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Advocacy for Development

Effectiveness, Monitoring and Evaluation

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With contributions from

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Cover photo: Tens of thousands of workers across Cambodia protested in favour of a living wage, demanding a monthly US\$177 (17 September 2014).

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Design: www.studiots.nl

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This publication was made possible by support from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Stichting Gezamenlijke Evaluaties.

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preface

Monitoring and evaluation of advocacy for development is an emerging field. Many CSOs, donors and evaluators are now involved with advocacy. Questions of how to understand and assess programmes are urgent. This e-book seeks to contribute to practical capacity on this front on the basis of lessons learned during the largest evaluation of advocacy for development in history.

It is rooted in the findings of the Joint MFS II International Lobbying and Advocacy (ILA) Evaluation.¹ The Co-Financing System (Medefinancieringsstelsel, MFS) was the Netherlands' 2011–2015 grant structure. The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs awarded €1.9 billion to 20 alliances of Dutch organisations through MFS II. This evaluation covered 2011 through 2014 and included eight ILA programmes with differing topics, locations, organisational setups, types of people they wished to influence, aims and strategies.

The MFS II ILA Evaluation was an opportunity to learn more about advocacy and its evaluation. In terms of geography, time and topic, the evaluation was a unique project in the development field, with a bigger scale than earlier work. Most previous studies on advocacy focused on national-level advocacy or on certain parts of just one programme. The ILA Evaluation gave the opportunity to examine different parts of advocacy processes, which can be complex, in many cases, and take place across multiple countries. This opportunity made it possible for the evaluation to improve the understanding of these processes and to contribute to better methods for advocacy evaluation.

The aims of the MFS II ILA Evaluation were 1) to assess the effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of ILA programmes; 2) to develop and apply new methods for the evaluation of the ILA programmes and 3) to make justified recommendations so that advocates can take up lessons for future development work. These aims led to a focus for the evaluation that was results-oriented, learning-oriented and analysis-oriented.

The e-book draws out the most important lessons learned through the findings of the Joint MFS II ILA Evaluation on the effectiveness, monitoring and evaluation of advocacy and development. It explains these lessons in practical terms, and was in large part designed to be directly usable by advocates, donors and evaluators. We also hope our lessons learned may advance reflection and further experimentation and development of advocacy evaluation approaches and tools.

1 Bodille Arensman, Bodille Arensman, Jennifer B. Barrett, Arend Jan van Bodegom, Dorothea Hillhorst, Dieuwke C. Klaver, Elisabet D. Rasch, Wolfgang Richert, Cornélie van Waegeningh, Annemarie Wagemakers and Margit van Wessel (2015). *MFS II Joint Evaluation of International Lobbying and Advocacy*. Endline Report. Wageningen: Wageningen University.

The MFS II ILA Evaluation was carried out by the Social Sciences Group of Wageningen University and Research centre and outside consultants. The evaluation was managed by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO/WOTRO). The full report is available at edepot.wur.nl/356079.

While this e-book was authored by Jennifer B. Barrett, Margit van Wessel and Dorothea Hilhorst, the content draws almost entirely on the methodological groundwork of the evaluation team, and the endline report of the MFS II Joint Evaluation of International Lobbying and Advocacy, also produced by the entire team. This team included Bodille Arensman, Jennifer B. Barrett, Arend Jan van Bodegom, Dorothea Hilhorst, Dieuwke C. Klaver, Elisabet D. Rasch, Wolfgang Richert, Annemarie Wagemakers, Cornélie van Waegeningh and Margit van Wessel.

We thank The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and the Stichting Gezamenlijke Evaluaties for financially supporting the production of this e-book. We also thank the eight alliances we evaluated for their co-operation. We thank Partos, the Dutch association of civil society organisations working in international development, for their support in coordinating collaborations.

1

What this book offers



A complexity-aware approach to advocacy for development

It is often noted that organisations in the development field have increasingly turned to advocacy as a means to achieve change. Seeking change through projects may lead to results, but these do not address fundamental conditions that shape lives, such as legal rights, cultural understandings or market relations. More than projects, advocacy addresses such structural matters, seeking to transform the legal, political and social conditions that shape development.

At the same time, this brings challenges related to understanding what it means to be 'effective', in addition to the monitoring and evaluation of programmes. First of all, when can one even say that one is 'effective'? Approaches centring on linear reasoning, expecting inputs to lead to outcomes in a straightforward fashion, seem inept here. Advocacy for development as conducted by the eight alliances we evaluated is mostly international in nature, involving institutions and actors at international, national and local levels. Understandings of problems, solutions and workable strategies may often differ among those involved. This means that it may not be a foregone conclusion in what sense we can see an achievement as an indication of effectiveness, or what its relevance is in terms of constituency needs.

Second, with change processes themselves often involving multiple levels, actors and factors, it may be difficult to identify and interpret the contribution of outcomes to desired changes. Advocacy for development often involves multiple civil society organisations (CSOs), working together and separately. Beyond CSO advocacy efforts, many other actors and factors contribute to change processes.

Third, advocacy often addresses systems rather than individual policies and actors. We can see these systems as collections of interconnected and interacting elements. Elements of a system that advocates engage with, like a ministry, are part of a constellation of governmental, economic, political and cultural institutions that interact with each other. For example, a ministry's approach towards an organisation's lobbying efforts may be influenced by dynamics in the government, the economy and international institutions or by developments like conflicts and natural disasters. To advocate effectively, advocates need to navigate such dynamics. System dynamics may provide opportunities or throw up barriers for advocates that severely limit opportunities to attain desired changes, in spite of excellent capabilities and the best efforts. System dynamics can also make change processes unpredictable.

PHOTO © Hivos

Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources of the Republic of Indonesia, Mr. Sudirman Said, visits Hivos' sustainable energy programme in Sumba.

The organisation commissioning the evaluation, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, provided a basic evaluation framework that was accountability-centred, asking the team to identify programmes' outcomes, contribution to these outcomes, outcome relevance and efficiency, and to explain the findings on these fronts. At the same time, the framework provided space to experiment.

The evaluation team took the starting point that the nature of advocacy work and advocacy achievements demands an approach that does justice to the complexities of advocacy. Our methodological approach meant that we kept an open eye for the flexibility required for advocacy, the multiplicity of relations involved, the long-term orientation needed when it comes to seeking change and the highly political nature of the work, with multiple forces often acting against one's objectives. From that basis, we sought to work with the accountability-centred evaluation framework. This meant that, in effect, the evaluation sought to reconcile two positions on evaluation that are sometimes entrenched in opposite terms: the linear evaluation tradition, which compares outcomes at a certain moment in time against a set of objectives, and approaches that incorporate complexity and adaptation. This e-book seeks to provide solutions that bridge or reconcile these two positions. This is also why we believe this e-book speaks to advocates, donors and evaluators simultaneously. The book provides approaches and tools that address needs that emerge for actors with different standpoints from which they engage with questions about the monitoring and evaluation of advocacy for development.

