

Monitoring Advocacy Capacity In Civil Society Organisations

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Introduction

The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs has supported development, human rights and good governance in Nepal for decades. Ensuring that the voice of the marginalised people is heard has always been an important aspect of Danish support. It is therefore natural that the DanidaHUGOU programme engages its strategic civil society partners on the best practises for advocacy capacity.

The document presents an overall framework for monitoring advocacy capacity in civil society organizations. The focus of the document is to present a basic model for advocacy and monitoring the capacity of the organisations. The focus will be on advocacy at national level for issues of national importance through national policy makers, especially parliamentary advocacy. The same methodology can however be utilized for lower level advocacy at district or local level.

The framework presented is aimed at measuring the capacity of the organisation, it will however also become an indicator for the advocacy work being undertaken, as the capacity is mainly measured on the quality of work undertaken. The tool can therefore be used to adjust both the actual advocacy work, but also the capacity profile of the organisation.

The document is not a comprehensive guide to all aspects of advocacy; it outlines the basic advocacy process, but does not go in depth with the various disciplines in advocacy. A basic understanding of advocacy is an advantage when studying the process for establishing a monitoring framework

“Advocacy” comes from the words “ad” and “Voca”, “ad” meaning amplifying or enhancing (as in “addition”) and “Voca” meaning voice, as in vocal cords. The basic meaning is therefore to amplify the voice of those whose voices are too weak to be heard.

Definition of advocacy

Advocacy has grown in importance in the role of civil society organizations, and most civil society organisations are engaged in one form of advocacy or another, either as primary focus or as an activity together with service delivery activities. The organisations may undertake advocacy directly or be engaged in networks which undertake advocacy on behalf of the membership. In any case it is important for all practitioners in civil society to understand the role and mechanics of advocacy and how it can be measured.

There are many definitions of advocacy. Most centre on the same themes, which is to influence and change conditions affecting human development.

For the purpose of the discussion on monitoring advocacy capacity the following definition will be used;

“Advocacy is a systematic democratic and concerted effort to change policies, laws, practices, behaviours and systems that are detrimental to human development.”

There are several key words in the definition above that give an indication on what the principles of advocacy:

- aims to change things
- must be democratic, it is therefore crucial to listen to the voices of those affected by the issues being advocated for and involve them and empower them.
- is systematic, should be planned and implemented in a coordinated manner.
- should ultimately benefit humans by influencing factors important to them¹
- should have a target, policy, practice, laws, systems
- should be monitored to assess whether the efforts have been successful and whether change in advocacy issue or target should be done.
- Can be prolonged and effects may not be immediately visible
- Is a process and not a state of affairs
- Is non-partisan
- should clearly frame an issue that captures the problems faced

The US based institution Advocacy Institute highlight a series of characteristics and forms of advocacy:

Advocacy requires reliable and objective information.

An advocacy campaign must persuade people with convincing arguments backed by factual information. There is need to fully understand the complexities of the problem in order to convince people unsympathetic to the cause. Compiling research and making it available to target audiences — such as lawmakers, journalists and the general public — is an essential component of advocacy. People who create or change policies and practices want solutions and not more problems.

Advocacy is a series of activities or actions.

One or two isolated activities do not represent an advocacy campaign. There is need to engage in a number of strategically planned actions that build on each other over a long period of time. For this reason, advocacy should be thought of in terms of strategies and campaigns rather than isolated individual activities.

¹ This includes advocacy for fundamental issues that may have immediate negative effect on humans with the aim of securing better conditions for humans in a larger group or in the long run. Examples could be advocacy to have communities evicted from sensitive eco-systems in order to protect the eco-systems for future generations or for a larger group of communities.

Advocacy seeks to change the balance of power so that vulnerable groups are given more control over their lives.

Powerful people and institutions do not, however, generally relinquish power willingly. Attempts to change the imbalance of power inevitably make those who hold power feel threatened or uneasy. The advocate needs to anticipate uncomfortable situations and be prepared to deal with them effectively. At the same time, the solutions that are proposed should be tolerable to all those who will be affected by them.

Advocacy Strategies and Methods

There are three ways advocacy organizations work to change the behaviour of individuals, groups or institutions that use their power to the disadvantage of others:

1. Working directly with those in power to pressure or convince them to adopt public policies and practices that will benefit disadvantaged people.
2. Influencing those in power by working directly with the people who are disadvantaged and providing them with the skills to influence those with power to adopt better practices and policies.
3. Disseminating information through the media and other sources to create public awareness about a problem, which will in turn put public pressure on decision-makers.

Most successful advocacy campaigns involve some combination of the three approaches. Likewise, a common characteristic of successful campaigns is the use of a wide range of strategies and techniques.

The advocacy cycle

By using the guidelines for advocacy above it is possible to construct a basic model of advocacy – “the advocacy cycle”.

The approach to advocacy in this model is that it is cyclical in nature, in that sense advocacy never stops, in fact, sometimes the real advocacy really begins with a successful campaign for legislative changes, the implementation of legislative changes are often more difficult than the legal change itself. However many advocacy organisations leave the issue after a formal decision has been made on it. The cyclical model highlight that any policy output from policy makers require implementation, typically by government, and subsequently have an impact on the constituency, which should be evaluated. The issue may need to be reframed and the cycle can start again.

