Hybrid	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Representation of interlocking objectives by different NGOs in multiple political arenas intertwined 2. Very fluid and continuous flow of information among all NGOs involved 3. Continuous review of strategies and joint management of political responsibilities by all NGOs involved. Risk management purely based on local realities in political arena of most vulnerable participants. 4. High level of accountability towards most politically vulnerable actors.
Concurrent	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coinciding representation of different but compatible objectives by NGOs operating in their own political arena 2. Regular but multi-phased flow of information among NGOs involved 3. Frequent review of strategies and coexisting management of political responsibilities by varying combinations of NGOs involved at different levels 4. Medium level of accountability
Disassociated	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parallel representation of conflicting objectives by different NGOs in their own political arena 2. A regular but lopsided flow of information among the NGOs involved, usually more information flows from the South to the North rather than vice versa 3. Occasional and unaffiliated review of strategies and management of political responsibilities among different NGOs involved, predominantly exclusive to their own political arena 4. Low level of accountability
Competitive	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parallel representation of opposing objectives by different NGOs in different political arenas 2. No direct flow of information among different NGOs at different levels 3. No joint review of strategies or management of political responsibilities which may result in human rights violations or other negative impacts on the interests of local communities 4. No accountability

They suggest that the hybrid campaign is the exception rather than the rule.

Structure of decision making

Although Jordan and van Tuijl place just as much emphasis on who makes decisions as to strategy, they do not talk about the actual structure of decision-making.

Valerie Miller suggests that a co-ordinating body with professional expertise and staff exclusively dedicated to a campaign allows the speedy, agile and clear decision-making necessary for groups to respond in a timely fashion to the fast-paced,

⁷⁰ Lisa Jordan and Peter van Tuijl, 1998

multilevel nature of policy influence work. She believes that formal democratic structures of coalition decision-making and accountability help establish common purpose, responsibility and ownership, and hold together ideologically diverse groups.⁷¹

Different types of network for different types of campaign

Jordan and van Tuijl do not examine whether different types of networking are more appropriate for different types of campaign; for them the hybrid campaign is always the ideal, although it remains uncommon in practice. Jane Covey suggests, however, that different types of linkage are more suitable for different contexts.

In Covey's view **grassroots-centred alliances** are established primarily on principles of solidarity and favour civil society gains over policy gains. **NGO-centred alliances** are formed primarily to achieve NGO-defined policy goals, and only involve grassroots groups to provide information, stage local protests or lend legitimacy. Covey suggests that these alliances are well suited to achieving policy change with organisations such as multilateral development banks, which themselves have low levels of public accountability. However, they have little chance of achieving positive civil society outcomes.

She identifies **mixed alliances**, linking the poor, middle classes and elites, as having the potential to gain both policy and civil society outcomes, but concedes that this type of group provides the greatest challenge.⁷²

Similarly, research by the NEF differentiates between three different structures of network:

- the **pyramid**, where information flows up and down to a Co-ordinating secretariat
- the **wheel**, with one or more focal points, but also with considerable flow of information directly between member organisations
- the **web**, where information flows in all directions in roughly equal quantities.

They summarise the advantages and disadvantages of each (see Table 7).

⁷¹ Valerie Miller, 1994

⁷² Jane Covey, 1994

Table 7: Advantages and Disadvantages of Different Structures of Collaboration⁷³

Structure	Advantages	Disadvantages
Pyramid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dynamic • quick to act • can speak with authority of many member organisations • can mobilise a lot of people • helps to get access to top level of policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • members may feel loss of identity • strengthening civil society at grassroots may not be given adequate attention • danger of speaking 'for' clients rather than facilitating them to speak for themselves
Wheel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more independence at the grassroots • good for information exchange and sorting • centres of specialisation in large networks can aid in information sorting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can be harder to show a united front or common identity • process of change is slow • campaign may miss opportunities for sudden changes in practice
Web	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good for information exchange 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • slow to take action • possibly would need to change into a wheel or pyramid before effective campaigning action could be taken

Brown and Fox concentrate specifically on campaigns directed at the World Bank. They find that where the dominant issue was moderating or undoing harmful impacts of specific Bank projects on grassroots communities, the transnational coalition was spearheaded and sustained by grassroots movements directly threatened by the projects, together with national NGO allies who in turn sought international support. Because these campaigns were essentially the international wings of already-existing national movements they called them **national problem coalitions**.⁷⁴

In other settings the campaign coalition was primarily concerned with Bank failures to live up to its own policies, with the primary target being reform of the Bank itself: they called these **transnational advocacy networks**.