In this, we relate to ongoing efforts in the development field. Practitioners, scholars and consultants have increasingly started to take complexity as a starting point for understanding development work itself, as well as its monitoring and evaluation. Relevant approaches include Complexity-responsive Evaluation², Complexity-Aware Monitoring,³ Theory of Change,⁴ Developmental Evaluation,⁵ Contribution Analysis,⁶ Outcome Mapping⁷ and Outcome Harvesting.⁸

A number of recent publications in the development field stress the complexity-related challenges involved with advocacy and its monitoring and evaluation.⁹ They tend to point to approaches like those mentioned above when identifying promising solutions. However, they generally do not seek to put such approaches to the test through empirical experimentation and learning. This e-book seeks to offer a contribution on this front.

2 Michael Bamberger, Jos Vaessen and Estelle Raimondo, eds. (2016). *Dealing with Complexity in Development Evaluation: A Practical Approach*. London: Sage.

3 USAID (2014). *Complexity-Aware Monitoring. Discussion Note*. Washington, DC: USAID.

4 Craig Valters (2014). *Theories of Change in International Development: Communication, Learning or Accountability?* London: LSE.

5 Michael Quinn Patton, Kate McKegg and Nan Wehipeihana, eds. (2015). *Developmental Evaluation Exemplars: Principles in Practice*. New York: Guilford.

6 Fiona Kotvojs and Bradley Shrimpton (2007). 'Contribution Analysis: A New Approach to Evaluation in International Development'. *Evaluation Journal of Australasia* 7(1): 27-35.

7 Harry Jones and Simon Hearn (2009). *Outcome Mapping: A Realistic Alternative for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation*. London: Overseas Development Institute.

8 Ricardo Wilson-Grau and Heather Britt (2012). *Outcome Harvesting*. Cairo: The Ford Foundation.

9 Josephine Tsui, Simon Hearn and John Young (2012). *Monitoring and Evaluation of Policy Influence and Advocacy*. Working Paper 395. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Harry Jones (2011). *A Guide to Monitoring and Evaluating Policy Influence*. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Julia Coffman (not dated). *Monitoring and Evaluating Advocacy: Companion to the Advocacy Toolkit*. UNICEF.

Methods for complexity-aware monitoring and evaluation of advocacy for development

The MFS II evaluation presented the opportunity to look at the multi-layered and often international processes of advocacy across many cases, to contribute to an understanding of advocacy processes and to improve the methodology for advocacy evaluation. In designing our methodological approach to the evaluation, we drew on advocacy evaluation literature, literature on development evaluation and the expertise of different team members in the fields of international development, advocacy, policy and evaluation. We experimented, bringing together and working with a range of ideas we found relevant for the MFS II evaluation. We drew on, to name some important examples, Theory of Change, Outcome Harvesting and Contribution Analysis. We adapted and elaborated methods and, where necessary, crafted innovative approaches appropriate for evaluating advocacy for development.

After this introduction, we continue in Chapter 2 with an elaboration of the MFS II International Lobbying and Advocacy Evaluation, the programmes it evaluated and their achievements. This then forms the background against which we, in the chapters that follow, present our main lessons learned on the effectiveness of advocacy for development and its monitoring and evaluation.

Chapter 3 centres on how Theory of Change can play a key role in the monitoring and evaluation of advocacy for development. We also elaborate on how the identification and analysis of outcomes can be fruitfully integrated here and offer a typology of widely applicable advocacy outcome indicators for this purpose. Additionally, we discuss the usefulness of Theory of Change for reflection and learning and point out some conditions that we found for this to take place.

Chapter 4 is on understanding what contributes to effectiveness. We identify a range of factors, including organisational capabilities, several external factors, the type of issue involved and the maturity of the issue and advocacy networks. We also discuss how these factors need to be integrated and considered in the monitoring and evaluation of advocacy for development.

Chapter 5 covers the analysis of advocacy programmes' contributions to change. Contribution analysis is widely embraced as a suitable way of approaching the effectiveness of interventions. While we agree, we also identify a range of challenges and conditions for contribution analysis to be helpful in monitoring and evaluating advocacy for development.

Chapter 6 discusses the assessment of the relevance of outcomes. We show how this can be usefully grounded in the Theory of Change. The chapter also explores different understandings of relevance by different partners and how such issues may be addressed through the Theory of Change process.

Efficiency, the topic of Chapter 7, is addressed by elaborating an experimental method for assessing the efficiency of advocacy developed especially for the MFS II evaluation: Theory of Efficiency. This method overcomes the problem that, for advocacy, efficiency benchmarks

cannot be established and offers an alternative that does justice to the complexity of advocacy, while addressing both the learning and the accountability objectives of monitoring and evaluation.

This e-book ends with a concluding Chapter 8 in which we take stock of the overall advancement of the field of advocacy monitoring and evaluation and identify some important themes and questions that deserve further attention.

Key audiences: advocacy practitioners, donors and evaluators

This e-book was written with different audiences in mind: advocacy practitioners, donors and evaluators. An important insight from our evaluation is that these audiences are all knowledge actors with a keen interest in maximising the effectiveness, relevance and efficiency of advocacy.

Moreover, we found that the methods we adopted and developed for the evaluation were equally relevant for the practice of advocacy. The advocacy networks we studied all put a high premium on evidence-based work, the monitoring of their efforts and reflection about their strategies.

There were, of course, differences in emphasis between the external evaluators, the back-donors of the programmes and the practitioners, related to their different roles. Nonetheless, the different groups had a great deal in common, raising similar questions around the evolving field of advocacy for development.

We hope that these different audiences will find valuable lessons in this e-book on the effectiveness, relevance and efficiency of advocacy. At the same time, we will emphasise that the domain of advocacy is highly contextual and complex, so few lessons will apply for all times and places. More than providing lessons, this e-book aims to advance methods to reflect and learn from advocacy and enable advocates to adapt their programming to navigate set-backs as well as recognise and use opportunities in ever-changing conditions.

2

Advocacy
for development



Madelon

HAS DISCOVERED THE BITTER TASTE OF SUGAR

Share a Coke with

Dolf Jansen

..HAS DISCOVERED THE BITTER TASTE OF SUGAR

OXFAM Novib



OXFAM Novib



THE

We define advocacy for development as a 'wide range of activities conducted to influence decision makers at different levels',¹⁰ with the overall aim of combatting the structural causes of poverty and injustice. This definition follows the widely held belief that CSO advocacy is a tool to fight the causes of poverty or injustice and influence structural change, aiming to change social, political and policy structures and to challenge power structures. This concept of advocacy goes beyond influencing policy and aims for sustainable changes in public and political contexts. This work includes awareness raising, legal actions and public education, as well as building networks, relationships and capacity.¹¹

In line with this, advocacy in the evaluated programmes aimed to advance major changes in the way societies organise and act around key problems such as sustainable livelihoods, economic justice, sexual and reproductive health and rights, protection, human security and conflict prevention. Such changes require action at multiple levels by multiple actors. The evaluated programmes were all active in the domain of international development. They all targeted national and international/multilateral levels while also seeking to maintain close connections to the realities on the ground in countries in the South through partnerships with CSOs.