The elements of the advocacy cycle include:

1. Constituency
2. Advocacy organisation

3. Advocacy issue
4. Consultations, research and public education.
5. Engaging the policy makers.
6. Policy output
7. Implementation
8. Follow-up

Constituency

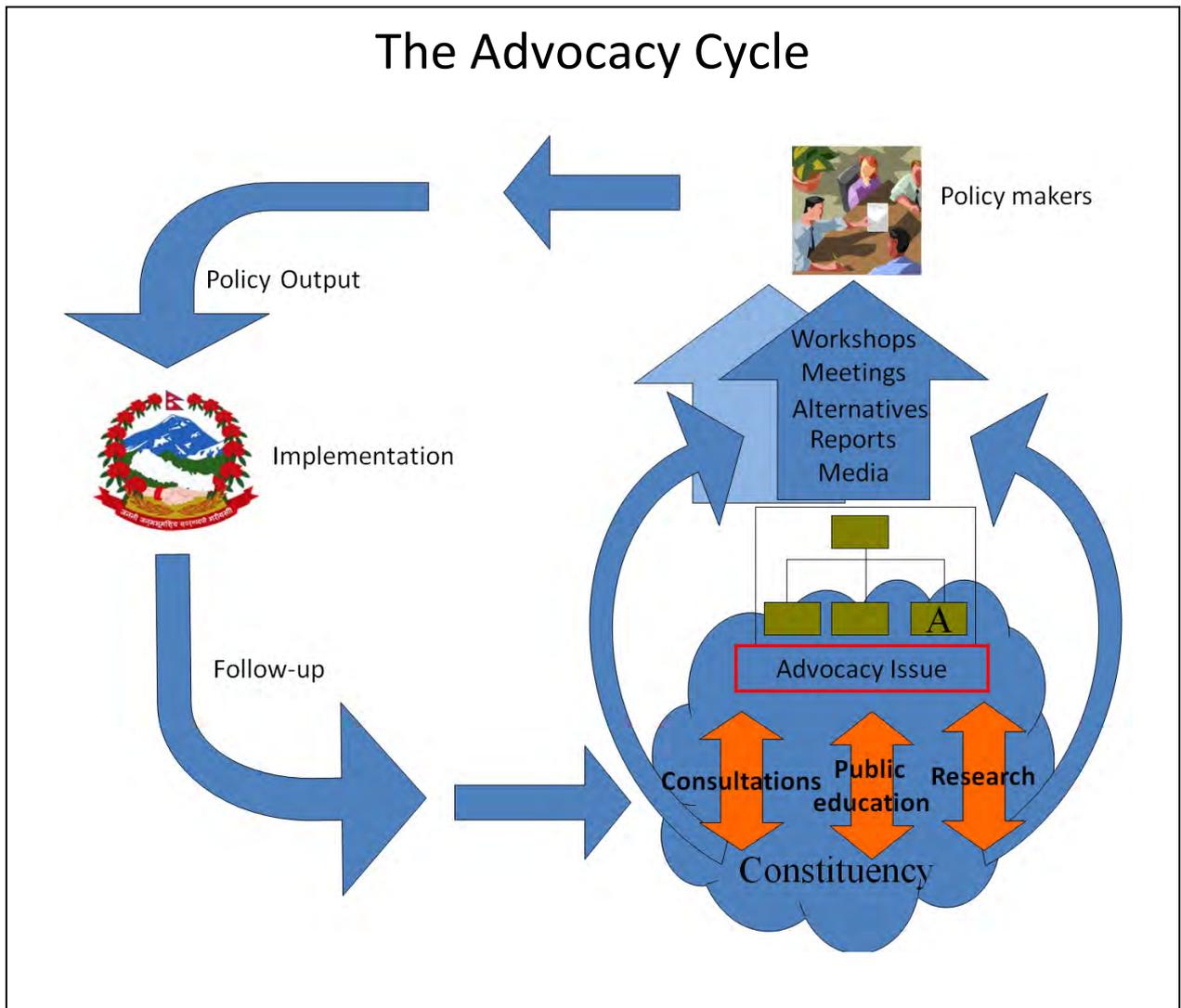
The basic model starts with the community or group the advocacy is supposed to benefit. A community can be loosely defined, such as “children of Nepal” or be a more organised and structured membership based group such as “textile industry”. In any case, it is important for the advocacy organisation to clearly identify the constituency.

Advocacy organisation

The civil society organisation undertaking advocacy on behalf, or with, the constituency is, as opposed to the constituency, organised with internal structures and management systems. Usually the advocacy effort is anchored in the organisation through a project, typically with an advocacy officer or unit (symbolised by the “A” in the illustration below)

Advocacy issue

The organisation, together with the constituency, usually formulates the advocacy issue. It is crucial that it is anchored in the real need of the constituency.



Consultations, research and public education.

In order for the advocacy organisation to adequately define the issue and to base its advocacy on evidence it is important that the constituency is engaged on the issues. Sometimes the organisations spring from the constituency itself because of the advocacy issue.

