



Module 5

Assessing Advocacy Campaigns

ADVOCACY
An E-course



Module 5: Evaluating and assessing advocacy

Learning Objectives:

- Raise awareness on the importance of evaluating advocacy work.
- Develop an understanding of different evaluation methods.
- Develop skills in undertaking evaluation tasks.

Why Evaluate?

There are many reasons why advocacy groups should evaluate their projects and campaigns. The obvious one is to enable the effective planning of future activities. Unless the group has a good understanding of how effective its previous activities have been it will not be in a strong position for future success. Evaluation can assist the group to increase the effectiveness of its actions by indicating what works well and what is a potential waste of time and resources.

More formal evaluation processes might also be undertaken to meet the accountability requirements of sponsoring bodies. Where external funding is obtained or requested, or where partnerships exist, a detailed evaluation can assist the group to obtain the kind of support it needs to carry out its work effectively. To be able to show potential funding bodies or partners that the group has an effective strategy in place, and to show this by pointing to the results achieved, can be highly persuasive.

Evaluation of advocacy campaigns usually involves several levels of analysis. The primary form of evaluation examines the extent to which the strategy and activities have succeeded in achieving the primary goals of the group. Evaluation might also involve an assessment of the success in achieving secondary goals and objectives.

For example, a health campaign may not have achieved its objective of reducing new HIV infections by 20% within a 2-year period. Nevertheless it may have been very successful in improving other, secondary, health outcomes in the area, or may have successfully organized and empowered the most vulnerable members of a local community. Such partial successes are very common in advocacy campaigns and need to be recognized.

Evaluation should not be seen simply as a post-campaign assessment, although such an evaluation can be very valuable (e.g. case studies which provide evidence of outcomes and impacts): it should also be undertaken as part of the ongoing work

Freire and evaluation

Paolo Freire emphasizes the importance of evaluation because it is a vital mechanism whereby the group can reflect on its experiences and gain a better view of the reality of the experiences the community faces. The method preferred by Freire for conducting an evaluation is the seminar:

Evaluation seminars ... confirm, deepen or correct the visions of some of the points which were already discussed

Freire recommends "permanent evaluation seminars in which all meet to share in the evaluation, re-enforcing accomplishments and discarding what are identified as errors."

of the group. Remember that an advocacy campaign is an ongoing process that benefits from cycles of critical analysis of planning, action assessment and learning.¹

Regular evaluation of strategy and tactics, whether in the form of detailed reviews or simply as discussion points at meetings, should be regarded as a standard part of the group's activities. It not only assists the group to plan future actions but can also serve to maintain group morale in circumstances where primary objectives appear difficult to achieve (often secondary objectives, and even unexpected positive outcomes, can be recognized and used to maintain morale and commitment).

What are the criteria for 'success'?

How do we decide whether a campaign is successful? What are the judgments that we must make and how can we best make such judgments?

The primary criterion for success is very simple: have we achieved our objectives? This shows the importance of having clearly articulated (and realistic) objectives for the group. It is only against such objectives that a meaningful evaluation can occur.

However, this primary criterion can only be applied at the end of a campaign and additional or secondary criteria for evaluation often apply during other stages.

For example, the primary objective may consist in empowering a group of young people within an urban community to enable them to tackle the problems of illiteracy and unemployment. The primary criterion of success might therefore be the organization and empowerment of the majority of young people in the specified area leading to a 25% increase in literacy. However, during the campaign there will be many strategic objectives or 'targets' to be achieved. For example, the strategy might require the active support of local church groups and the recruitment of at least 10 volunteer educators. Such strategic objectives would form part of the ongoing evaluation process of the campaign.

¹ Taken from Action Aid's Monitoring and Evaluation Workshop in Ghana



Keck and Sikkink and advocacy network evaluation

Keck and Sikkink recommend assessing the effectiveness of transnational advocacy networks by determining if they are able to accomplish the following things:

- 1) frame the debate and get issues on the agenda;
- 2) secure discursive commitments from states;
- 3) cause domestic and international procedural change;
- 4) affect policy; and,
- 5) influence behavior changes in target actors.