There are many opportunities for advocacy. Actors in public and political contexts increasingly interact, work together and influence one another. Governance – as opposed to government – is now the term to denote how policy making and implementation may continue to centre on the government but is usually to some extent co-produced by other types of international, national or local actors. This opens new spaces for advocacy. Change often depends on multiple actors or organisations. Advocacy networks are increasingly transnational and involve a range of different types of actors including, for example, governmental and intergovernmental organisations, private actors like companies, and other CSOs. A conventional understanding of advocacy assumes that advocacy aims to influence powerful 'decision makers' through clearly defined messages and actions 'towards' targets. This applied to some of the activities in the evaluated programmes. For others, advocacy took place through working together in longer-term processes. Even when advocates had clear objectives, advocacy in the evaluated programmes sought to work through governance processes rather than positioning themselves completely outside of these processes and influencing them 'from the outside'.

10 Johanna Morariu and Kathleen Brennan (2009). 'Effective advocacy evaluation: the role of funders'. *The Foundation Review* 1(3): 100–108 (3 January 2016).

11 Morariu and Brennan, 'Effective Advocacy Evaluation: the Role of Funders'.

PHOTO © Arie Kievit

Dolf Janssen campaigns for the Oxfam Novib action at Coca Cola Headquarters. This was part of the Behind the Brands Campaign that called on multinational companies to make their supply chains more sustainable.

Although there are many opportunities in advocacy for development, there are also many challenges. Policy processes are complex, involving multiple levels and actors, often working against the changes pursued by advocates. Another important challenge is that, in many contexts, space for civil society has been shrinking, sometimes strongly limiting the ability of CSOs to act, interact with likeminded organisations or even exist, often with high personal risks for the involved activists. When the space for civil society is there, international policy-making arenas are often far from the day-to-day contexts of advocacy organisations – especially Southern ones – and the people in whose interest advocates work. Effective advocacy therefore requires building strong connections and communication between advocates across contexts. This can be challenging considering issues of language, power, resources and differing understandings and priorities.

This e-book is based on the evaluation of eight international advocacy networks. These had in common that they were (to some extent) financed by the Netherlands government. All but one of the evaluated programmes were coordinated by a Netherlands-based international NGO (INGO) in collaboration with their own partners (often labelled ‘Southern partners’). Although there are many other types of networks, the notion of Southern partners therefore comes into this e-book, and this may have implications for some of what we talk about, for example, issues of relevance. We are aware that this model, influenced by the MFS II funding and programme, is not the only model for advocacy networks, and we expect that those working in and with a variety of advocacy network types will find this e-book useful in their work.

The eight alliances evaluated

The work of the alliances included in the MFS II evaluation provides real-world instances of practice in advocacy for development. The evaluation covered parts of the advocacy programmes of eight alliances implementing projects in 15 different regions. The alliances were grouped into three thematic areas: sustainable livelihoods and economic justice; sexual and reproductive health and rights; and protection, human security and conflict prevention.

Thematic area	Alliances
Sustainable livelihoods and economic justice	Ecosystem Alliance Fair, Green and Global Alliance Hivos Alliance, People Unlimited 4.1 IMPACT Alliance
Sexual and reproductive health and rights	SRHR Alliance
Protection, human security, and conflict prevention	Communities of Change Freedom from Fear Together4Change

Sustainable livelihoods and economic justice

Under the sustainable livelihoods and economic justice theme, four alliances focused on shifting existing power relations in favour of sustainable livelihoods for smallholders, local communities and ecosystems and natural resources.

Ecosystem Alliance (EA)

The Ecosystem Alliance (EA) included three partner organisations: the International Union for Conservation of Nature NL, Both ENDS and Wetlands International. The EA aimed to strengthen livelihoods and ecosystems in developing countries; change policies and practices around palm oil, soy, biofuels and products resulting from mining in favour of local communities and their ecosystems; and create an international-level policy environment encouraging the reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions and appropriate climate change improvements. Included in the evaluation were two projects under the livelihoods and ecosystems theme: 1) the Alliance's work on commodities (e.g. biofuels, palm oil, soy) and flaws in the economic system and 2) REDD+ and climate change mitigation through the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Fair, Green and Global Alliance (FGG)

The Fair, Green and Global Alliance (FGG) included ActionAid Netherlands, Both ENDS, Clean Clothes Campaign, Milieudefensie (including Friends of the Earth International and Friends of the Earth Europe), SOMO and the Transnational Institute. FGG aimed to contribute to reducing poverty and encouraging socially just and environmentally sustainable development. Two of FGG's interventions were included in the evaluation: The evaluation assessed 1) FGG's efforts to influence international trade and investment agreements – between the EU and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Latin American or African countries – in relation to food security and land issues, investor obligations and universalised services or common goods that everyone should be able to access and 2) FGG's efforts to help ensure that Dutch companies and Dutch government policies did not contribute to environmental pollution, nature devastation or destruction of natural livelihoods resources in the South.

People Unlimited 4.1 Alliance

The third alliance in this group is the People Unlimited 4.1 Alliance. The evaluation focused on activities by Hivos, the lead organisation of this alliance. Other partner organisations in this alliance were the International Union for the Conservation of Nature NL, Mama Cash and Press now. Hivos carried out an international lobby and advocacy programme that aimed for 100% sustainable energy as quickly as possible at global level. The evaluation looked at two components of this programme: 1) increasing access to energy for poor people and shifting to sustainable energy in developing countries, with a particular focus on the UN initiative 'Sustainable Energy for All' and 2) the 100% Green IT campaign in the Netherlands that aimed to reduce Dutch data centres' CO₂ emissions. Two interventions were examined in depth: one targeting the World Bank on its energy policy during an international forum and one in Uganda, where Hivos' partners lobbied for access to sustainable energy sources in line with a UN initiative.

IMPACT Alliance

In the IMPACT Alliance, the evaluation focused on the activities of Oxfam Novib, the lead

organisation of the alliance. Other partner organisations in this alliance were SOMO, the 1percentclub, Butterfly Works and the Himilo Relief and Development Association. The evaluation looked at two components of the GROW campaign, which was implemented in 40 countries by Oxfam Novib together with the Oxfam Confederation in more than 90 countries. The GROW campaign aimed at creating a better future where everyone has enough to eat. The two evaluated components of the campaign were the land grab campaign, which aimed to stop land and water grabs by powerful corporations and countries, and the Behind the Brands campaign, which targeted the 10 biggest food and beverage companies to change their policies and practices. In the Behind the Brands campaign, the evaluation assessed two campaign spikes: women and land grabbing.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights

SRHR Alliance

The SRHR Alliance was the only evaluated alliance focusing on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). The alliance included five Dutch partner organisations: Amref Flying Doctors, CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality, dance4life foundation, Rutgers WPF (lead organisation) and Simavi. The SRHR Alliance worked towards equal access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, as well as all people having the freedom to make informed choices about their sexuality. The SRHR Alliance supported CSOs in nine African and Asian countries. Two projects were analysed: 1) the national-level project, directed towards the budget of the Netherlands for SRHR as a percentage of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and towards Dutch spending on SRHR being effective and 2) the international-level project, directed towards the SRHR agenda at UN level being renewed after 2014 (focusing on the International Conference on Population and Development and post-2015 processes).

Protection, human security and conflict prevention

The protection, human security and conflict prevention group included three very diverse alliances working towards these related issues, which are also tied to peace, development and human rights and related to national and international policy developments.

