Guidelines for Impact Orientation of Advocacy

A manual for planning, monitoring and evaluation

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Preface

Influencing political processes and decisions is an essential component of the commitment to development by the churches. For a sustainable overcoming of poverty and hunger, protection of the natural basis of life and promotion of human rights can only be successful if the man-made causes of poverty, environmental destruction and human-rights violations are rigorously addressed. It is in this context that advocacy and lobbying are gaining importance within the work of non-governmental and church-related development organisations. Moreover, their civil society partners in South and East are calling for support and solidarity for their commitment to the rights of the disadvantaged and marginalised people and their demand for political participation.

But what do we know about the major prerequisites for successfully transforming societies and politics? What can we learn about the impact of political dialogue, lobbying activities and campaigns? How can we and our partner organisations find a way to extend our knowledge in this area and how can we improve our lobbying activities towards achieving more impact?

As part of the international discussions around aid effectiveness and the joint efforts to improve the development cooperation, many non-governmental organisations have refined their instruments for monitoring results and have introduced impact oriented planning, monitoring and evaluation standards. While great progress has been made in the area of financial cooperation for concrete measures to improve the living conditions of the poor, the monitoring of measures aiming at creating public awareness and advocacy are still an uncharted methodological territory for many.

This guideline was originally published in German to close this gap. However, we felt that it could also make a valuable contribution to the international debate, as it offers a new route map and valuable information on concrete planning and monitoring instruments for more effective advocacy. It adds substance to the concept of impact orientation in the field of advocacy and lobbying,

which "Brot für die Welt", Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and EED pursue. Initially it was intended for our own staff, but we quickly realized that the guidelines can be of great benefit for colleagues in many organisations and development policy initiatives.

We kindly thank Franziska Krisch (FAKT) for her work. She has made this largely unknown field accessible. May it show its impact and effects!

Stuttgart, April 2012

Dr. Klaus Seitz
Head of the department "Policy and Campaigns"
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1 What are the benefits of impact orientation in advocacy?

Bringing justice to the poor and fighting hunger; securing peace, health and education for everyone regardless of gender, social status and ethnicity: Many organisations share these overall goals of development which cannot, however, be achieved by solely drilling wells and distributing seeds. Even though it can be important to give concrete support on the ground, it is mainly through additional measures at a policy level that successful approaches become standard practice and lead to comprehensive social change. Therefore, civil society organisations are getting increasingly involved in advocacy work, political lobbying and campaigning, both as a supplement to their grassroots support or as an independent field of work.

In the German context, the term advocacy stands for the representation of marginalised individuals or groups; in English speaking countries this is called „social justice advocacy" and encompasses a more general understanding of advocacy as the representation of group interests (e.g. trade unions or industrial associations) or as the promotion of a specific cause (e.g. saving the whales). This predominantly argumentative support of public opinion making and influencing of political decision making is geared towards governments, parliamentarians, local government units and multilateral institutions (political lobbying, interface to governance). If stimulating broad social change is the aim, the general or a specific public have to be mobilised with the media as intermediate (campaigns, interface to public relations and education). In times of economic globalisation, private sector companies have become a growing target group for advocacy work (interface to Corporate Social Responsibility).

While traditional project support has seen an increasing impact orientation following the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectives (2005), for a long time it has been assumed that the impact of advocacy work can neither be planned nor measured. Civil society organisations in the United States (US), wanting to improve their domestic lobbying and to document their successes for their donors, were the first to initiate the development of new approaches and methodologies in this field. How advocacy measures can be oriented towards impact, how changes can be observed and contributions analysed, is the topic of a relatively new field of work in development cooperation (DC).

On the basis of theoretical models for social change, this manual compiles a range of helpful approaches for planning, monitoring, and evaluation (PME) of advocacy programmes. Additionally, some concrete tools are presented which help to structure planning processes and to collect and analyse data. The addressees of this information are organisations and staff who conduct their own advocacy and lobbying projects and campaigns. The Manual is based on the "Brot für die Welt" and EED joint Concept for Anchoring Impact Orientation (November 2010), elaborating on its short paragraph on advocacy and lobbying. It aims at contributing mutual learning (learning goal), of reporting towards stakeholders (accountability goal) and of fostering dialogue on development (dialogue goal).

Since advocacy work is frequently conducted by networks and coalitions of different institutions, the dialogue goal becomes specifically important for developing and maintaining a shared motivation and goal orientation. Normally, an advocate is accountable to his or her client. In advocacy programmes the accountability goal should therefore be extended to wider stakeholder groups among whom the advocates need credibility and trust. However, this kind of dialogue has to be conducted with the necessary sensitivity, since not every lobbying success has to reach a wider public if, as a result, strategic contacts and political influence may be jeopardised. In such a case, the internal learning goal should be the focus of impact monitoring. Advocacy processes call for fast and flexible actions and as a consequence, sometimes lead to actionist behaviour; in this case impact oriented reflection rounds can contribute to keeping the programme goals in mind while constantly adapting strategies and tactics to current needs.

2 What types of impact can advocacy generate?

„The counter-bureaucracy ignores a central principle of development theory – that those development programs that are most precisely and easily measured are the least transformational, and those programs that are most transformational are the least measurable" (Natsios 2010, 4),

warns the former director of USAID, Andrew Natsios, against schematic assessment grids in the context of social change. According to his statement, advocacy that aims at changing the political, economic and social conditions eludes a systematic impact measurement. At the same time, countless lobbyists in Berlin, Brussels and Washington charge for their services of effectively representing the interests of their clients. Can influence thus be measured?

2.1 Challenges of impact orientation in advocacy

Classical advocacy goals are most often long-term and can only be achieved over a period of several project financing cycles. This leads to the challenge of – within a long-term strategy – defining sub-goals which can be reached within 3 to 5 years. If, for example, the implementation of the Right to Food is the long-term goal, corresponding plans and measures in one country or a geographic region could be the focus of a specific project financing cycle. In the common situation of being faced with conflicting interests, success across the board is rare; normally advocates meet at best with partial success while having to accept some compromises. Depending on the perspective, the assessment of achievements tends to be highly subjective and differs between stakeholders.

In some cases, it can already be called a success if the situation does not deteriorate, e.g. that the ratification of a new law which criminalises homosexuality can be prevented. Due to the lack of control groups, such effects are difficult to document, and human rights activists have sound arguments why they do not want to publish successful strategies.

Successful advocacy requires a combination of mutually supportive interventions. Lobbyists and campaigners reach their goals by influencing intermediaries (e.g. journalists, educators), who on their part influence decision makers. This results in a complex and variable impact framework where contextual factors gain high significance. Already within one organisation it is challenging to attribute results to specific interventions. This attribution gap further widens in the case of networks or coalitions which civil society organisations form in order to carry out issue oriented advocacy.

Since successful advocacy can generate substantial change with limited resources, more and more organisations get engaged in this field of work. Along with this potential, however, the risk of unintended side effects is also increasing.

If one social group gains influence, this can easily lead to other groups feeling disadvantaged and starting to organise themselves, as can be observed in the case of job reservations for marginalised groups in the US or in India. Similar to development programmes in conflict affected countries, special attention has to be paid to unintended effects while pursuing advocacy goals.