Keck, Margaret, and Sikkink, Kathryn (1998), *Activists Beyond Borders*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Strategic objectives or targets are usually outlined in the action plan developed by the group. Regular evaluation is the process whereby the action plan is amended and time-lines changed to increase the group's effectiveness.

While ongoing evaluation is important, it is crucial to keep the primary goals and objectives in mind. While a particular tactic might appear very effective on the surface, it may not necessarily assist in achieving the overall objectives of the campaign.

For example, a group of young people decided they wanted to stop their local council from demolishing an old building that they wished to use as a youth club. They were very angry with the Council having ignored their needs and decided they had to get publicity for their viewpoint. On the night of the meeting they barged into the Council chambers, distributed a petition and threw tomatoes at several councilors. They received considerable publicity over the next few days. However, two days later, after a secret meeting of the council, the building was demolished in the night. The Council revealed that they had initially considered refurbishing the building for community purposes but decided to demolish it after the "delinquent" behavior of the "irresponsible" young people who wanted to use the building. In this case the tactics used by the young people were successful in obtaining the publicity they sought, and their voice was clearly heard in the media. But the success of the tactics did not help them to achieve their overall objectives and probably worked against them.

In other words, don't lose sight of the primary objectives when evaluating particular tactics or steps in the action plan.

Evaluation should include both the achievement of objectives as well as the evaluation of the group's process, or what we might refer to as *external* and *internal* evaluations:



- The effectiveness of steps towards the final objectives and towards interim or short-term objectives is referred to as the “external” focus of evaluation.
- The effectiveness of the group processes for achieving internal or group cohesiveness and for achieving empowerment is referred to as the “internal” focus of evaluation.

EXTERNAL: Evaluation of Effectiveness in achieving objectives

General Questions

- With reference to the goals and outcomes, and to the action plan, what are you doing that is really working well?
- What are the major problems you are facing?
- Are there unanticipated outcomes from the actions taken so far?
- To what extent can you confirm achievements so far? How robust or lasting are these achievements?

Involvement

- How has the number of people involved changed?
- What changes have there been in the breadth of community involvement, such as changes in ethnic, socio-economic, gender or age groupings involved in the campaign?
- What levels of involvement exist and how have they changed (for example, has nominal membership grown, has active membership grown)?
- Apart from membership (however defined) what are the indicators of changes in broader community engagement with the issue and support for the campaign?
- What additional possibilities for alliances or coalitions have been created by the campaign and how have these been followed up?

Support

- What levels of support does the campaign have amongst various sectors of the community? How is this changing?
- What levels of support does the campaign have amongst various decision-makers or influential people and groups (including funding bodies)? How is this changing?

Activities

- What activities have been successful? What were the main elements of this success?
- What activities were not successful (or only partially successful)? What were the main elements in the failure to achieve success?



- Are the activities empowering people? Are more people, or a more diverse group of people, being empowered through these activities?

INTERNAL: Evaluation of Effectiveness in establishing group processes and empowerment

General Questions

- Within the group, organization or coalition, what are you doing that is really working well?
- What are the major problems you are facing?
- Are there unanticipated outcomes because of working together?
- To what extent is there a change (improvement or deterioration) in the group's processes?
- What kind of action could you take to improve the group's processes?

Involvement

- How active are the group's members? How often do they meet? How much volunteer and professional time is being focused on a particular problem because of working together?
- How long has the group been together? Is there still a desire to work together?
- What type of structure has been developed to assure the continuity of the group or coalition, such as officer responsibilities, membership guidelines, working groups or committees?
- What type of skill development is being undertaken to ensure group cohesiveness, such as skills training, mentoring, learning groups?
- What social activities have been developed to maintain the group's cohesiveness, such as having a meal together, social events, film nights, games nights, sporting events?

Inclusiveness

- What types of individuals and organizations are represented? Are these the right type of individuals to accomplish the work of the group or coalition?
- Is there equal access to the group and to group processes?
- In the case of coalitions, alliances and partnerships, to what extent do member groups or organizations promote each other's efforts, workshops, etc.? Are responsibility shared in a fair way?
- What type of actions is taken to encourage other groups to participate?