Communities of Change

Communities of Change was an alliance with Cordaid as the lead organisation. Other partners were PAX, Impunity Watch, Mensen met een Missie, Netherlands Red Cross, Wemos and Both ENDS. The Alliance had an extended programme focusing on disaster risk reduction, conflict transformation, health and wellbeing, entrepreneurship, living in slums and humanitarian aid. One part of this alliance's work was Cordaid's Women Leadership in Peace and Security (WLPS), which included an advocacy component. WLPS advocacy focused on increasing women's inclusion, participation and gender equality in peace and security processes, policies and practices. WLPS envisioned sustainable and inclusive peace and security. WLPS sought to achieve this by focusing on the effective implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, increasing capacities of local women and integrating women's perspectives and participation in national and international policies and practices.

Freedom from Fear

Freedom from Fear consisted of PAX (lead organisation), Amnesty International the Netherlands, Global Partnership for Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) and Free Press Unlimited.

The main objective of the Alliance was a world where human rights are respected, human security and development are guaranteed, independent media are free and citizens are able and willing to co-operate in conflict prevention. The Alliance was organised around four programmes: human security and human rights in fragile states, human security and voice for civilians in repressive states, security and disarmament, and networking for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The evaluation focused on the Alliance programme seeking to influence and mobilise the UN, regional intergovernmental organisations and state actors, moving away from reaction and towards conflict prevention. GPPAC, a civil society-led network focusing on conflict prevention and peacebuilding, led the programme of focus and was responsible for its thematic and financial coordination and implementation. For that reason, the evaluation focused almost entirely on GPPAC.

Together4Change

Together4Change (T4C) was set up to ease poverty through strengthening North–South and South–South relationships, focusing on improving the wellbeing and protection of children and young people. Investing in Children and their Societies was the lead organisation in this alliance. The other Dutch partners were Wilde Ganzen/IKON, Wereldkinderen and SOS Kinderdorpen. T4C's extended programme on children and wellbeing covered 14 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The evaluation focused on the Ethiopia-based African Child Policy Forum (ACPF), a Southern partner in the Alliance that executed the ILA component of the programme in Africa. ACPF is an international not-for-profit, pan-African institution of policy research and dialogue that aims to contribute to child wellbeing in Africa by putting children and specific issues about their rights and wellbeing on the public and political agendas.

Strategies

How did the evaluated programmes try to achieve change? Past work on advocacy often mentions 'insider' and 'outsider' strategies. Insider strategies concern behind the scenes activities that are usually directed at co-operating with and persuading decision makers. Outsider strategies concern public activities and are usually directed at awareness raising through pressure and confrontation directed at decision makers. The programmes we evaluated mostly worked through insider strategies. They included formal and informal interactions with targeted decision makers, such as consultations, one-on-one meetings and contributions to policy processes in the form of reports, models, testimonies or policy proposals. Participation in non-public events like roundtable discussions and closed multi-stakeholder meetings was also common. Advocates also organised platforms themselves to help create spaces where different stakeholders including targets like state actors could meet. Outsider strategies were less common but were very visible in a few programmes. These were mostly public campaigns, rallying the public through mainstream media and social media activities (e.g. web platforms, teleconferencing, intranet facilities, tweets, invitations to write letters to target companies and governments, signing of petitions, demonstrations). These strategies primarily addressed the behaviour of private sector organisations, but some state actors were also targeted. Such strategies often involved moral appeals through blaming and shaming. For the evaluation, we created a typology of advocacy activities to get an overview of the many varied activities that can go into advocacy work (see page 20–21).

Typology of advocacy activities

1. Strategy development and planning

- Situational analysis (identification and monitoring of relevant arenas, identification of opportunities and threats)
- Stakeholder analysis (targets, allies, opposition)
- Internal strategizing, coordination and planning
- Strategizing, coordination and planning with allies (external to the organisation)

2. Relationship building and maintaining

- Relationship building and maintaining with lobby targets
- Alliance building and maintaining
- Constituency (citizen support base) building and maintaining
- Co-operation with CSOs
- Co-operation with governmental actors
- Co-operation with private sector actors
- Building and maintaining platforms for interaction involving CSOs and advocacy targets
- Relationship building and maintaining with media

3. Capacity building

- Organisational capacity building
- Southern partner organisation capacity building

4. Content development

- Development of content for direct influencing of targets (e.g. position papers and policy proposals)
- Message crafting (including framing, symbolism)
- Development of materials directed to the public

5. Information-centred activities

- Research
- Case-based approach (including case studies for exposure)
- Use of testimony
- Use of indices to score actors (corporations, state actors, others)
- Collaboration with research institutes

6. Insider advocacy communication

- Formal and informal meetings with targeted decision makers
- Participation in non-public events (meetings, round table discussions, working groups)
- Presentations (at conferences, policy meetings, working groups, etc.)
- Publications (reports, briefs, statements, recommendations, testimonies, etc.)

7. Outsider advocacy communication

- Public campaigns
- Mass media campaigns
- Social media campaigns
- Public events (e.g. conferences)
- Mass media outreach and coverage (other than campaigning)
- Social media outreach and coverage (other than campaigning)

8. Participation in multi-stakeholder processes*

9. Monitoring mechanisms

- Monitoring implementation of new policies and conventions
- Conducting monitoring and evaluation of the advocacy programme (internal) in relation to changes in the pathways of change (acting and reacting upon opportunities and threats)

10. Using legal and grievance mechanisms

11. Learning (internal)

- Monitoring and evaluation follow-up (important during the process to be able to act, react and adapt the advocacy strategies, methods and activities according to upcoming opportunities and threats)
- Acting and reacting upon lessons learned (including adapting the Theory of Change)

* Because multi-stakeholder processes are highly diverse in terms of objectives, participants, scope and relations to decision making, we refrain from providing a typology here.

Hybrid strategies and blurring boundaries between advocates and targets

In almost all cases, alliances taking outsider strategies combined these with constructive engagement, either within the programme itself or through co-operation with other CSOs. When there was co-operation with other CSOS, tasks were divided. Hybrid strategies evolved, often built on evidence-based approaches using the development of cases to provide evidence and testimony. In this way, outsider strategies like campaigns explicitly combined tactics, boosting the energy created with media attention through different forms of public action and stakeholder engagement.

Interestingly, we found that the distinction between insiders and outsiders became blurred in a substantial number of cases where advocates became part of the governance processes they aimed to influence. This was especially the case in alliances' work with and through multi-stakeholder platforms. These platforms deliberately bring together key decision makers with implementers and stakeholders to achieve inclusive policies. Although decision-making power in these platforms is rarely equal, the image of insiders and outsiders becomes increasingly unclear. Advocates who facilitated multi-stakeholder platforms and hence enabled (and steered) decision processes went beyond insider or outside strategies to influence advocacy 'targets'.

Likewise, we found the often-used categories distinguishing allies from targets in advocacy sometimes inadequate to describe an increasingly fluid reality. The relations between advocates and their targets at times shifted, and targets sometimes developed into allies. For example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands was often a 'target', but also an 'ally'. Similarly, 'frontrunners' in the private sector developed into allies to target those lagging behind.