2.2 Theories of social change

Advocacy strategies are based on scientific theories of social change. While applying impact orientation to planning, monitoring and evaluation, it can be helpful to keep some of them in mind.

■ **The right people (Power Politics):** This lobbying strategy on influencing political decision makers is based on the Elite Theory of the American sociologist C. Wright Mills (Mills 1956) which says that important decisions are made by a few powerful persons. This applies specifically to political and legal transformations that are most likely influenced by fostering contacts to politicians, senior officials and civil servants.

■ **The right moment (Window of Opportunity/ Large Leaps):** Systems and institutions do not change in a linear mode but rather in sudden leaps. Once the right factors coincide, large leaps become possible (Baumgartner et al. 1993). If an advocacy programme succeeds in introducing an issue into public discourse, winning relevant actors for change and timing all this to the right moment in the political cycle, a window of opportunity may open. For that purpose, advocacy organisations or coalitions need the capacity to work on these multiple streams (Kingdon 1984) simultaneously.

■ **The right message (Messaging & Frameworks):** Similar to advertising, advocacy campaigns are based on the psychological Prospect Theory which states that individuals do not take their decisions only in a rational way and are thus more prone to accept new solutions if these are promoted in an attractive way (Kahneman et al. 1979). Advocacy needs to succeed in increasing awareness, introducing a widely accepted problem definition and raising the salience of its concern. Media work is a central strategy that results from this theory.

■ **A broad supporter base and an effective network (Grassroots/Community Organising; Advocacy Coalition Framework):** These two theories build on cooperation between like-minded people who are jointly representing their interests. Masses can be mobilised if a large number of people is affected by the same problem and civil society organisations take on a facilitator's role (Biklen 1983). Political change can be triggered through coordinated action of a group of people who share core visions (Sabatier et al. 1993).

2.3 Impact areas of advocacy

Before starting the planning, monitoring, or evaluation of advocacy measures, a reflection needs to take place in which impact areas results are being expected. While classical lobbying mainly aims at political change, campaigns and capacity building processes may pursue different objectives. The effects of political change again can be traced in a range of impact areas and among different stakeholder groups. If they relate to income generation or improved access to education and health

services at grassroots level, classical methodologies of impact monitoring can be applied for the collection and analysis of data. Generally, hardly ever just one distinctive target group will exist; especially the problems and perspectives of women and men tend to differ significantly. A gender differentiated analysis therefore needs to be made in all of the following impact areas.

2.3.1 Policy change

For lobbyists, comprehensive knowledge of the political system and continuous observation of relevant policy fields are pivotal tools of the trade. Depending on which stage of the policy cycle (see Figure 1) the advocacy concern is located and on its political priority or salience, different strategies need to be applied.

If, for instance, an issue which has not received much attention so far is to be introduced into public discourse, the strategy will start from agenda setting. For that purpose, intensive media work and perhaps even mass mobilisation are necessary tactics. In case a law or regulation is already under way in a democratic system, lobbyists can present key issues or draft wording. Some countries have good laws which are poorly enforced. In such a case it makes sense to propose implementation plans and/or critically monitor how they are being implemented. Finally, even functional laws and regulations have to be periodically reviewed to adapt them to new realities. Since each political concern has to compete with countless others, it can already be considered an effect of successful lobbying if the promoted issue gains in priority, thus speeding up the course of action within the political cycle.

2.3.2 Expansion of democratic freedom

Most strategies and tactics discussed in the previous paragraphs relate to pluralistic democratic systems. However, influencing the political system is far more difficult in the regulated anarchy of failing states as well as in authoritarian or totalitarian dictatorships, where normal citizens or civil society organisations (if they exist) hardly get access to those in power. In repressive systems the prevention of human rights violations can

Figure 1: **The different stages of the policy cycle**
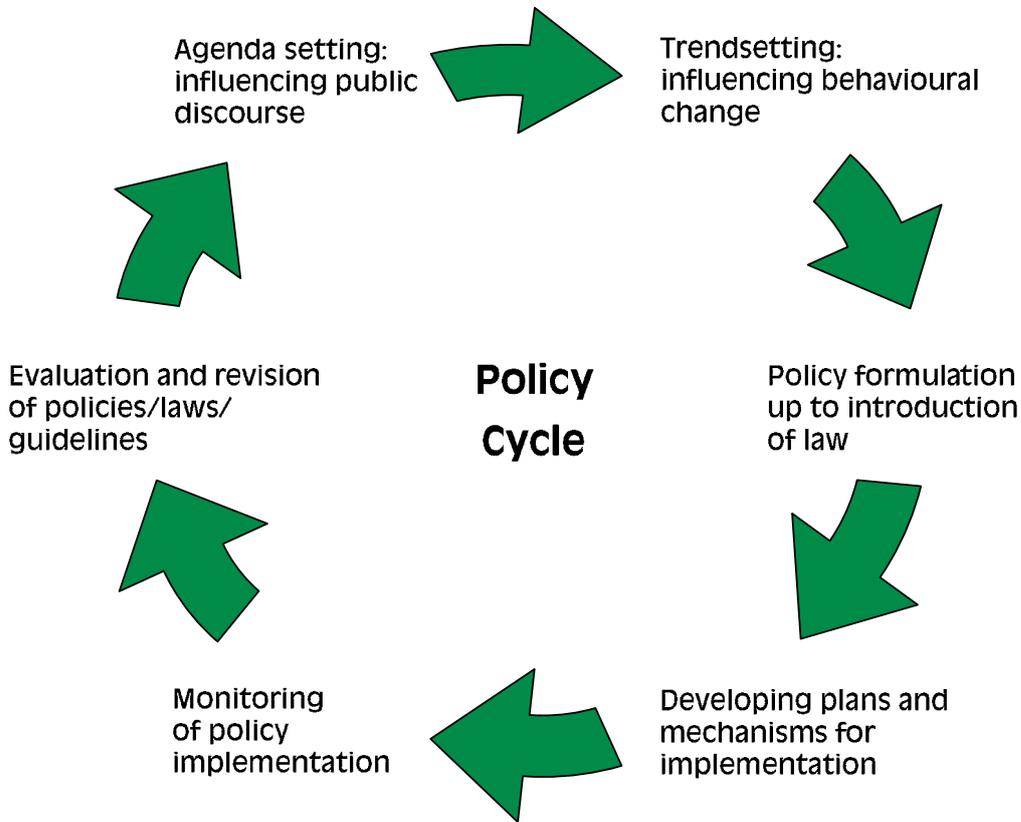
be an important impact of advocacy; such effects, however, are difficult to measure and their documentation is mostly limited to anecdotal form.

In non-democratic systems, the strengthening of civil society representation and contribution to decision making constitutes an important advocacy goal. A gradual improvement of political participation can be monitored using the following indicators:

■ Interest groups are allowed to form civil society organisations.

■ Civil society organisations obtain information about impending decisions and decision making processes.

■ Civil society organisations get the opportunity to inform political decision makers/to express different opinions/to participate in consultations.

■ Transparency and feedback on decision making processes.

■ Examples for influence of civil society organisations on decision making processes.