The constituency needs to be informed of its rights and the importance of the issue, therefore **public education** needs to be undertaken. Some groups are so marginalised that they do not even question the status of their community, public education should address this.

Consultations must be undertaken to ensure that the real needs and priorities are captured by the advocacy organisation. Consultations are often based on perceptions and attitudes on how people want priorities made, these are all important in the advocacy process when engaging policy makers. Finally **research** has to be undertaken. Research differs from consultations by being more scientific. One example could be on an advocacy issue of public security. It is

important to differentiate between perceived level of insecurity (consultations) and the actual crime rate (research). Often there are differences between what communities perceive the problem to be and what the problem really is.

Engaging policy makers.

Advocacy organisations use a number of instruments in engaging policy makers. In the model only a few have been mentioned; workshops, meetings, media, reports and formulation of policy alternatives. It is crucial that engagement actually takes place and that the organisation get access to the policy makers. When engagement does take place it is important that networks are utilised. Other CSOs will simultaneously engage the same policymakers, sometimes on issues very related to each other. One example could be one organisation advocating on formulation of a domestic violence bill while at the same time another organisation is advocating on women's inheritance law change. The issues are related and the organisations need to form coalitions (illustrated by the underlying arrow to the policymakers).

It will also be crucial to ensure that the information and engagement generated in the constituency are being taken to the policy makers. The advocacy organisation should act as a facilitator and enabler for the communities to access policy makers. If proper care is not exercised by the advocacy organisation and they lose close contact to their constituency, it can quickly end as a filter and additional layer between the constituency and policy makers. Strategies for ensuring this vary, but some could be to capacitate the members of the constituency to address the policy makers directly, without the presence of the advocacy organisation. In that example the organisation is invisible to the policy maker, but crucial and invaluable to the process of bringing the real needs of the marginalised to the decision makers. This is indicated by the direct connection between the constituency and the engagement of the policy makers.

Policy output

The policy output of an advocacy campaign can vary between, no change (or negative), complete adoption of the issue or, most commonly, somewhere in between. As indicated above, most advocacy organisations leave the issues after a satisfactory, or even unsatisfactory, policy output. The changes in the law or policy are seen as the ultimate success of a campaign. This is indeed a very important step, but the advocacy efforts need to continue beyond the policy output stage.

Implementation

Implementation of the policy output is usually vested with government at various levels. Advocacy has to ensure that the policy output is indeed captured by the implementing agencies and administrative changes are made, budgets adjusted and activities implemented. Many countries have adequate legal frameworks, which are not being implemented and organisations address the problem by trying to change the framework rather engage the government on implementation of already approved law.

Follow-up

Any implementation of a policy output will affect the constituency. Regardless of how well the advocacy organisation has prepared and researched the issue it cannot perfectly assess the effect on the constituency in advance. The follow-up is needed to compare expected results with actual effects. Lack of implementation, wrong implementation or other factors may necessitate the organisation to establish monitoring mechanisms in communities, take government to court or start the advocacy cycle once again by adjusting the issue, take up a new issue or continue with the same cause.

Where to start?

An advocacy organisation may find that it is engaged in follow-up on old legislation, leading to undertaking a new campaign. Others start advocacy through a court case. The basic principle of the advocacy cycle is that an organisation can choose to start at any point in the cycle, depending on the nature of the issue. Advocacy is highly dynamic, for long periods of time the campaign may not achieve anything only to see a crucial opening in one day and to see the issue to be resolved, or to see the issue being discarded by the policy makers.

Challenges in measuring advocacy capacity.

As discussed above advocacy is a process, and it is imperative to ensure that the organisation has good knowledge on whether the efforts are successful. The importance of monitoring advocacy capacity is as great as the potential challenges in doing so, it is therefore important to have a framework in place to ensure that monitoring is not done on ad hoc basis but in a consistent manner.

It is important to emphasise that the framework presented is not for long term evaluation or impact assessment of the advocacy. It is designed to ensure that individual steps in the advocacy cycle are being monitored for quality and act as a quality assurance tool and guide to the organisation on where to strengthen its capacity.

Some of the challenges in monitoring advocacy are:

- How to measure a process which cannot fully be determined in advance as advocacy is a dynamic process.
- How to measure whether advocacy is a success or not, since the outcome of a campaign is dependent on so many things outside the control of the organisation (i.e. elections)
- Many of the elements in advocacy are non-tangible (i.e. “quality of public engagement”), establishing an objective indicator may be a problem
- Advocacy is a highly internalised process in many institutions and includes many levels of the organisation which makes outside assessment difficult. Ownership of any assessment by the advocacy organisation is therefore

important to ensure that all aspects of advocacy is monitored and results accepted by the organisation.

The challenges fall in three general categories; i) process oriented, ii) ownership and in depth organisation knowledge is essential and iii) the process is non-tangible and objective indicators are difficult to identify.

There are responses to the three types of challenges: Self-assessment, monitoring process rather than result and peer reviews.