An important strategy that underpins all advocacy work is the building and maintenance of relationships within coalitions and CSO networks used to advance objectives jointly. Programmes worked in coalitions with CSOs beyond the alliances. They also sought to connect global/local and North/South. Networking helps to build the legitimacy of a wide social base and the credibility of being rooted 'on the ground' and 'locally'. It provides complementary strengths and the connections needed for information flow and concentrated action across levels. Similarly important, several programmes also included capacity development, including funding and organisational and technical support of Southern partners.

No matter which strategy is chosen, success is based on credibility. Insider, outsider and hybrid strategies are successful because of the credibility of the messages and materials produced and advanced. Credibility is also found in reputation: the perceived added value of organisations or programme staff, rooted in (perceptions of) experience, knowledge, expertise and the 'usefulness' to targets. Credibility is also attained by representing legitimate civil society views and through the ability to link different levels of influence: bringing local voices to international tables and, vice versa, providing local actors with knowledge on international policy. This last source of credibility of the representativeness of international advocates is sometimes compromised when co-operation with Southern partners is limited or problematic.

Achievements

Advocacy is political activity. It is about drawing attention to issues, influencing policy processes or practice in the desired direction or stopping undesirable developments. In the current age of shrinking space for civil society, increasing numbers of conflicts, the rise of fundamentalist policies challenging women's rights and an eroding respect for human rights, advocacy is often geared towards protecting past achievements and preventing their loss. There may be strong opposition. Your work may be largely ignored by targets because of other priorities. Targets may also be opposed to your views, and their interests may go against what you advocate. In many cases, advocacy is also a long-term investment, with outcomes mostly being steps towards desired outcomes. We saw this in the achievements of the evaluated programmes.

For all of the programmes, at least some outcomes involved contributing to voices for civil society. Outcomes included, for example, enabling the networked co-operation of CSOs. Outcomes also contributed to the articulation of views, interests and expertise on the nature of problems and solutions from civil society perspectives. Many such outcomes can be seen to result from investments in relations, networks and internal capabilities to enable advocacy.

Outcomes also included the building of connections and interaction between civil society and targets, and the building of relations needed to gain further influence. Facilitating Southern voices to join international arenas is an example of this kind of outcome that particularly enhances the voice of Southern opinions by developing opportunities for Southern partners to build relations with actors otherwise less accessible to them, including South-South connections and connections with international institutions such as the UN and the EU. Outcomes also helped with the organisation and facilitation of platforms and other forms of mutual engagement in collaborative processes. These opened spaces for civil society and enabled discussion and more inclusive policy processes in different national and regional contexts. Many outcomes of this type improved the legitimacy, credibility, visibility, recognition and influence of CSOs in political arenas. Alliances got attention for issues and the acknowledgement of their points of view and the evidence and solutions they brought to the table. Going further, many alliances also received responses to reports, campaigns, testimonies and other input.

Relatively fewer outcomes were more tangible types of influence that obtained clear changes in policy. Such outcomes consisted of, for example, the incorporation of positions or recommendations into policy drafting and the adjustment of plans. Outcomes of this type were achieved with international and national government institutions, as well as roundtables and private actors – most prominently international corporations – and were mostly found in a few of the programmes. That relatively few policy-influencing outcomes were achieved can be seen at least partly as characteristic of advocacy itself: Many changes that build voice and set agendas will be needed to achieve one policy change. However, some programmes were successful at achieving both agenda-setting outcomes and policy-influencing outcomes, whereas others attained mostly outcomes building civil society voices and setting agendas.

Comparatively few outcomes involved changes in practice, including policy implementation and targets' practices of inclusion. This was also not the focus of most of the programmes. Some programmes did seek changes in practices amongst governments, companies and other actors, and, in a number of cases, they achieved these. The changes in practice that were found mostly concerned changed patterns in inclusion and behaviour among actors.

EXAMPLES OF OUTCOMES

The UN Committee on World Food Security adopted the VGGT (Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security); other actors like the World Bank and the Dutch government subsequently endorsed these guidelines. (IMPACT Alliance)

The African Union sought ACPF's support for policy input on child marriages, which resulted in the writing and adoption of the Declaration on Child Marriages by the ACERWC (African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Wellbeing of the Child). (ACPF is part of the Together4Change Alliance.)

GPPAC, of the Freedom from Fear Alliance, advanced the development of networks connecting CSOs and a range of other actors including states, regional intergovernmental organisations and international institutions to advance more inclusive and people-centred conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Ugandan CSOs mainstreamed energy issues into their programmes. (People Unlimited 4.1 Alliance)

The Communities of Change Alliance contributed to a cluster of outcomes around policy discussions on financing UNSCR 1325 (UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security) on the international level, now developing into more concrete discussions to set up a global discussion group on financing UNSCR 11325 together with UNWOMEN.

Concerning the Renewable Energy Directive of the EU, the Fair Green and Global Alliance contributed to changed policy that significantly limited the increase of the allowed mix of biofuels in fuels for transport, and reporting on the way biofuels are produced has become a serious policy issue. Targets changing their position included the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Commission and the Dutch government.

Such clusters of outcomes were also obtained through other forms of transnational institutions, such as the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil: A set of outcomes was achieved including, among other things, the adoption of a policy for outreach to local nongovernmental and community-based organisations and a dispute settlement facility to resolve community and company disputes. (Ecosystem Alliance)

Despite general cuts to development assistance, threats of de-prioritisation and several government changes, the Dutch government continued to support sexual and reproductive health and rights, in terms of both priority and budget. (SRHR Alliance)

Three food and beverage companies integrated gender in the CocoaAction Plan of the World Cocoa Foundation that aims to secure cocoa supplies in a sustainable manner. (IMPACT Alliance)

However, the inclusion of civil society may not yet, in itself, lead to significant changes in the final population or process of concern.

Importantly, outcomes were rarely achieved with an alliance as the only contributor. Alliances worked together with many CSOs in coalitions and networks, and many other CSOs were often advocating similar views. In many cases, contributions were also made by many other types of stakeholders, including politicians, national governments, international institutions, the public, the media and private actors.

Another difficulty encountered in evaluating outcomes involved the timeframe of change. We often found that outcomes in the period of funding resulted from efforts in earlier years or already existing alignments.



PHOTO © Cas Besselink
Local actors in Uganda meet
to discuss advocating for
no-go areas for mining.

3

What does it mean to
be effective?

Effectiveness, at the most basic level, is about achieving objectives or outcomes. This chapter introduces effectiveness and outlines a practical approach to questions of effectiveness in advocacy. We introduce Theory of Change as a useful tool for looking into effectiveness, both for assessing advocacy work and for ongoing reflection, monitoring and adaptation of advocacy programmes. Although other tools can also be used to identify effective approaches for advocacy, we mostly limit our focus in this chapter to Theory of Change.

Evaluating effectiveness involves looking into which achievements, or outcomes, advocates contributed to through their work. When looking for these outcomes, it is important to remember just how complex the world of advocacy can be. Advocacy is often a long-term investment, and most of the outcomes achieved may be individual, smaller steps necessary to take on the way to achieving larger outcomes. It is often necessary to achieve, for example, enhanced attention for an issue and acceptance of new evidence before a shift in policy or practice can be realised.