■ Decision makers actively involve civil society organisations in political processes.

2.3.3 Shift in social norms

Awareness campaigns frequently aim at changing attitudes and behaviour. They are necessary wherever a problem is not yet well-known or appropriately dealt with. The campaigns for awareness raising, treatment and support of HIV infected people, AIDS patients and their relatives are an example in kind. Such campaigns have been conducted in many countries and have achieved varied results.

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Along the following indicators, an attitude shift can be retraced in progressive stages:

■ Awareness level of the problem has increased.

■ Increased agreement about the definition of a problem (common language).

■ Change in beliefs, attitudes and values.

■ Severity of issue is acknowledged → prioritisation.

■ Increased knowhow about potential solutions/ actions to be taken.

■ Willingness to support a concern has grown.

■ Change in behaviour can be observed.

2.3.4 Empowerment of individuals and groups

Wherever disadvantaged individuals or groups are strengthened, those who previously received preferential treatment will most likely answer back. Empowerment processes are generally power struggles about participation and access to resources. From an individual perspective, subjective change will be described in qualitative terms. Taking the examples of women's empowerment, Christa Wichterich has developed a complex criteria checklist which samples change in the following areas (Stahl 2006, 36 ff):

■ **Personal empowerment:** Self-confidence, freedom and opportunities (e.g. education, scope of action, decision making power);

■ **Legal empowerment:** Legal protection relating to family, reproductive and property rights, labour laws, access to legal services;

■ **Cultural empowerment:** Influence on symbolic order, women culture, status in religious systems;

■ **Social empowerment:** Visibility, participation in public life, respect in community, organisation;

■ **Economic empowerment:** Economic alphabetisation, property and means of production, income and disposal of financial means, social security, politico-economic influence.

2.3.5 Capacity building of civil society organisations

As discussed earlier, most advocacy organisations represent people or groups who are not able to defend their interests themselves. Such an advocacy is only legitimate if secured by a mandate, as it has long been consensus in specialist publications.

Experienced advocacy organisations that are funded by EED, however, pled during an international workshop in 2010 that the terms "legitimacy" and "mandate" should be replaced by "credibility" and "trust", since there is no formal contract relationship between advocacy organisations and their target groups, but rather a bond of trust which has to be periodically renewed. As a fundament for credibility and trust, an organisation should build on one or several of the following competencies or value systems (Hudson, 331 ff):

■ practical experience (relating to the issue/concern), grassroots relations (dialogue with target groups),

■ reference to a widely subscribed value basis (e.g. human rights or religious values),

■ expert knowledge (relating to the advocacy topic),

■ cooperation in democratically organised networks (may serve as substitute for a., if another organisation in the network brings in the grassroots contacts).

In the context of development cooperation each advocate should aim at capacitating the clients, enabling them to organise themselves and to effectively represent their own interests. For that purpose young civil society organisations need support and training to fulfil basic institutional preconditions of management and leadership, sector knowhow and strategic flexibility (Raynor et al. 2009).

2.3.6 Building a supporter base and setting up networks

Especially in the case of new topics which still need to be anchored in public awareness, expanding the supporter base can already be considered a relevant effect. Setting up or strengthening regional/national/international networks represents a success per se if they deal with sensitive issues.

2.3.7 Improving corporate practices

Multinational companies frequently look for production sites in countries and regions where wages are low and labour rights as well as environmental standards are either lacking or not well enforced. Especially in global value chains, civil society coalitions such as the Clean Clothes Campaign have successfully sensitised consumers in industrial countries for the exploitative working conditions of sewers in Asia and Latin America and thus pushed brand companies to invest in improvements.

When dealing with grievances, organisations either directly target the company (e.g. in fragile or autocratic states) or they channel their complaints through public control bodies (in case they are functional), depending on the advocacy strategy. Hereby they aim at achieving effects in the following areas:

■ compliance with laws and regulations,

■ transparent planning and decision making processes (e.g. when projecting new factories or mining sites),

■ guarantee of labour rights (ILO core labour standards etc.),

■ protection of natural resources, environment-friendly production, occupational health and safety,

■ social services for workers and employees,

■ compensation payments and support measures (e.g. for people affected by resettlement schemes),

■ lasting acknowledgement of the companies' direct liability for human rights' violations.

3   Impact oriented PME of advocacy and lobbying

While linear models are helpful for analysing changes stage by stage, the long-term course of advocacy is best visualised as a cycle. In Figure 2, the outer circle depicts the process from first reflections, research, strategy development, setting up networks and implementation of an action plan, up to the repetition of the situational analysis.

The sequence of the steps may vary, e.g. depending on whether or not a network of organisations does the planning, or whether one organisation starts and searches for coalition partners only at a later stage. The functions of data collection, documentation, monitoring and evaluation as well as the dialogue with stakeholders and supporters that can be found in the inner circle are a continuous process.

As already mentioned, impact orientation of advocacy is still in its early stages. There are hardly any ready-made tools for planning, monitoring, and evaluation of campaigns. Of those tools presented in the following paragraphs, only the Composite Logic Model was specifically developed for advocacy programmes; others originate from different contexts, yet can be adapted to the needs of lobbying and campaigns.

3.1   Can effective advocacy be planned?

Even more than in classical development projects, effective advocacy work never strictly sticks to the plan but

Figure 2:   Operation cycle of advocacy and lobbysim
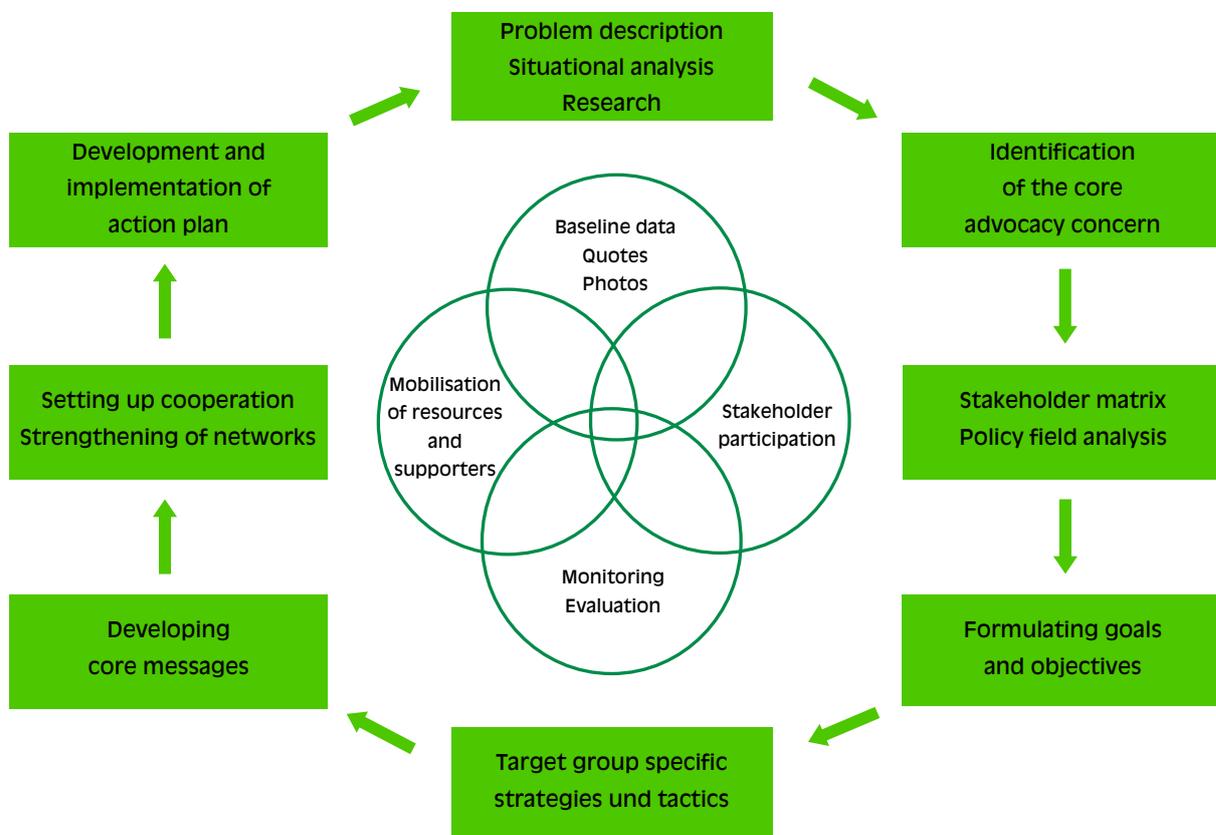
Based on: O'Flynn, Maureen (2009)