Self-assessment

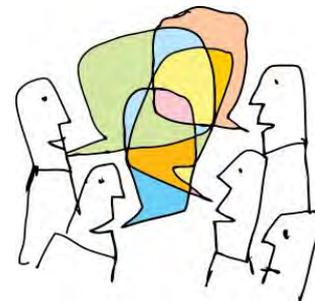
By ensuring that the organisation internalises a monitoring framework, it ensures that the in depth knowledge of the organisation is included in the monitoring process. Self-assessment will also ensure that the results of the monitoring, even if they are showing weak capacity, is adopted by the organisation.

Monitoring the process, not the result of advocacy.

While advocacy should monitor the end results of the efforts, a monitoring framework built solely around the end achievement will not capture the essence of advocacy capacity, which is whether the organisation can engage in a high quality advocacy process. The focus of monitoring should therefore be focussed on the steps in the process.

Peer review.

To overcome the challenge of assessing non tangible and at times subjective assessment of the advocacy process, it could be considered to let a larger group of advocacy organisations or practitioners in a network assess each other. By submitting the organisational self-assessments to a peer review, the assessment will not only act as a monitoring instrument, but also for accountability and learning tool. The effect of peer review is basically the same as when a group of people is trying to assess the distance to the nearest mountaintop without any accurate tool to measure the distance. Much like there is no commonly agreed measuring tape for good advocacy, the group will have to use improvised means of assessing the distance. Instead of relying on only one assessment, the group would usually have a much more accurate assessment if they all contribute to the assessment and derive the average distance.



Peer review has become the standard way of quality assurance in all fields of science when it comes to producing written work, while cumbersome, the benefits of such a system has been proven. The details of an advocacy peer review system will be explained later.

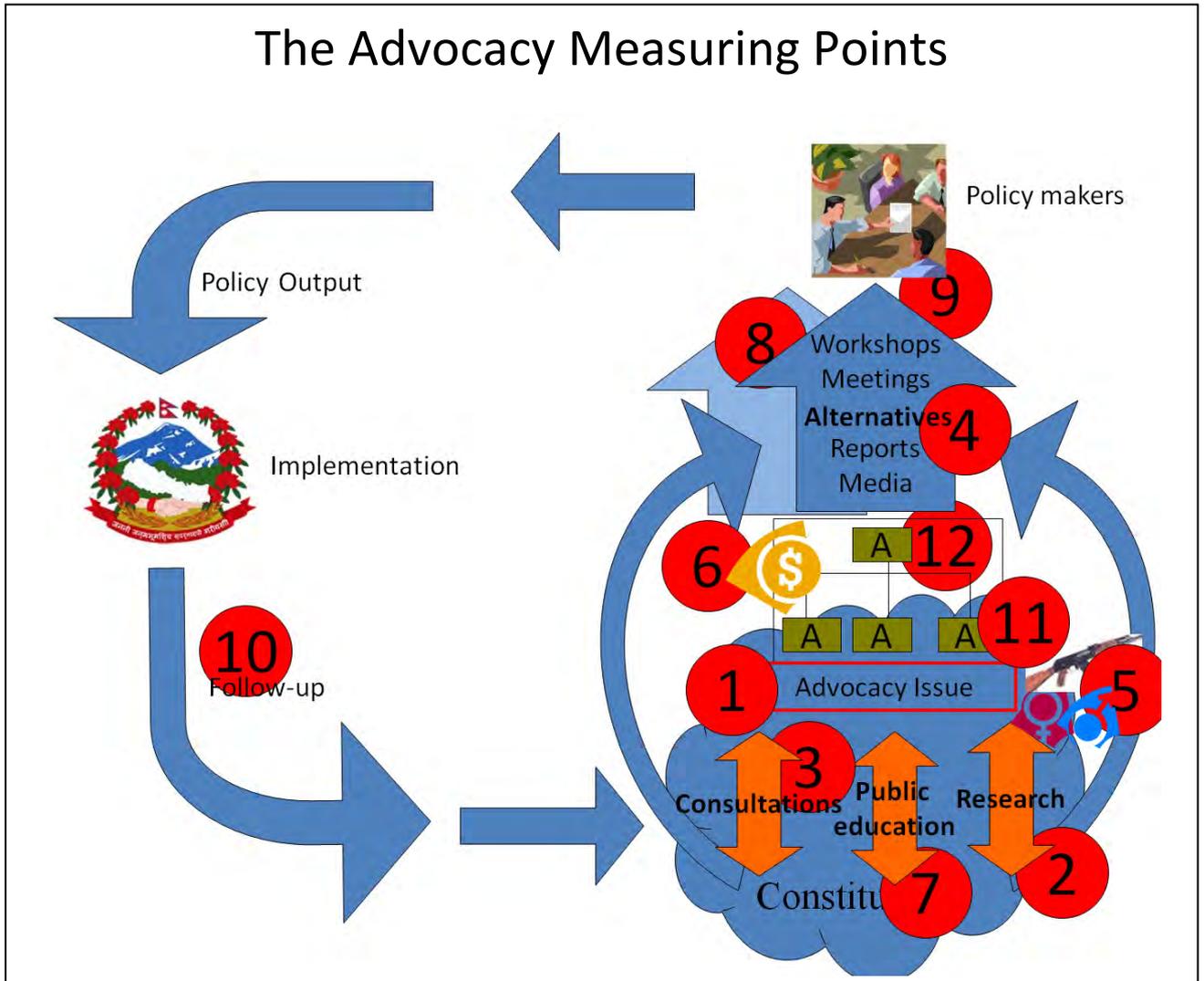
For an organisation to benefit from advocacy monitoring, peer review is not strictly necessary, but would benefit the organisation.