Their third typology was **internal reform initiatives**, where coalition leadership came from within the Bank, as internal reformers worked with external groups to review Bank experience and articulate alternative policies.

⁷³ Chapman and Fisher, 1999

⁷⁴ Brown and Fox, 1999

VIII. Political Space

Aims and objectives for opening up political space will vary greatly depending on whether the advocacy is aimed at local, national, or at international level, and on the awareness, interest and action of partner groups. This will vary from country to country and region to region⁷⁵.

Monitoring and evaluating political space is perhaps the hardest issue of all, and there is a scarcity of work and literature on it. Indeed, the definitions of what constitutes political space may vary according to context. Such definitions, however, should include assessment of cultural norms and practices that prevent certain social groups (e.g. harajins or women) being involved in decision making at all levels.

The organisation Freedom House in the USA produces a 'Civil Liberties Index' in the annual volume *Freedom in the World*. This systematically compares every country's 'association and organisational rights' (i.e. the crucial political freedoms of individuals to assemble and to form civil organisations) as well as the existence of such interest organisations as major unions, peasant organisations and professional associations at national level.⁷⁶

This could provide a good starting point for discussions of a country's current political space, which might be done either when setting national advocacy aims or when monitoring and evaluating advocacy undertaken at national level.

It is important to think about not only what political space means in a particular context but also by what means advocacy aims to increase it; it is also important to disaggregate indicators of political space by gender. A study of various advocacy efforts by The Advocacy Working Group in the Philippines developed a list of broad indicators to look at when considering contributions to building democracy⁷⁷:

- Did it result in general public awareness?
- Did it generate public support?
- Did it contribute to public processes (election, mobilisation etc)?
- Did it improve the accountability of the governing structures/institutions?
- Did it improve accountability of the policy advocates?
- Did it enhance participation by the constituents?
- Did it stimulate action/decision by target groups?
- Did it enhance equity along: gender, ethnicity, religion and class?

Many of these questions are not easy to answer, except perhaps in an anecdotal and subjective way.

The Ladder of Democratic & Political Space⁷⁸

One way to assess changes in political space at both local and national levels, and even in a particular international forum, is to discuss as a group, or network, how they