has to continuously adapt strategy and tactics to changing conditions. However, revising a strategy becomes easier if it can relate to initial planning documents. And especially in networks and coalitions, a joint planning process is indispensable for establishing consensus about goals, lines of action and division of labour. As a basis for monitoring, milestones have to be defined during the planning phase against which progress can be measured during the implementation phase.

The motive for taking up advocacy normally lies in the detection of social grievances, political shortcomings or tangible injustice. Especially in situations where people are acutely suffering, fast action has to be taken. For achieving sustainable impact, however, parallel to possibly implementing emergency measures, the root causes of the problem have to be analysed on the basis of which the advocates can then develop long-term political goals and detailed project goals, strategy and tactics. Impact oriented planning starts from the perspective of the goal to be achieved, then, thinking backwards, listing all the steps and activities which will be necessary to achieve. Documenting evidence of sustainable effects and impact (quality at exit) is more important than showing an efficient and effective implementation of activities (quality at entry).

3.1.1   Research as a solid basis

Whoever is challenging those in power has to be well prepared. This is true for both government representatives and for private sector companies. Therefore, a systematic research phase needs to constitute the first step of any planning process for lobbying and campaigning. What was triggered off by outrage should then be based on a comprehensive description of the problem (substantiated by facts and figures) and the presentation of possible solution strategies. Ensuring the participation of target groups adds to credibility, builds trust and facilitates first learning effects among all actors. Conducting a stakeholder analysis of relevant intermediaries and decision makers will not only provide a better understanding of the socio-political environment, but also help in establishing contacts to potential supporters and possible adversaries. The resulting stakeholder matrix shows which channels of influence an advocacy organisation already uses and to which access could be gained through a strategic alliance with other groups.

The formulation of a realistic advocacy goal marks the end of the research phase. Building on the analysis of possible solution strategies, the leverage of the organisation/network, on available resources and timeframe, a specific and measurable advocacy goal can be developed. If the problem is very complex and has to be dealt with in several stages, an overall goal that will remain constant through several project phases has to be formulated as a first step. In that case, realistic project objectives which can be achieved within a set time (e.g. funding phases) should be worked out. In this context it helps to look at the different impact areas and stages of change (see chapter 2) where results are to be obtained.

The baseline data generated during the research phase also provide a good basis for a 'before and after comparison' in the context of monitoring. Case stories and interviews documented during research as well as photographs can later be used in publications. Depending on how broad the issue is and how many stakeholders are involved, six to nine months have to be calculated for the research phase.[1]

3.1.2   Planning with the Composite Logic Model

The only planning and evaluation tool that was specifically developed for advocacy builds on the experiences of US civil society organisations engaging in domestic advocacy. Like a checklist, the Composite Logic Model (CLM) asks the user to compile the key elements of a campaign such as objectives, stakeholders, strategies and tactics as well as the focus for monitoring. As a result, all selected elements are visualised on one page (see Figure 3).

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[1]   For further reading: START Simple Toolkit for Advocacy Research Techniques (VSO 2010).

Figure 3: Advocacy and Policy Change Composite Logic Model

The model is organized into columns from left to right:

Inputs

Capacity Building
- Fund Raising
- Staffing and Leadership Development
- Infrastructure Development
- Skills Development

Preparation/Planning
- Data Collection
- Problem Assessment
- Policy Assessment
- Landscape Mapping
- Goal setting
- Strategy Development
- Partner Development
- Message Development
- Materials Development

Activities/Tactics

Policy and Politics
- Issue/Policy Analysis and Research
- Policymaker and Candidate Education
- Relationship Building with Decision Makers
- Policy Proposal Development
- Litigation or Legal Advocacy
- Lobbying

Communications and Outreach
- Polling
- Electronic Outreach
- Earned Media
- Paid Media
- Public Service Announcements
- Media Partnerships
- Voter Education
- Coalition and Network Building
- Grassroots Organizing and Mobilization
- Rallies and Marches
- Briefings/Presentations
- Demonstration Projects or Pilots

Interim Outcomes

Advocacy Capacity
- Organizational Capacity
- Partnerships or Alliances
- Collaboration and Alignment (including messaging)
- New Advocates (including unlikely or non traditional)
- New Champions (including policymakers)
- New Donors
- More or Diversified Funding
- Organizational Visibility or Recognition

Policy
- Media Coverage
- Issue Reframing
- Awareness
- Salience
- Attitudes or Beliefs
- Public Will
- Political Will
- Constituency or Support Base Growth

Policy Goals
- Policy Development
- Placement on the Policy Agenda
- Policy Adoption
- Policy Implementation
- Policy Monitoring and Evaluation
- Policy Maintenance
- Policy Blocking

Impacts
- Improved Services and Systems
- Positive Social and Physical Conditions

Audiences
- Elected Officials
- Candidates
- Public Administrators
- Voters
- Political Donors
- Specific Constituencies
- Media
- Popular Culture Artists/Gatekeepers
- Business
- Community Leaders
- Courts
- Other Audiences

Contextual Factors
- Political Climate
- Economic Climate
- Social Climate
- Prior Experience
- Issue Competition
- Potential Partners/Competitors/Opponents

Based on: Coffman, Julia (2009)

Following the instructions of a manual which is available on the internet, organisations and networks can plan new campaigns or check if they left anything out in existing plans. In that context, they are invited to answer the following questions as precisely as possible:

■ **What are the goals of the advocacy programme?** This question asks for an overall goal and several policy goals. The user is reminded to focus and not to formulate too many goals.

■ **Which stakeholder groups are important?** This includes direct target groups such as political decision makers, intermediaries such as the media as well as the general public (as voters) and (private or institutional) donors.