Monitoring system for advocacy - indicators

Establishing a monitoring system for advocacy capacity in an organization will, as described above, focus on the steps in the advocacy process outlined in the advocacy cycle. A total of twelve measuring points will be used to scrutinise the process. The twelve are:

1. Issue, as defined, is timely and nationally significant
2. CSO collects information, carries out research, and gets input about the issue.
3. CSO systematically seeks input and response from its members and or public on the issue.
4. CSO formulates a viable alternative policy position(s) on the issue.
5. CSO provides a gender/conflict/social inclusion analysis of the present policy/situation and of the alternative policy it is recommending.
6. CSO allocates resources (especially time and money) for advocacy on the issue.
7. CSO provides public education/builds public support through public meetings and/or the media.
8. CSO builds coalitions and networks, to obtain cooperative efforts for joint action on the issue.
9. CSO takes action to work with Parliament to influence policy on the issue.
10. CSO takes follow up actions, after a policy decision is made, to foster implementation and/or to maintain public interest.
11. CSO demonstrates institutionalization of advocacy role
12. CSO demonstrates sound financial management and internal governance

The twelve elements have been highlighted in the illustration of the advocacy cycle below, and will be explained in detail.



It should be noticed that there is no measuring of what policy output have been achieved due to the focus on the process and because the policy output is being formed by many factors outside the control of the CSO. However, some elements of policy output assessment is included in element 9 of the monitoring system on engagement of policy makers.

Below is a list of considerations the advocacy organisation may want to take into consideration under each of the 12 components in the monitoring system. The indicators are, as described, subjective in form, and will require internal discussion in the organisation; this will be outlined in the section on advocacy monitoring process.

1. Issue



Defining the issue is of crucial importance. There is generally a danger that the CSO defines an issue so broad that it becomes difficult to advocate for or so specific that it fails to address underlying factor. Issues should generally have longevity, i.e. not

be changed often, but serve as a strategic guide to the advocacy campaign. Attention could be focused on:

- Issue (s) has(ve) been clearly defined by CSO
- Issue is of vital concern to the group's constituents
- Issue is critically important to the current or future well-being of the CSO and/or its clients, but its importance may not yet broadly understood
- Issue is important to the nation as well – it goes beyond CSO membership
- New opportunities for effective action exist
- At least a few key decision makers are receptive to the issue

2. Research



The research is the basic tool needed to undertake evidence based advocacy. Evidence is crucial to avoid getting caught in accusations of being political and being subjective. Attention could be focused on:

- Relevant government agencies and their respective roles in the issue are identified at national and local levels; knowledge and positions investigated
- Existing information and data on the issue is collected, such as summaries or position papers
- Policy analysis, such as the legal, political, social justice or health aspects of the issue, are conducted
- Focused/applied research is carried out in libraries, internet, archives, media reports, primary documents through interviews

3. Consultations



Consultations with the constituency should be seen as the basic tool to secure legitimacy for the campaign, the organisation need constantly to ensure that it is representing the views of its constituency, and recognise that perceptions and attitudes change in the constituency. Attention could be focused on:

- General public input is solicited (including from women and minorities) on the issue via public meetings, focus groups, etc.
- Representative input is collected on the issue via surveys (including from women and minorities, where appropriate)
- System of polling of members in meetings, by phone or mail, focus groups, on specific issues or the learn their needs
- Capacity to carry out public polls (using economic but rigorous sampling) on specific issues
- Ability to use the information for supporting arguments and building support

4. Alternative policy formulation

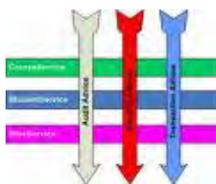


It is important that the advocacy organisation is seen as constructive in its approach. If the organisation is concentrating on protesting and pointing out what is wrong, rather than constructively proposing alternatives to the situation they seek to change, they are likely to be perceived as a hindrance to the political process rather than a partner for positive change.

Formulation of policy alternatives is therefore very crucial. Attention could be focused on:

- Policy formulation done in participatory (and gender sensitive) manner for various audiences and policy makers
- Policy position is clearly and convincingly articulated
- Rationale for policy is coherent, persuasive, and uses information collected in components 2) and 3)
- Presentation of policy position uses attractive and effective formats, such as graphs
- Presentations are user-friendly for Members of Parliament

5. Cross cutting issues



Depending on the context, there may be a number of cross cutting issues to be taken into account. This will almost always include a gender dimension, but could also be regarding social inclusion, other marginalised groups, conflict analysis, children, environment, human rights etc. Below are

some guiding questions regarding gender, which could also be used for other marginalised groups. The component should be expanded with questions related to any other cross cutting issue the organisation may want to explore. Attention could be focused on:

- Differential economic implications on men and women (e.g. tax effects, ability to earn income, receive benefits) of policies on different categories (e.g. socio-economic)
- Differential consequences for men and women in area of public services (e.g. health, education, pensions)
- Impact on ability of women and men to participate in decision-making at different levels (e.g. local, community, business or NGO)
- Social/cultural/status/legal implications for women and men
- Progress made in getting the Board and senior management to understand and support gender mainstreaming in analysis and advocacy of the policy

6. Resource allocation



Advocacy requires resources. While many organisations receive support from international organisations it is important to ensure that resources in the organisation is mobilised and channelled to good use in the advocacy efforts. This is particularly important in

organisations where advocacy may not be the main focus and where service delivery may traditionally have been the focus, and where non-tangible activities such as advocacy may not receive the focus it deserves because the organisational culture is focussed on tangible and measurable service delivery. Attention could be focused on:

- CSO collects contributions from members, interested citizens and/or from other organisations (businesses, foundations, religious groups, etc.) specifically for advocacy
- CSO assigns financial or other resources including staff time to the issue from within the CSO
- Volunteer time to help advocate for the issue obtained and well managed
- International agencies with interests in the issue area identified, their procedures for applying for financial support determined, and proposals submitted.

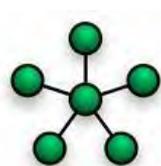
7. Public education



Public education seeks to inform the broader constituency and population on the issues. It is important to build support around the issue and promote it at the political level. Attention could be focused on:

- Holds town- or community meetings to explain the issues (and get feedback)
- Uses creative appropriate methods to get message across taking account of age, culture, literacy/education (e.g. modern music or theatre or humour or seminars)
- Invites press to key events, informs newspapers (builds personal relations with correspondents)
- Provides press briefings, press information sheets
- Write letters to press

8. Coalitions and networks



The value of coalitions and networks cannot be underestimated. The success of one organisation will to a large extent be determined by its ability to establish these. In the section on peer review, one model for use of networks and coalitions is presented. Attention could be focused on:

- Other groups and individuals with interests concerning the issue identified or persuaded to take an interest (may include government organisations which share concerns)
- Coalition formed (defined as any type of joint working group)
- An existing or new coalition or network activated, such as by having informal contacts, joint meetings, identifying common interests, sharing resources, etc.

- Joint or coordinated actions planned (see #9 and #10 below, for carrying out the actions)

9. *Engagement of policy makers*



The sharp end of advocacy is the engagement of the policy makers. All the work in advocacy leads to, or supports this activity. The areas mentioned below are focussed on parliamentary advocacy. A similar list can be developed for local government advocacy. Attention could be focused on:

- Members/citizens encouraged to take appropriate actions, such as writing letters to legislators
- Contacts made with groups of MPs, Parliamentary Committees including invitations to MPs to participate in workshops or joint committees
- CSOs make oral contributions to committee hearings
- MPs use CSO provided data/arguments in Portfolio Committee(s)
- Committees discuss CSO issues/amendments seriously
- Committees include/support CSO arguments/amendments in its submissions to Parliamentary plenary session
- Plenary session of Parliament discusses CSO amendments
- Plenary incorporates CSO amendments into its legislation/amendments
- Parliament passes bill including amendments
- Bill becomes law – signed by President and gazetted.
- If necessary, sustained and innovative efforts to retain/strengthen public interest & support e.g. new alliances, approaches, ways of communicating.

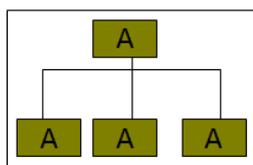
10. *Follow up*



As discussed above, follow up action is important and often overlooked by advocacy organisations. Monitoring implementation is important and normally requires more resources from the organisation than anticipated. Many instruments have been developed for this purpose; one of the most quoted is the citizen's report card and budget monitoring. Attention could be focused on:

- Monitoring the implementation of a newly passed law or policy, such as by making sure that authorized government funds are disbursed, implementing regulations are written and disseminated, checking implementation in field sites, asking members for feedback on how well it is working, etc.
- Some staff or volunteer time and resources are allocated to the issue or policy for monitoring
- Organize public meetings/press briefings to point out weaknesses in implementation

11. Institutionalising advocacy



Advocacy cannot and should not be isolated in a project in an organisation. All levels in an organisation have a role to play in the promotion of the issues. Typically advocacy is undertaken on a daily basis by technical staff, but senior management and board members also have a crucial role to play in ensuring the constituency and policy makers are engaged on the advocacy work. Organisations where advocacy is not the main focus are particularly challenged in this context. Attention could be focused on:

- Establishes an advocacy office or department
- Allocates money from the budget for advocacy on a regular basis
- Educates and informs membership on role of advocacy
- Establishes a parliamentary or government relations function
- Has an agenda/action plan that goes beyond the present one issue – although the focus may remain the same.
- Advocacy strategy included in CSO strategic planning
- Has informed and active support of the Board
- Has informed and active support of senior management

12. Internal governance



Most advocacy issues seek to promote higher levels of accountability, transparency or enhancing the rights or services to the population. It is crucial that the organisation practices what it preaches. An organisation cannot preach democracy and not have internal democracy in order, just as it cannot criticise a government for mismanagement if it does not have proper financial management. Issues of gender and inclusion of marginalised groups is especially pertinent. If an organisation is promoting gender equality or inclusion of marginalised groups in government, it should document that it has assessed to what extent the same groups are represented in its leadership and board and taken the same action it recommends to government. Attention could be focused on:

- Procurement procedures and tracking of fixed assets.
- Expenditures are in line with program activities
- Internal controls in place and practised, including controls on documentation and authorisation on expenditure
- Financial planning and foresight
- Board and management oversee financial practices
- Board meets regularly with agenda and reporting
- Adequate personnel systems: recruitment, conditions, training
- Professional staff retention
- Policies for gender, governance, marginalised groups or similar in place and abided by.