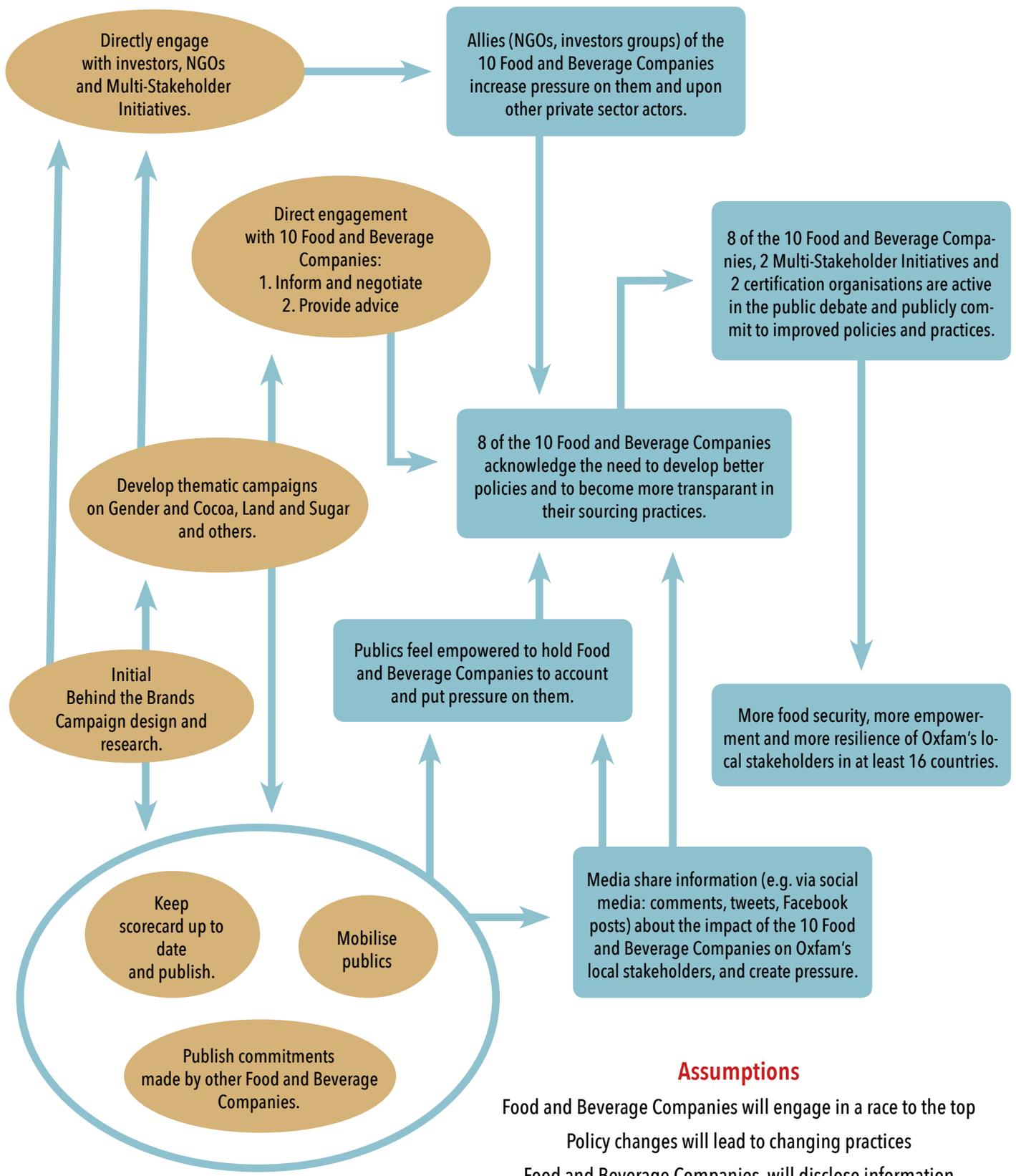
What this means is that, first, it can be difficult to assess advocacy with a short time scale. All steps taken earlier towards a larger goal must be considered, and a 'failure' to gain influence in a particular time period should not automatically be seen as ineffectiveness. Rather, a longer-term perspective should be taken. With advocacy, there is often a time to sow and a time to harvest, though this can happen in unpredictable ways. Second, it is important for advocates to include indicators describing the important processes that contribute to achievements in their monitoring. Assessments of the effectiveness of advocacy programmes need to take an approach that grasps how these programmes are able to relate to the complex challenges of advocacy. Part of having an effective advocacy programme is being able to see emerging opportunities and act on this knowledge. Looking into the effectiveness of advocacy also means looking into how well an organisation is able to adjust to changing circumstances and identify and maximise opportunities that arise.

PHOTO

United Nations General Assembly,
New York.

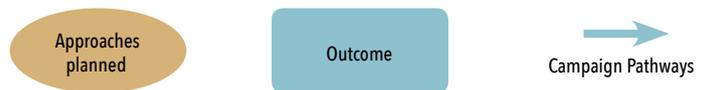
Using Theory of Change to address effectiveness

Theory of Change (ToC) is an important tool for approaching the question of effectiveness. ToC maps how an organisation, project, network or group of stakeholders understands political, social, economic and/or cultural change to happen and how they see themselves contributing to that change. A ToC aims to define all of the building blocks required for a long-term goal to be achieved. It includes the smaller outcomes necessary to lead up to a larger change, as well as the interventions thought to bring about these outcomes. Importantly, a ToC also clarifies how these interventions and outcomes are understood to be linked to each other.



Assumptions

- Food and Beverage Companies will engage in a race to the top
- Policy changes will lead to changing practices
- Food and Beverage Companies will disclose information
- Food and Beverage Companies are sensitive to consumer pressure



The ToC is described both visually and with text. Figure 1 shows an example of a ToC taken from the evaluation (the IMPACT Alliance's ToC for the Behind the Brands campaign), distinguishing strategies, planned outcomes, pathways and assumptions. Visual representations of ToCs help to see the complexity of the social changes at stake, showing how interventions and outcomes are thought to be linked to each other in a way that leads up to the larger goal. The links between outcomes are known as pathways of change. Each expected outcome in a pathway of change is tied to an intervention or intervention strategy, revealing the often-complex web of activity required to bring about change.

ToCs can be used at many stages, including programme planning, implementation, monitoring and/or evaluation. A useful ToC can never be 'finished'. Rather, a continually adapting ToC reflects the process of theorising about how change happens as you gain experience, learn and respond to changing conditions.

ToC was fundamental to our evaluation approach. Working with ToCs gave us insight into changes over time in internal and external processes and factors. Looking into ToCs also built our understanding of the changes alliances were seeking to facilitate, how they wanted to contribute and what assumptions were behind this. Being explicit about the different steps to be undertaken by alliances and/or other actors/factors demonstrated how individual changes fit into the bigger picture of the change ultimately desired.

In terms of using ToCs in monitoring and evaluation, several initial questions must be answered. Programmes will vary in how actively they work with ToCs and in the level of detail included. An evaluator must first decide how many ToCs will need to be reconstructed and at which levels (overall programme, specific project or campaign, etc.). The work required to develop or reconstruct a ToC will vary even when a ToC is present, depending on whether a programme actively works with and adapts their ToC or uses it only for initial planning.