■ **What will it take to convince or move the audience?** From capacity building within the own organisation, research, strategy development and action planning, to the formulation of milestones, this point deals with the complete planning process including the setup of a monitoring system.

■ **What contextual factors might impact the strategy's success?** This question deals, for instance, with competition on the political agenda, prior experience of the organisation and of their allies, as well as with the economic climate.

■ **Where does the strategy not need to focus?** Here advocates are invited to deliberately delete potential lines of action and interim goals, thus consolidating the focus on the selected strategy.

■ **What will strategy collaborators do?** Networks and coalitions need to agree on a division of labour that builds on the strengths and contacts of each partner. For a comprehensive overview it is helpful to visualise the core working areas of each partner.

■ **What will competitors or opponents do?** Whoever has identified potential opponents in the stakeholder matrix should now reflect on how they could react to the campaign and which tactics could minimize the impact of such a potential opposition.

■ **Is there a contingency plan?** As will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters, advocacy strategies contain numerous assumptions with related risks. Therefore, in formulating long-term advocacy strategies, alternative scenarios should be developed, e.g. on how a lobbying strategy could be adapted in case the government changed after elections.

The CLM facilitates a structured planning process which is also compatible with the log frame approach that is still widely required in project funding proposals. A weakness lies in the categories and terminology used by the CLM since they strongly relate to the US American parliamentarian system.

When using the CLM, they have to be adapted to the political system and processes in the country where the advocacy will be conducted.[2]

3.1.3   Impact framework and Theory of Change

Compared to a rural development project for which a fairly clear impact chain can be developed, advocacy is more like playing billiard: Once set in motion, the ball can only achieve its goal of pushing another ball into the pocket by hitting other balls or via the rail. By doing so, a number of other balls will be set in motion, necessitating a well-planned hit. Translated into the impact logic, advocacy projects have to deal with complex impact frameworks with narrow system boundaries, after which the direct control of project actors ends (see Figure 4).

Many effects take place at the Use of Output level; even though they cannot be directly influenced, they still

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[2] You will find the CLM-Toolkit (step-by-step approach) under http://fp.continuousprogress.org/. In addition there is the possibility of using an online tool which also results in the overview given in Figure 3: http://www.aspeninstitute.org/policy-work/apep/tools

Figure 4:   Impact Chain /System Boundaries of Advocacy
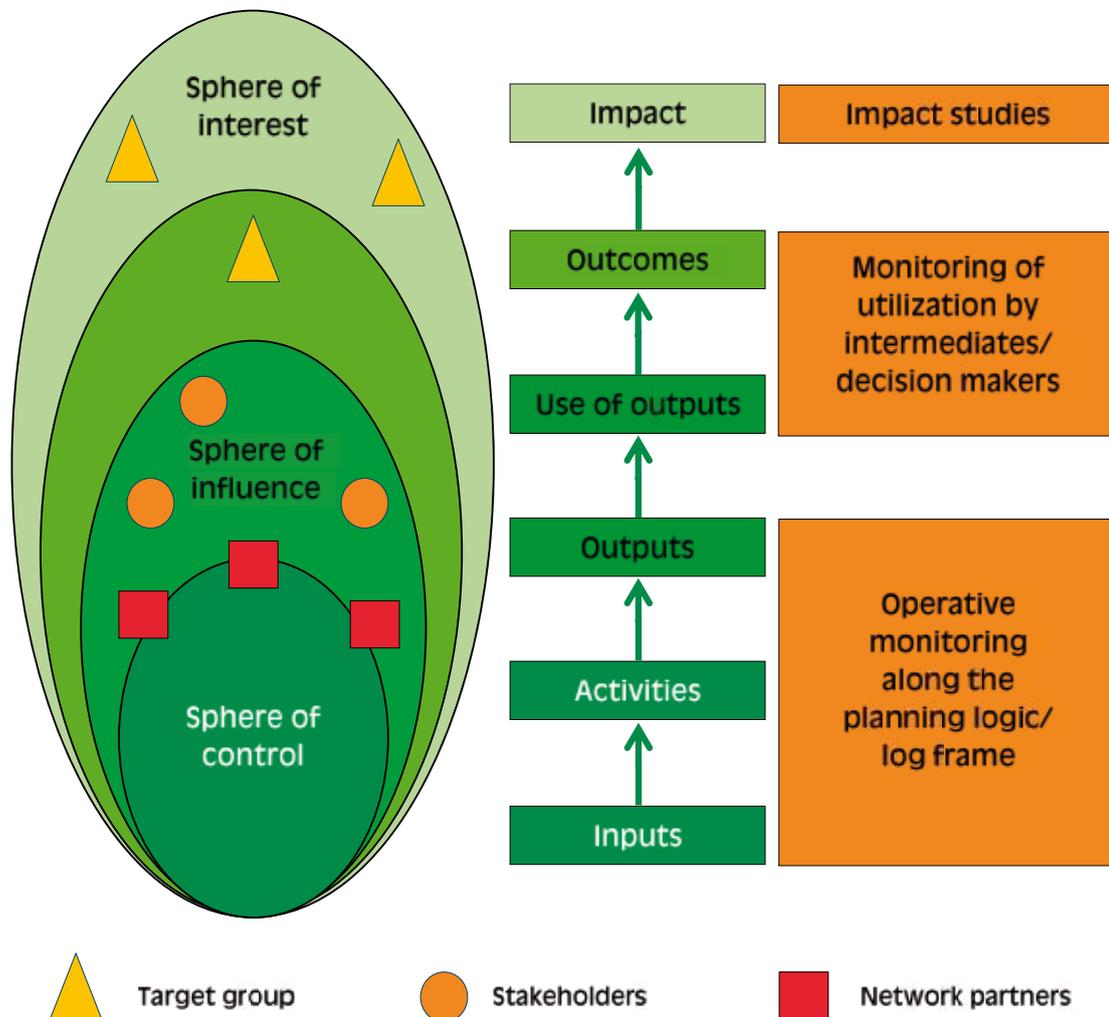
Based on: Hearn, Simon (2008)

have to be well-planned and closely monitored because if they do not take place, new activities and outputs have to be designed. It is advisable to formulate impact hypotheses which clearly state what kind of action is expected from which stakeholder so that the desired results can be achieved.

The impact framework of an advocacy programme normally contains several Use of Output levels; e.g. if presenting a study among the media and members of parliament was the output, and the ratification of an international convention is the desired outcome, the following intermediate steps could be necessary:

■ Study is requested – presentations are well attended;

■ Results of study are cited in the media, scientific publications and political speeches;

■ Political committee has been formed and representatives of advocacy groups are invited;

■ Political bill takes on arguments and recommendations of the study;

■ Parliament decides on ratification of the convention.

Even after ratification, in order to generate impact on target group level, the regulations contained in the international convention still need to be implemented. This leads to another line of action in the long-term advocacy strategy (see Figure 5) which will now be presented with an even more detailed elaboration of the Theory of Change. Consistently formulated, the Theory of Change enunciates assumptions that are related to the selected strategy and consequently also points out its potential risks.