Empowerment

- What indicators are there that members feel empowered to participate in group processes?



- What changes can be observed in member's participation (changes in types of participation, such as taking on more challenging roles and duties, or changes in the degree of participation, such as more frequent volunteering for tasks, greater meeting attendance and activity involvement)?

Some Challenges Associated with Monitoring Advocacy²

Assessment of advocacy campaigns is hindered by the following problems:

- Lack of effective power, gender and contextual analysis
- Lack of understanding of how change happens
- Assessment is divorced from planning
- Assessment is viewed as a technical task not as an empowering process – it is narrowly viewed in terms of accountability, rather than learning.

There is a tendency to focus on legal and political changes when assessing advocacy work, and/or to monitor campaigning activities (number of marches, for example). This type of focus will skew the M&E of advocacy work as well as the activities of the campaign itself. Changes in legislation can result in little or no change at the grassroots. According to Action Aid, strive for change that is

- Advancing rights
- Advancing people's leadership
- Transforming gender and power relations

Using critical thinking when planning for advocacy work will broaden understanding of where change can happen and the arenas and levels at which power dynamics should be redrawn. Advocacy work should not be limited to the policy or legislative level. As a result, the following strategies to promote change are suggested:

- Consciousness raising
- Social mobilization
- Leadership development
- Using the media
- Using research, coalitions, networks and social movements

Working at these levels, in conjunction with policy work, will obviously have implications for assessment of the impact of advocacy. Very different approaches will be needed to assess attitudinal change at community level, for example, as compared with change at the policy or legislative level. Some of these approaches were mentioned in the previous two modules

Along with the formal authorities, in the African context traditional authorities also play an important role. This presents challenges for monitoring changes in

² From Action Aid's Monitoring and Evaluation Workshop in Ghana



customary law, and the extent to which changes in national level legislation will impact upon attitudes and behavior of traditional bodies.

Case Study: Challenges in Affecting Gender Inequality and Domestic Violence

At ActionAid's workshop on Monitoring and Evaluation in Ghana, some participants discussed how they work on gender issues, particularly violence against women. However, their strategy often involves the use of mediation: bringing together the survivor of violence and the perpetrator. This often appears to be more about achieving peaceful communities than addressing issues of gender equality. The anti-violence message was often presented through Biblical teaching – for example, that men should love their wives. This approach does not address issues of power, in particular, the predominance of patriarchal attitudes towards women, emanating from traditional leaders, and indeed, the Church. While these groups were using the rhetoric of women's rights, their focus, in practice, did not appear to have a rights base. Without clarity of aims, assessing the impact of the work will be even more of a challenge.

This shows the importance of careful planning with aims and objectives.

Some tools for evaluation

There is a very wide range of tools available for evaluation, and the choice of tools needs to be carefully made. The most appropriate means of evaluation will depend on the purpose of the evaluation as well as the resources available to the group.

In many cases informal means of evaluation, during group discussions and meetings will prove adequate. Simply taking a list of questions, such as those above, and considering them at a meeting can achieve the group's purpose. On the other hand, if evaluation is required for purposes of satisfying coalition members about the viability of the project or as part of the group's accountability to a funding body, then more systematic and formal evaluation tools may be required.

Systematic evaluation tools include:

- Structured Observation based on group member's reports and assessments of events, outcomes, etc.
- Careful and regular maintenance of records of activities, participants, support indicators and outcomes.
- Review of external records and reports (e.g. in the early 1970s in Australia an interesting testimony to the effectiveness of the draft resistance campaign sparked by the Vietnam war came from the Annual Report of the Australian Commonwealth Police which complained of the effectiveness of the resistance and their inability to deal with it). Official statistics (health, court, etc.) may also provide useful indicators of success over time)
- Interviews can be an easy and quick way to obtain information about the way that others view an issue, a group or its activities. The degree of structure in the interview can be readily adapted to the time and resources available.