- Mechanisms in place and followed providing for full accountability and transparency to members, public, constituencies

Assessment scale

An organisation may choose to quantify an assessment. A scoring system has been developed with a scale from 0-6, with 0 being the lowest score. The organisation can choose to use the score to assess its internal capacity or activities. In the absence of a way to assess the capacity, it can use the assessment of activities as a proxy indicator for capacity; the scores are therefore usable for both activities and capacity. The organisation should not, unless specifically interested, undertake two separate assessments of capacity and activities. The definition on the scores is:

Score	Capacity	Activities
0	No Capacity	No activities undertaken
1	Minimal Capacity	Symbolic activities undertaken
2	Some capacity, but not sufficient for effective work	Some but insufficient activities undertaken
3	Reasonable capacity, can undertake the basic work but not advanced activities	Basic planned activities undertaken
4	Effective capacity, can undertake all planned work	All planned activities undertaken effectively
5	Strong capacity, can undertake all planned work and further develop concepts for advocacy	All planned activities undertaken, new models for advocacy is being developed and strong engagement of policymakers
6	Very strong capacity, best national or regional practice or has multiplier effects on other advocacy issues.	Actual results from advocacy achieved, laws enacted or advocacy strategies becoming very advanced and unique for the country or region

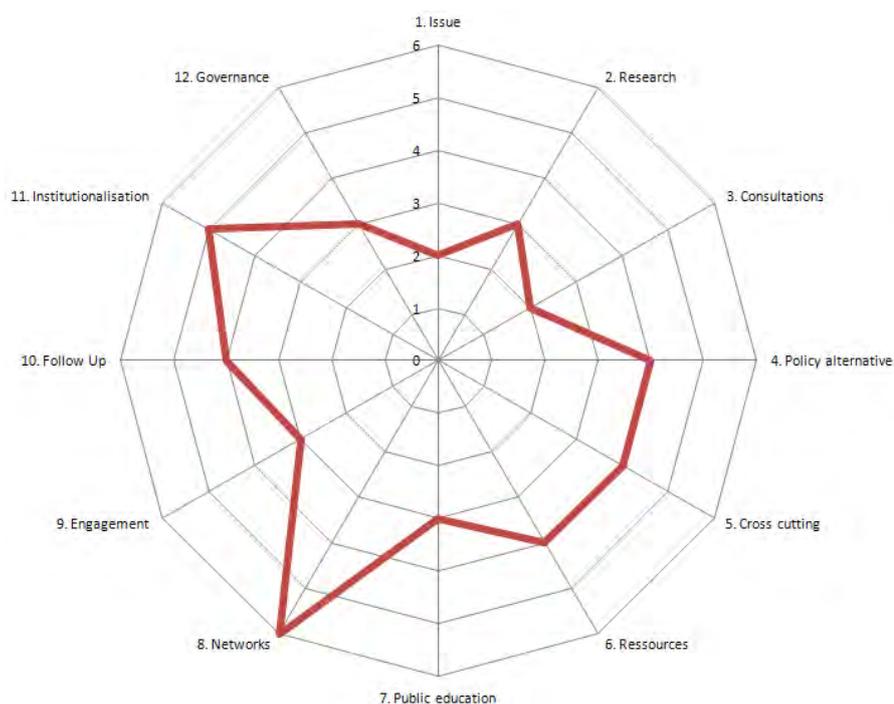
- A score of 0 will be unusual, as that would normally be symptomatic of an organisation that has never undertaken advocacy at all.
- A score of 1 would be for an organisation with some knowledge, maybe with no specific staff allocated for advocacy, but with minimal knowledge and symbolic activities.
- A score of 2 would be an organisation that can undertake basic advocacy activities, may not have an actual consolidated strategy and cannot develop comprehensive plans.
- A score of 3 is for an organisation that has staff with specific knowledge of advocacy and who can undertake the basic steps in advocacy according to a predetermined plan.
- A score of 4 is for a progressive organisation that can undertake most steps in advocacy according to an advocacy plan or strategy and does so with some effectiveness.

- A score of 5 is a very effective organisation with staff and management involved in advocacy that has a well formulated advocacy strategy in place. The organisation is beginning to see actual results of its activities and it can relate the results to its efforts. It will have effective access to policymakers.
- A score of 6 is for the unusually strong advocacy organisation who have well documented wide ranging results or who is undertaking advocacy in ways never seen before in the country or region and who can document the best practice and spread capacity to other organisations

The scoring should be done for each of the 12 components of the system. Some organisations may be doing state of the art public consultation and score a 5 or 6, but be very weak in terms of research and only score a 1. The strength of the system is that it will allow the organisation to map its strong and weak points and work on areas where it needs to improve.