It is advisable to rate identified risks on a scale (low – medium – high). If a central element of the strategy contains a risk, such as in the previous example a (notorious) procrastination of political processes, measures for risk mitigation can be planned; e.g. by fortifying the urgency of the concern with a media strategy or through mass mobilisation. In case the risk is rated as very high, a contingency plan should be developed as to how the long-term goal (implementation of the convention) could be approached with a completely different strategy; e.g. through private sector dialogue if the issue relates to environmental protection or the observation of labour laws.

The Theory of Change depicted in the graph represents only a small section of a complex undertaking. When the next step – implementation of the convention –starts, the advocacy organisation or coalition will have to assume a new role as critical observer for which a new impact chain or Theory of Change has to be developed. A long-term advocacy strategy is best visualised by an impact framework that connects several lines of action or impact chains.

3.2 How can impact of advocacy be recognised?

While PME experts already struggle to close the attribution gap between direct outcomes and indirect impact in classical development projects, demonstrating attribution proves to be rather unrealistic in advocacy projects; however, contribution should be demonstrated. In view of the manifold influences that impact on political and social processes, it is already a challenge to identify the

particular contribution that one particular organisation or advocacy network has made towards change. To capture such a contribution, however, it does not suffice to develop a monitoring system alongside the activities and outputs of the project.

In order to assess the impact of an organisation's or network's own measures, contextual influences such as political developments on a national or international level as well as activities and results of other stakeholders (both opponents and supporters) have to be monitored.

Since the success of an advocacy project largely depends on the ability of actors to adapt their strategy to changing conditions, short monitoring intervals with focus on learning and steering are important. Providing evidence on outcomes relating to the project goals and on utilisation of the project outputs by different levels of intermediates should be the focus of accountability efforts.

3.2.1 Impact oriented indicators and lead questions

Indicators show progress achieved on the way towards reaching the project objectives, like milestones on a planned route. They have to be formulated during the planning phase, ideally relating to the different levels of an impact chain or Theory of Change.

If the indicator is very complex, it can be subdivided into several steps (e.g. x signatures after one month, xx signatures after 3 months, xxx signatures after one year) to enable timely reactions in case the expectations are not met. Advocacy organisations should not just develop indicators for monitoring the desired results of their own measures but also potential contextual factors and possible successes or failures of opponents.

Meaningful indicators fulfil the SMART criteria; they are Specific, Measurable, Appropriate, Realistic and Time-bound. They narrow down which group of people has to be observed in which region and contain both quantitative and qualitative elements that can also be combined within one indicator (see Table 1). At the higher result levels of advocacy projects, however, it is often not easy
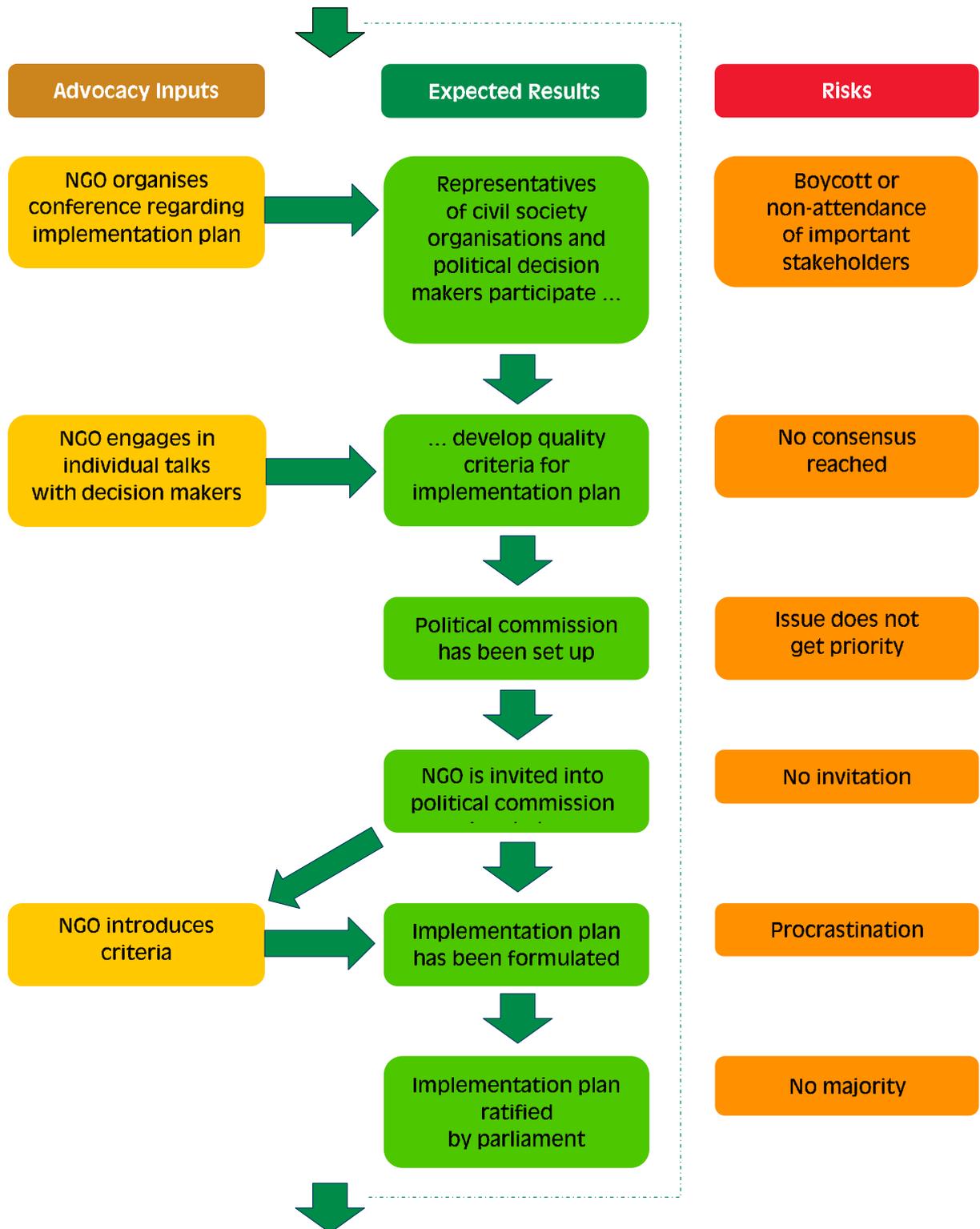
Figure 5:   Example for a Theory of Change

Advocacy Inputs	Expected Results	Risks
NGO organises conference regarding implementation plan	Representatives of civil society organisations and political decision makers participate …	Boycott or non-attendance of important stakeholders
NGO engages in individual talks with decision makers	… develop quality criteria for implementation plan	No consensus reached
	Political commission has been set up	Issue does not get priority
	NGO is invited into political commission	No invitation
NGO introduces criteria	Implementation plan has been formulated	Procrastination
	Implementation plan ratified by parliament	No majority