⁷⁵ Ros David, 1998

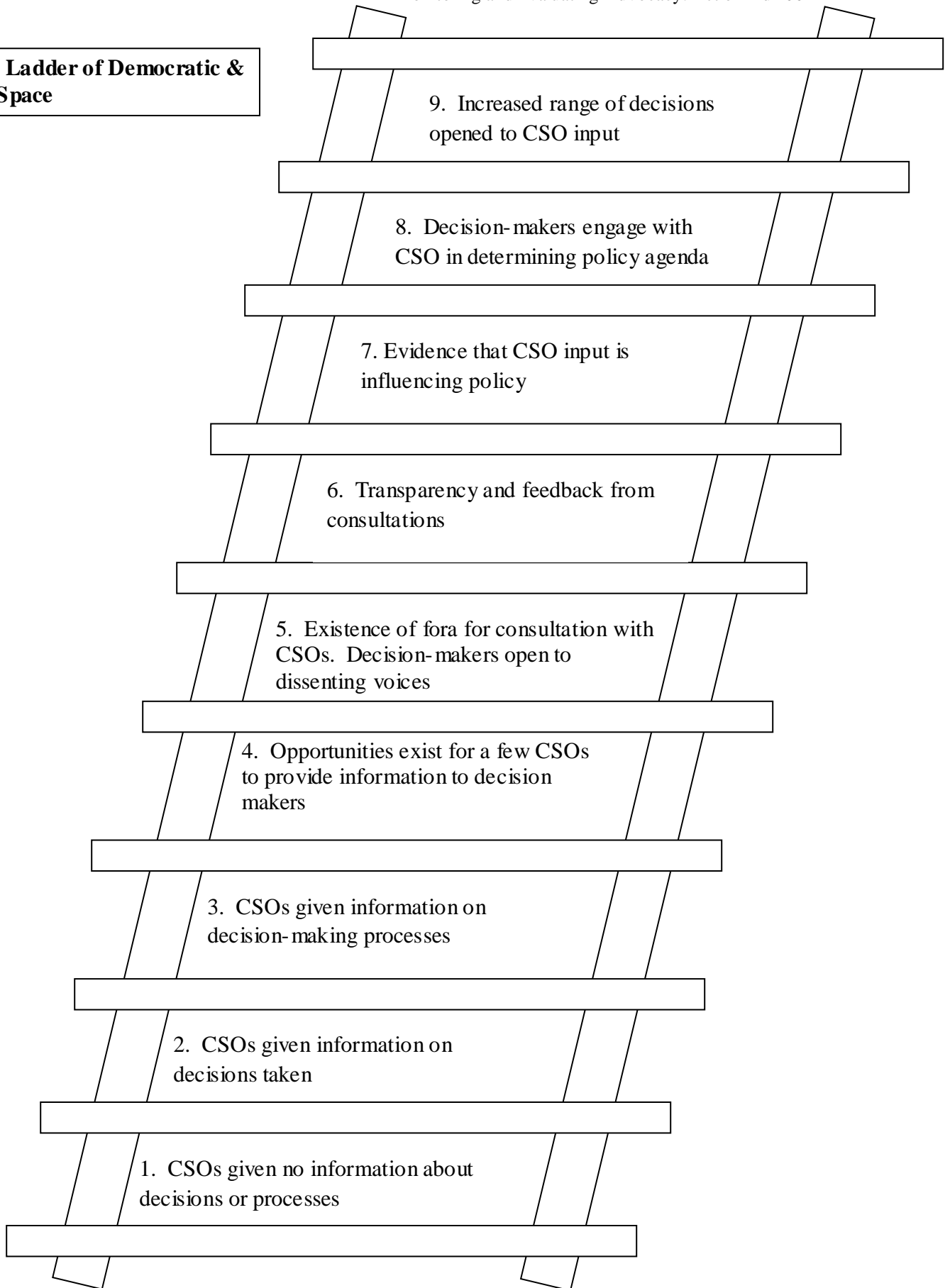
⁷⁶ Friedheim, 2000

⁷⁷ Edna Co 1999

⁷⁸ Ros David, 1999

perceive their ideal level of political/democratic space and compare it to current levels of civil society participation in policy making. This can be represented as a ladder of change showing the current level of civil society participation in policy making and the steps leading up to a more ideal level. At regular meetings you could revisit this scale with your partners and identify the changes that have occurred, the reasons why they have occurred and to what they are attributable. See Figure 7.

Figure 7: Ladder of Democratic & Political Space



IX. CONCLUSION

Lessons and Gaps

As we have seen, a growing number of Northern NGOs now place advocacy work at the top of their agendas in their attempts to tackle the constraints placed on their development efforts. Donors are also investing more heavily in ‘rights based’ work to promote political and economic democracy. Underpinning this shift is the realisation that ‘projects’ alone are not going to overcome long term poverty, but that greater democracy, transparency and the work of civil society to hold governments, corporations, local multinational institutions and other key decision makers accountable are more likely to achieve long term sustainable changes.

This paper has described how ActionAid’s approach to advocacy has shifted from a concentration on international and national level policy change to advocacy at all levels which emphasises supporting poor people and marginal groups to have a voice and take a central role in holding decision makers accountable. ActionAid’s role has changed; instead of only undertaking direct policy work it is also working to develop the capacity of partners and other civil society organisations to carry out effective advocacy for basic needs and basic rights, and is opening up spaces for them to become involved.

This shift towards greater ‘democratisation’ of advocacy work within ActionAid has been mirrored by the progressive move towards increasing ‘downward accountability’ – or accountability to the poor and marginalised people with whom we work. This shift is now formalised in ALPS⁷⁹, ActionAid’s new internal reporting and learning system, which requires that the priorities and perspectives of poor people inform the decisions made at all levels in ActionAid. The emphasis on joint planning, joint identification of indicators and joint monitoring establishes the principles upon which the process of monitoring and evaluation should be based.