After a proper assessment, an advocacy profile of the organisation will emerge, below is a constructed example of an organisation with each of the 12 components being assessed. The aim of a profile should not be to reach a score of 6 in all areas, depending on the focus of the organisation and its coalitions and networks; it could be that one organisation is tasked with public consultation and another on policy engagement and a third on research used by all the organisations in the network.

A yearly assessment will produce a clear picture on in what way the organisation is developing its capacity and can serve as a tool for the board to prioritise its resources for better advocacy.



Monitoring system for advocacy – the process

The process of assessing the advocacy of an organisation will depend on whether the aim is to use the assessment for purely internal purposes or whether the tool is used for external reporting and strategizing.

As outlined from the outset, the assessment is essentially subjective. This may serve the organisation well if it is used for purely internal capacity reasons. However, if the tool is used for external reporting, either to a donor, coalition or networks or other fora, the assessment may have to be quality assured.

There are two ways to have a quality assurance. One is to ask an outside facilitator to facilitate the initial assessment, the other to have the self-assessment reviewed by an external expert. Given that ownership of the system is important it would be of value to the organisation if the original assessment was made by the organisation itself, perhaps supported by the external facilitator.

The greatest value may be obtained if a peer review system is used. Such a system should probably only be implemented if a group of organisations with advocacy as one of their main activities arrange a network with this as one of the activities. Establishing a panel for one or very few organisations may not be comparable to the effort in undertaking the peer review. The use of peer review of advocacy organisations have been used with success in other countries.

In case a technical partner exists for the organisations, the technical partner could facilitate the process in order to ensure consistence and provide technical and financial support to the process. Technical partners would normally be larger INGOs or other organisations involved in capacity development of advocacy organisations.

Peer review process

Peer review basically means that the assessment is being subjected to scrutiny of a larger group of individuals with capacity in all or some of the aspects of advocacy.

The review group will assess documentation and consult the organisation before making its assessment.

The peer review process could be the following:

1. Self-assessment prepared by the organisation
2. Self-assessment reviewed but not changed by technical partner, if such exist
3. Self-assessment sent to peer review panel

4. Panel to make final assessment on the organisation, based on evidence from self-assessment, technical partner and documentation submitted and interview with the organisation being assessed.

It will be important for the assessment that there is a multiyear approach to the system and that there is commitment from the participating organisations to continue the assessment. If not the value of tracking changes in capacity will not materialize.



It is also crucial that the organisation(s) under assessment professionally and honestly undertake the self-assessment and use it as a tool for critical analysis of its capacity. If the organisations are too optimistic, it will not assist them in adjusting the capacity.

The role of the technical partner should be to ensure the self-assessment is undertaken according to the standards agreed, and contribute with the knowledge it may have with regard to the capacity of the organisation. The technical partner could act as the external facilitator for the organisation in preparation and internal review of the self-assessment.

The technical partner should also facilitate the process of hosting the panel and organising the logistics. Depending on the role and people in the panel, it may be relevant to arrange some form of remuneration.

Selection of the panel

The peer review panel should be selected by the participating organisations or the technical partner who may facilitate the process. In selecting the panellists several criteria should be observed:

- Competence and credibility in the understanding of the social, economic, and political dynamics of the country, the operations and challenges of civil society and Parliament, and the methods and role of advocacy;
- The highest integrity, to inspire complete confidence that the panellist would make careful, fair and independent assessments;
- Strong likelihood that the panellist will be available and able to devote the time required over several years
- Likelihood that the panellist would not have to withdraw from the panel because he/she takes up a senior position in one of the organizations being assessed.

Scope and responsibility of panel

The role of the panel will be to determine the final score for the organisation, the details of the responsibilities are:

- One person serves as Convener of the panel. The Convener's role is to facilitate the progress of the Panel, keep to a timetable, convene meetings, allocate report writing responsibilities and take final responsibility for preparing the report to the organisation under review.

The Panel determines each year who will be the Convener for the following year.

- The Panellists commit to study the materials presented to them, principally the advocacy organizations' self-assessments, together with comments provided by the technical partner if such exist
- The Panellists' then meet as a group to discuss initial individual assessments and to identify issues and queries that will need further investigations in a meeting with each of the advocacy organisations.
- The Panellists make provisional scoring of each organisation at the end of their meeting with that organisation; subsequently the Panellists' meet for review and final scoring of all of the organisations.
- The Convener prepares the final report each year for the organisations under review, drawing on the individual panellists' scores and their contributions to the Panel's commentary that accompanies the scores.

Limitations of the peer review of advocacy organisations

It should be recollected that essentially the assessment is subjective in nature and that the peer review system is engaged with a purpose to limit the inherent weakness of a subjective assessment and act as a tool for sharing experiences and learning. The scoring of organisations can therefore not be used to compare organisations with each other, but only be used to track the changes in capacity in the organisation.

Maintaining a peer review system can also be a substantial task for an advocacy organisation, which is why it may be beneficiary to engage a technical partner to make sure the process is facilitated and logistics and potential financing is being taken care of.