Table 1:   Levels of impact of indicator development

Impact level	Indicator	Data source	Lead questions
Impact	Situation of target group has improved, e.g. reduced incidence of discrimination	Survey (questionnaire, focus group discussions)	Needs to be compared with baseline data, influence of contextual factors?
Outcome	Public awareness of campaign issue /concern has increased	Opinion poll (expensive), focus group discussions	Contribution of campaign as compared to other actors?
Outcome	Target groups/CSO have joined in networks	Foundation charter of network, website	Which role does our organisation play in the network?
Use of Output	Politicians/decision makers relate to study	Parliament records, speech manuscripts	How often mentioned? Campaign name cited? Supporting campaign goals?
Use of Output	Target groups/CSO are asserting claims	Observation of stakeholder environment	Number of events? Content? Signs of coalition building?
Use of Output	Results of study have been cited by x scientists /experts	Scientific/expert publications	How many citations? What kind of scientists? What is getting cited? Supporting campaign goals?
Use of Output	Results of study have been published in x media	Clipping reports	Quantitative: How many features in which media? Coverage, duration? Qualitative: Core messages reproduced correctly?
Use of Output	Study has been ordered /collected /downloaded x times	Order statistics Web analysis	Quantitative: No. of users Qualitative: Who are the users, intermediates, decision makers?
Output / Use of Output	Study has been presented by campaign staff in x events	Event documentation	Quantitative: How many participants in events? Qualitative: Who exactly, what questions, opinions?
Output	Study on campaign issue/ underlying problem has been published (print run?/web)	Brochure Web link	Operational: Deadline met? Balanced budget? Qualitative: Comparison with similar publications, Up-to-datedness?

to quantify what contribution the implemented measures have made to the changes observed. By developing an influence matrix with a predetermined scale, target group representatives or project team members can assess the importance of different measures or contextual factors with respect to the observed changes.

Formulating meaningful and measurable indicators may initially pose a challenge, but will get easier with time and experience. Developing a Theory of Change and formulating indicators initiates a learning process that frequently results in a sharpening of the strategy. Chapter 2.3.2 and 2.3.3 contain tips for developing indicators in specific impact areas.

Table 1 shows exemplary indicators for an awareness campaign (agenda and trendsetting, shaping the socio-political discourse) that includes a media strategy. Please make sure to formulate each indicator as a full sentence with subject, object, and predicate.

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While an indicator always contains an organisation's or network's own change assumptions, lead questions are more likely to also reveal unintended effects. Especially at the higher result levels it is, therefore, recommended to complement specific indicators with more open lead questions.

3.2.2 Tools for collecting and documenting monitoring data

Even in the ideal case of (at least partial) goal achievement, advocacy organisations should be able to demonstrate their contributions to this change. For that purpose, they have to collect different data on each result level, as the example in the table shows.

Which kind of information is needed largely depends on the purpose of monitoring. To begin with, good baseline data are required which document the situation before the start of the project. For gathering this information, universal tools for impact monitoring can be utilised, such as those from the NGO-IDEAS Toolbox (www.ngo-ideas.net). Wherever official statistics are accessible, they should always be consulted to complement one's own research and enable triangulation.

Collecting baseline data for campaigns that aim at influencing public discourse and achieving behavioural change is slightly more difficult. NGOs or advocacy coalitions rarely have the means to contract a polling firm for conducting a statistically relevant survey. Alternatively, they could relate to published polls of other clients – in case the parameters fit – and monitor their specific questions by conducting focus group discussions. Even though their results are not statistically representative, if conducted well, focus group discussions will provide the necessary information on whether or not the strategy works or has to be changed.

Wherever, after finalising a campaign, the monitoring data provide evidence of positive change compared to the baseline data, the advocacy organisation or coalition still has to demonstrate if and how they have contributed to this change. For this accountability goal – or for the purpose of project steering in case the expected

results have not been achieved – a meaningful impact monitoring of the Use of Output levels is needed, tracing the actions and reactions of intermediaries and decision makers who the project set out to influence.

For that purpose, a number of templates exist some of which contain exemplary lead questions. The most comprehensive tool collection can be found in the Handbook of Data Collection Tools of Annie E. Casey Foundation (Reismann 2007). However, these types of templates should not be seen as a blueprint, as they always need to be adapted to the needs of the respective advocacy project. For a disaggregated data analysis, relevant categories such as gender, age or economic status have to be distinguished already during data collection. For the documentation of quantitative data, it is recommended to contrast baseline figures with desired and actual values in an Excel sheet.

In Table 2 some tools for data collection in the context of advocacy are listed. Before using them it is recommended to look for additional information at the cited source. Since the available tools do not systematically look for unintended effects, open questions regarding general change in the observation field should be added, as well as regarding potential disadvantages for social groups that are not targeted by the advocacy measures.

3.3 Impact oriented evaluation of advocacy

As opposed to continuous monitoring, an evaluation looks back at a defined project period and assesses its results in relation to, for instance, the DAC criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. Some of the tools presented in this manual can also be used for evaluations, e.g. the Composite Logic Model.

Also in evaluations, the challenge of attributing the observed changes remains and leads to the argumentation that advocacy eludes classical evaluation designs (Teles et al. 2011). However, the attribution gap can be narrowed by combining several different methodologies and perspectives:

Table 2:   Tools for data collection

Tool	Application	Template
Indicator Tracking	Regular target-actual comparison of project progress along planning logic/ impact framework/ Theory of Change	
Focus Group Discussion	Cost efficient opinion polling (before and after awareness campaigns) conducted with small groups of about 8 people Qualitative, open lead questions for facilitated discussion	Handbook[3], p. 4
Build Initiative Self-Assessment Checklist	Tracking changes in attitudes regarding the advocacy concern among important target groups/ intermediates	Handbook, p. 17 ff.
Bellwether Questions	Interviews with influential persons regarding - Priority of issue on political agenda - Ranking of advocacy concern - Estimation of future developments	
Contact Management	Documentation of conversations with decision makers and their reactions/ actions relating to the advocacy concern – crucial if several advocates are in contact with the same person	
Media Tracking	Documentation and quantitative as well as qualitative analysis of media response	Handbook, p. 21 ff.
Documentation of Public Hearings	Recording of frequency, duration and content of discussions relating to the advocacy concern, as well as of consensus, dissent, and decisions	Handbook, p. 5
Policy Tracking (various tools)	Structured analysis of political and legislative processes on the basis of e.g. parliament protocols that in some countries can be accessed on the internet (e.g. www.parliament.uk)	Handbook, S. 26 ff.
Assessment of Organisational Capacity	Self-assessment of organisations and networks relating to their performance in the advocacy process (criteria checklist)	Handbook, p. 10 Real Time Self Evaluation and Spider Diagram, see 3.3
Intensity of Integration Continuum	Lead questions assessing the intensity of cooperation between organisations on a scale from exchange of information up to formal integration	Handbook, p. 12 ff.