- Surveys/Questionnaires can be similarly useful in detecting changes to attitudes and levels of support. While not as flexible as interviews they are especially useful where larger numbers of respondents are available for purposes of feedback.
- Focus Group Interviews are sometimes used for more formal processes of evaluation, and are usually conducted by researchers external to the organization.

Many combinations or degrees of formality in evaluation are possible. In choosing the methods used it is important to remember that evaluation is aimed at providing useful and timely feedback. It is not a goal in its own right and should not monopolize resources and jeopardize the main objectives of the campaign. Like most other aspects of advocacy, the group needs to establish a balance between the main campaign and the evaluation processes.

Reporting the evaluation

Once part or all of a campaign has been evaluated it may be useful to report the results, especially where there have been important outcomes (even “failures” may be worth reporting because we can still learn from campaigns that haven’t been totally successful). Preparing an evaluation report is no different to other forms of reporting.

One of the favorite and highly useful ways that campaigns have been reported, especially by NGOs, is in the form of a case study.

Constructing a Case Study:

The format may vary depending on the case and the purpose of the documented study. In the previous module, you were given information on how to write a good case study. To reiterate, the following pointers may assist in preparing a case study.

Possible structure:

Situational analysis: introduction, identification of the issues, focus of the case (e.g. on the advocacy campaign, on role of media, on government, on process, etc);

1. “Stakeholders”: identification of who is involved and their position(s);
2. What happened: chronology, methods used and results. Could include analysis of particular tactics: use of media, direct actions, community building, negotiation with government or company, etc.
3. Outcomes: expected and unexpected, short and long term;
4. Evaluation: lessons learned, possible transferable model



Concrete indicators³ related to the effectiveness of a social mobilization movement will tell the organizers whether their coalition is moving toward true capacity to be catalysts for change and empowerment. These indicators should have been determined before in the planning stages.

They can include:

- coalitions are formed
- recognized leadership emerges
- policies change
- gender equity increases
- sense of community develops within the movement

Measurable indicators to use for monitoring the coalitions growth and capabilities. They can include:

- ability to foster networks/coalitions
- ability to develop leadership at community and national levels
- ability to work with the media
- ability to organize events
- ability to monitor and evaluate activities
- ability to manage conflict & communicate

- **CASE STUDY: Assessing Advocacy**⁴:

³ CEDPA, 1999

⁴ 'Advocacy in Action' Toolkit, ICASO

Coalition: Family AIDS Caring Trust, Dananayi NGO, individual PLHAs, and Murambinda hospital

Advocacy aim: Encourage the community leaders in Gombahari to publicly support people with HIV/AIDS

Objectives	Targets	Activities	Resources required	Persons or organisations responsible	Timeframe	Expected outcome	Indicators
Objective 1 By July 2002, three influential community leaders will make positive public statements defending people living with HIV/AIDS	All community leaders	Meeting with all community leaders of Gombahari on stigmatisation of PLHAs	Manpower: Team leader, community leaders Stationary: books, pens, etc. for record-keeping Vehicle, Food, Money	Team leader of organisation	September 2001	Come up with three most influential leaders	Leaders: - who are listened to by other leaders - from whom local people ask for advice most often - who have successfully led a change in policy or practice in the past Monitoring methods: informal survey, observation at meeting
Objective 2	Three most influential leaders	One-to-one meetings with the three leaders who were most influential during the meeting	Team leader, community leaders Money Vehicle	Team leader	By early October 2001	Positive support from three community leaders willing to make public statements	Leaders: - show understanding of why stigma is a problem - show understanding of how public support for PLHAs can help - promise to make public statements in support of PLHAs Monitoring methods: NGO reps observe and discuss after meeting
	Community members	Meetings between three community leaders and their communities	Manpower: Team leader, three community leaders, PLHAs, community Vehicle, Food	Team leader Community leaders	April 2002	Public statements defending PLHAs	Number of positive statements Number of people hearing statements Monitoring methods: NGO reps attend and observe meetings; informal surveys in community

Reference: Adapted from an advocacy skills-building workshop for HIV/AIDS, International HIV/AIDS Alliance, Zimbabwe, July 2001.