The people centred approach is the basis for emphasising the participatory processes currently being explored in ActionAid for monitoring advocacy. Creating ownership of both the process and the information generated during monitoring is perhaps the greatest strength of participatory monitoring. However, the challenges of using such approaches are well documented and should be taken into consideration when monitoring advocacy. For example, the time consuming nature of participatory work should be noted, remembering that any monitoring that takes up too much time is unlikely to generate the enthusiasm and the information that is needed. In the words of Chris Roche, participatory assessment should always be used to inform and not just to document.⁸⁰

This paper, in looking at how other agencies have approached the assessment of advocacy, provides some useful insights into how ActionAid can develop its own monitoring and evaluation systems to track change. In particular it has identified a number of aspects that need to be taken into account for analysing advocacy work.

⁷⁹ ALPS ActionAid’s Accountability Learning and Planning System

⁸⁰ Roche, C 1999

In summary these include:

- Identifying the different dimensions of advocacy work and their outcomes.
- Recognising that advocacy can work at different levels which may, but do not necessarily reinforce the work at the other levels. This paper has not put any weighting, but in different scenarios there will be different weightings depending on the nature of the work.
- Identifying the gender differentiated impact of advocacy work.
- Monitoring processes as well as outcomes.
- Frameworks should not be straitjackets. They are useful for giving an overview of areas to look at but should be seen as tools for facilitating creative thinking. The challenge is to remain open to unintended outcomes that fall outside the framework of assessment that may have been adopted.
- It is important to monitor not only policy change but also implementation.
- The need to acknowledge the collective nature of advocacy work and focus less on questions of attribution, realising that there is need to establish a balance between who takes credit and when to take or not to take credit. Our value base should inform this balance. Advocacy is increasingly being carried out in networks or coalitions. We need to look at how organisations are working together for a common purpose and monitor and evaluate ActionAid's most appropriate role in this.
- The values we espouse as ActionAid should also determine what we look for in our monitoring and evaluation, which in turn determines who participates and who does not.

And the gaps?

Perhaps the greatest challenge for us is the fact that we have not had the opportunity to explore some of the concepts that we have discussed on the ground. What are the different understandings of political space? What is our understanding of social capital?

Specifically, the gaps that need to be addressed include:

- The need for more information on networks and movements: how they develop, how they work, the sort of accountability structures that work best, and how ActionAid can best support them.
- The need to understand better how to work at different levels and in different arenas in order to reinforce the work of others in the most effective way.
- The need to understand the way the work of different actors adds to the process without falling into the trap of trying to claim attribution at the expense of co-operation.
- In the dimension of people centred advocacy there is little understanding on how to best support civil society in the longer term to both advocate for pro-poor policies and to monitor implementation.
- Understanding how to monitor and evaluate social capital in different contexts is very limited.
- Understanding the conflictual aspects and political consequences of advocacy work.

- There is little information on what ‘space’, ‘political space’ or ‘democratic space’ might look like in different cultures and at different levels, from the micro to the national and international.
- Information on how gender issues can be incorporated into these frameworks is very limited.

This scoping study is not an end but a beginning which is intended to lead into further work. It has looked at a broad range of approaches for analysing advocacy work, but has not been able to consider the most appropriate methods that might be used to assess change with different stakeholder groups. This again highlights the gaps in current practice. The need for examining frameworks and methods that can be used to assess this type of work is therefore urgent. If responsibility is to become more localised, and based on the diverse needs and priorities of local communities, progress can no longer be measured using standardised methodological approaches. New, more versatile and more devolved processes are required to track and assess change.

As international NGO advocacy and influencing work slowly evolves, there are more examples of innovative, evaluative practices to draw upon. Work has already begun in ActionAid to develop, methods, approaches, structures and behaviours that will facilitate the participation of poor people and their representatives in shaping policy. A critical feature of this work will be to develop the appropriate tools and methods to ensure meaningful involvement and representation of these same groups of people in assessing the value of this work and their involvement in the process. The ultimate indicator of success is that the people whose lives are most affected recognise and value their own work.⁸¹

⁸¹ Barry Coates and Ros David 2000

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