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3   All relating to: Reisman, Jane et al. (2007)

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Figure 6:   **Capacity of advocacy organisations**

good
ok
weak
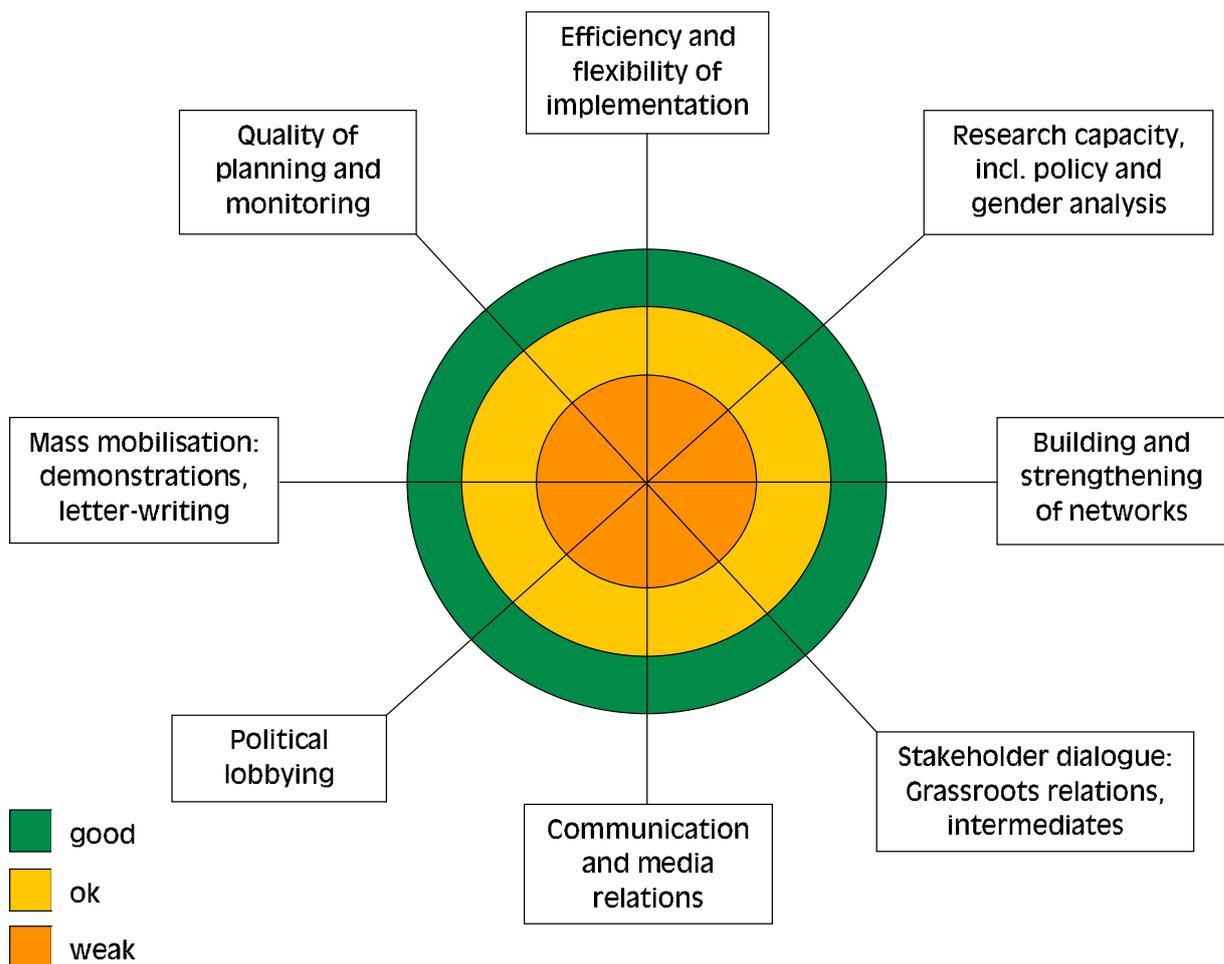
Based on: Gosling, Lousia; Edwards, Mike (1995)

■ **Strategic perspective:** Have the appropriate impact areas/target groups/strategies and tactics been selected?

■ **Progress towards goal achievement:** To which level of results has the project progressed according to the formulated Theory of Change and/or the indicators of the impact framework?

■ **Competency of the advocates:** To what extent are the cooperating individuals, organisations and networks able to generate pathways of influence, seize Windows of Opportunity and flexibly adapt to changing conditions?

The third perspective is especially helpful wherever success has to be handled carefully, e.g. in human rights work. Here, the assessment of the advocacy organisation, its staff and possible networks provides an approach which does not depend on documented results at the target level. An example for measurable impact would be how the capacity of the organisation has improved over time. Such a development can be documented in a spider diagram according to predefined criteria (see Figure 6).

4 Impact-oriented support for advocacy projects of partner organisations

Programme officers that are not directly involved in advocacy projects but support partner organisations in this field, could draw some suggestions from the preceding chapters how to better support their partners in planning and monitoring of advocacy projects and organisational development.

In addition, the following check list is supposed to help assess the competencies of current or potential partners and identify possible needs for further consultancy.

Knowledge of the subject, quality of research, objectives

■ How urgent, significant and morally convincing is the objective of the advocacy programme?

■ Does the organisation possess a comprehensive understanding of the issue, its causes, consequences and further related issues?

■ In case a study is supposed to be carried out: Is there a consistent research concept? How are the results supposed to be analysed, documented and distributed? Are there alternative plans for obtaining information, in case some of the required data is unavailable?

■ Are the goals set clearly? Do the indicators fulfil the SMART-criteria?

Context and actors

■ Did the organisation sufficiently analyse its stakeholder context?

■ What kind of political system does the organisation face? Are decision-making processes centralised or decentralised? Are there any external impacts that have an influence on policy-makers? Do civil society actors have access to policy-makers?

■ What are the target groups and how are they organised?

■ Who are the relevant multipliers? Does the organisation have the ability to mobilise the media and the public around their issue? Are there other relevant actors in the respective field and how strong is their influence on policy-makers?

Strategy and tactic

■ What is the long-term strategy of the organisation or network? To which major goals is the specific advocacy programme supposed to contribute? Are these goals specified sufficiently and, where necessary, subdivided into several steps?

■ Which tactics are used (political lobbying, meetings with policy-makers, negotiations, on-site visits, media relations, Internet, street theatre, postal campaigns, poster and advert campaigns) and how are they combined?

■ Does the organisation possess an action plan that details what is supposed to be done at what point of time and with whom? How flexible does the organisation react to changes in the political situation? Is it able to recognise and use windows of opportunity?

■ How realistic and how focused are the strategy and the tactics? In case of doubt, less can be more – i. e. a focused work on a limited amount of issues rather than a wholesale approach.

Monitoring of results

■ Does the organisation or network have formulated a Theory of Change? Is the project planning documented within an impact framework? Does the monitoring system work with suitable and meaningful indicators?

■ Does the organisation collect and analyse data regularly on the basis of these indicators?

■ Are the results of the monitoring taken into account by the project management?

■ Do project reports contain qualified information on impacts and sustainability that are supported by the previously gathered data?

Experience from cooperation with advocacy organisations in India has shown that organisations are more motivated to develop an impact-oriented monitoring system at the beginning of a new phase of a project than in the middle of it. Ideally, it should be possible to work out an impact chain or impact framework during the planning phase that should be considered in the project planning (log frame). The impact chain is predominantly used for monitoring and evaluation since it includes intended and unintended outcomes.

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- www.ngo-ideas.net
- www.organizationalresearch.com
- www.outcomemapping.ca
- www.planning.continuousprogress.org

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