It can also be fruitful to use the ToC to bring tensions and differing opinions in a network to the surface. Although we often speak of ToC as a unified 'thing' that applies for a whole network, it may be helpful to view a ToC as negotiated or as representing a dominant view in a network, and acknowledging differences of opinion could change the network's ToC. Likewise, a ToC may be used to analyse the assumptions and viewpoints of stakeholders outside of the advocates' networks, who may have their own vision and opinion on the context, pre-conditions and pathways of change.

In our evaluation, we worked with the alliances and used multiple sources to reconstruct the applicable ToCs. When we started the evaluation process, few alliances had a complete advocacy-specific ToC. Although outcomes related to advocacy often played a role in broader alliance-level ToCs, we needed a higher level of detail on advocacy goals, outcomes, links and assumptions. We combined a review of the alliances' strategy documents with multiple individual and/or group in-depth interviews to reconstruct ToCs at the appropriate levels. We took care to draw out all of the relevant parts of the ToC, as outlined by the Center for Theory of Change as steps in constructing a ToC (see box, Methodological guideline: Steps for developing ToCs on page 32).¹²

FIGURE

ToC of the IMPACT Alliance's Behind the Brands Campaign.

¹² Adapted from [Center for Theory of Change website](#) (2013).

Convergence of differing ToCs of stakeholders in study on Partners for Resilience

A study of a development programme with a large advocacy component, Partners for Resilience (not part of the MFS II ILA evaluation), viewed the general ToC of the alliance as a main storyline but also investigated how different stakeholders – including partners in the network – challenged this storyline and implicitly adhered to an alternative ToC. A striking result was that the main storyline saw programmes initiated by local communities as a major pathway of change, whereas local government representatives, and to some extent local partners, initially viewed communities as a major obstacle to change because of their assumed backward values or passive attitudes. Another finding was that local community members in some countries put much more emphasis on conflict as an impediment to resilience than was found in the alliance's ToC. In this case, in the course of the programme, the different stakeholders developed much more convergence in their ToCs. This important achievement was only possible because the alliance made these differences visible in order to address them.*

* Dorothea Hilhorst, Cecile de Milliano and Lisa Strauch (2016). *Learning From and About Partners for Resilience. A Qualitative Study - Synthesis Report*. Groningen: Globalisation Studies Groningen

Steps for developing ToCs

Six steps walk through the necessary elements for developing a ToC:

1. **Identify long-term goal(s)**
2. **Map and connect outcomes**
3. **Identify and connect preconditions**
4. **Identify assumptions**
5. **Develop indicators**
6. **Identify interventions**

These steps should be followed in sequence, moving back from the long-term goals to the outcomes required along the way to the specific interventions thought to be effective. Different ToCs may operate for different aspects of a programme or at different geographical levels. Depending on how many ToCs should be developed, the work of getting the ToC down on paper might best be accomplished in a group workshop or a series of group and/or individual interviews, possibly after mining programme documents. An external facilitator helping with this process is often likely to be a good idea for several reasons, most importantly making sure that the facilitator has experience developing ToCs and allowing all stakeholders to play an active role in contributing.*

* For more practical instructions and tips for facilitators developing ToCs, see: Dana H. Taplin and Muamer Rasic (2012). *Facilitator's Source Book: Source Book for Facilitators Leading Theory of Change Development Sessions*. New York: ActKnowledge

Theory of Change in monitoring and evaluating advocacy

Specifically for advocacy work, the beauty of using ToC to approach the question of effectiveness is that it acknowledges the complexity of advocacy contexts and interventions needed and allows for the recognition of interim achievements accomplished on the way to the larger goal. It also recognises how programmes adapt to changing external circumstances. Knowledge about the long-term change desired is needed to understand how smaller outcomes fit a programme's broader aims, as well as the intended strategy and the underlying assumptions. This approach also makes it possible to assess programme effectiveness within a relatively short window of time, without waiting to see results only at the highest levels.

The evaluation centred on outcomes, which we approached as observable changes – intended or unintended – in the policies, practices, behaviours, relationships, actions, activities or mind-sets of an individual, group, community, organisation or institution. Outcomes were identified through a combination of document review and interviews with alliance members. The existence of these outcomes was then verified by further (external) document review and interviews with external informants. For some alliances, documents describing the outcomes suitable for evaluation purposes were provided directly by the alliances. Where needed, these written descriptions were supplemented through internal interviews. In all cases, the detailed descriptions of all outcomes were reviewed or discussed with alliance members and then revised. The identified outcomes were then analysed in light of the ToC.

Because the processes of change alliances were involved in were long-term and very complex, individual outcomes were naturally mostly intermediate in nature, consisting of steps heading in the direction of an ultimately desired end point. Several examples of intermediate outcomes serve to show their nature and broad range:

- The EU Commissioner for Development strengthened EU policy regarding access to renewable energy by publishing a Green Paper that, amongst other things, addressed the issue of energy access (Hivos Alliance)
- The Dutch Economics Affairs Minister sent a letter to parliament on optimal biomass use (FGG)
- Palm oil and wood pulp players made public commitments to avoid further expansion on peat (Ecosystem Alliance)
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child included budgeting and allocation of spending on child rights in their policy discussions and policy drafting for the International Policy Conference on Inter-country Adoption (ACPF, Together4Change)

Such individual, intermediate outcomes are often interconnected, with changes in one actor contributing to change in another, or the same process contributing to changes in different actors.

It is important to understand any change achieved through advocacy in relation to the relevant ToCs, to the objectives of the programme and to developments in the broader context surrounding the change. These changes are almost always part of a process; even after an

intended outcome is achieved, the larger process where that outcome fits normally does not end. Effectiveness can be assessed appropriately only when the broader change process is understood.

The overall goals in the evaluated programmes were almost always changes to be achieved over the long term. Therefore, the ability to observe and contextualise the smaller outcomes leading up to the larger change was especially important. Working with ToCs allowed us to identify these changes and to see how they fit within the bigger picture.

ToCs are negotiated and potentially changeable. To enhance effectiveness, ToCs should evolve over time to adjust to changes in the environment and respond to lessons learned. From the perspective of monitoring and evaluation, evidence of these changes to a ToC over time can provide valuable information about an organisation's ability to reflect and adapt their strategy in response to changing circumstances. The results of the evaluation indicate that the possibilities opened by working with ToCs tend to be underutilised. A number of the evaluated alliances did not revise their ToCs based on learning and experience, meaning that the ToCs were not used in an ongoing and reflective way to help to respond to changes and implement lessons learned over the life of these programmes.

Considering a wide range of achievements

A key lesson related to the intermediate nature of many achievements is that it is necessary to remain open to a wide range of possible outcomes. Specifically, in seeking to identify outcomes relating to setting agendas, changing policies and shifting practices of specific lobby targets, it is important not to lose sight of the 'building block' outcomes that often happen before higher level changes (e.g. the strengthening of local voices, capacity development and networking). A significant amount of the evaluated alliances' work would not have 'counted' if we had not drawn out outcomes related to, for example, building, developing and maintaining relationships and networks, facilitating interactions and convening stakeholders. This point is relevant for advocacy work in general, where intermediary steps like seeking allies, networking and coalition forming are most often needed before higher level outcomes can be achieved. To identify and capture the broad range of outcomes in a meaningful way, we developed a set of outcome indicators to be used across the evaluation. These general indicators, along with specific aspects that might be relevant for certain programmes, are provided in the methodological guidelines box on outcome indicators for advocacy evaluations. These indicators are measurable markers for potentially complex outcomes.

Outcome indicators

General outcome indicators and examples of specific instances of these for advocacy evaluations

Agenda setting

GENERAL INDICATOR

Within the advocacy programme, relevant alliance members determine, share and keep up-to-date their policy positions and strategies

- Strength and size of networks between actors in the alliance and/or between other actors relevant for the advocacy programme
- Position paper adhered to by all actors in the evaluated programme
- Nature and frequency of communication channels (e.g. meetings, public debates, workshops, memos, websites, media outlets) set up to share analysis of policy positions and strategies among relevant actors
- Extent of coherence and integration in programme objectives and proposals between partner organisations at different levels

GENERAL INDICATOR

Alliance and other actors become aware of the issues at stake, organise themselves and adhere to the position of the advocacy programme

- Frequency, nature and success rate of proposals by the alliance and their network to bring forward their position on key issues in the advocacy programme at national and international levels
- Extent and nature of direct and explicit coverage of the views and/or activities of the advocacy programme in the media
- Extent to which media or other CSOs take up language that fits the frame offered by the advocacy activities
- Number of petitions, public debates, actions in new and 'old' media, demonstrations or other demonstrable cases of public support by other stakeholders who have taken forward the advocacy programme's framing of the issue
- Extent and nature of the alliance and partner organisations' relations with important thematic networks and interest groups
- Extent to which other interested societal groups at local, national and international levels are exposed to and aware of how the issues at stake affect their livelihoods
- Extent and nature of other societal groups organising at local, national and international levels

Read more on page 36 and 37

GENERAL INDICATOR

Extent to which lobby/advocacy targets react upon the positions of the advocacy programme

- Extent and nature of lobby targets' response to alliance interventions or position (e.g. statements in documents, media outlets, agendas, speeches, papers, parliamentary questions or votes)

GENERAL INDICATOR

Relevant CSOs and/or other stakeholders involved in the programme are invited to participate in or organise meetings relevant for the issue(s) on public/private sector policies or those of international institutions

- Extent of alliance and partner organisations' access to and relations with decision makers/target groups (type and frequency of informal/formal contact)
- Frequency and nature of alliance and partner organisations' participation in relevant meetings at national and international level (e.g. round tables, official delegations, consultation meetings organised by relevant authorities).
- Sustainability and nature of effective participation (institutionalised vs. more transient, solicited or volunteered) of the alliance and partner organisations in public and private sector organisations or institutions
- Number of successful proposals by alliance members to allow previously-excluded marginalised groups to participate in decision-making meetings at national and international levels
- General Indicator: Terms of public debate are influenced: New civil society perspectives and alternative approaches are introduced into the policy debate
- Extent of coherence in language between advocacy programme output and lobby/advocacy targets
- Number and nature of lobby targets changing their agenda in line with the alliance's position

Policy influencing

GENERAL INDICATOR

Demonstrable changes (including adoption of new policies and prevention of policy changes) take place by lobby/advocacy targets

- Number and kind of policy changes in public and private sector institutions at national and international levels
- Extent to which frames introduced by the advocacy programme are taken up in policy documents and speeches of officials at national and international levels
- Extent to which budget allocation is obtained for policy on key issues at national and international levels
- Extent to which the advocacy programme has resulted in demonstrable institutional reforms to law enforcement and its effective implementation

- General indicator: Demonstrable shift occurs in accountability structure for government
- Number and nature of shifts in accountability structures for governments/authorities following policy changes (openness of results of implementation of policies)

Changing practice

GENERAL INDICATOR

Concrete changes occur in policy formulation practices of lobby targets

- Demonstrable changes in formal rules, structures, authorities and/or institutions addressing the concerns and interests of the alliance by the targeted government, institution and/or company
- Long-term changes implemented by targeted government, institution and/or company to make decision-making processes on relevant issues more transparent
- Demonstrable changes in actor involvement and inclusion by targeted authorities and/or institutions with regard to decision making and policy discussions on relevant issues
- Formal or informal changes increasing inclusiveness of previously closed decision-making spaces (i.e. CSOs, their networks, and their constituents are increasingly able to participate in decision making)

GENERAL INDICATOR

Concrete changes occur in practices of governments, institutes and/or targeted companies regarding implementation of policies in the 'field'

- Demonstrable shifts in communication of policies to general public and/or institutions operating at local level
- Demonstrable shifts in communication of policies by targeted company to its stakeholders
- New strategies or work plans developed by the governments, institutes and/or targeted companies to ensure implementation of policy
- Extent of demonstrable action by governments, institutes and/or targeted companies to increase or maintain sustainability of key policy
- Official mechanisms in place to enforce policies and rules/regulations

In working with this set of general outcome indicators, it was sometimes difficult to classify outcomes in one category. Some outcomes could be placed in multiple categories, depending on the contextual explanations given for the outcomes. For example, participation in multi-stakeholder working groups organised by the Dutch government might be framed as the opening of spaces (agenda setting), changed accountability structures (policy influencing) or a changed way of formulating policy (changing practice). This was resolved, in part, by taking into account the durability of the outcome. A single invitation was considered an outcome for agenda setting, whereas more permanent inclusion could be considered a change in policy or practice.

From an evaluator's point of view, there was a dilemma in how to treat outcomes geared towards strengthening the advocates' networks. Advocacy is about creating constituencies for an issue, and this crucially includes developing a common agenda, as well as expanding and strengthening the advocates' network. This stands in contrast with classic development programmes that deliver services and need to be accountable to reduce their overhead costs by keeping the implementing party as lean as possible while retaining the required quality. Although it was obvious that the rationale of such classic service-delivery programmes could not be applied to advocacy, we were left with the question of to what extent outcomes internal to the advocacy networks could be considered advocacy achievements, and to what extent advocacy must lead to outcomes beyond the advocacy network to justify the resources used in building the network.

Another challenge we confronted was the potentially restrictive nature of sets of predefined outcome categories. For example, while our team was obliged to work with a framework distinguishing agenda setting, policy influencing and changing practice as priority result areas, this could not easily accommodate outcomes such as network development or capacity building. While we grouped these under agenda setting, such a categorisation is artificial. The lesson to learn is to remain open to a wide range of possible outcomes, depending on the context and programme.

Theory of Change as a tool for reflection, learning and adaptation

Working actively with ToCs, or comparable tools, encourages reflectiveness, acknowledging that the ultimate goal may be reached through multiple pathways, that new pathways may emerge and that strategies must remain flexible. The potential of ToC as tool for collective reflection, learning and adaptation is enormous.

However, few of the evaluated alliances used ToCs effectively for communication, organisation, analysis, action, reflection or adjustment based on experience. Several of the alliances did use ToCs as a reference for discussing change. When this was the case, the ToCs were specific, defining the sphere of influence and making explicit assumptions about necessary interventions, expected outcomes and pathways of change. These ToCs were continually tested and adapted as the programmes were carried out. This practice, at its best, saw the ToC as a tool for introspection and reflection, allowing alliances to balance working in a struc-

tured fashion with the ability to adjust to changing circumstances and learn from experience. A key lesson learned from the evaluation is that advocacy programmes could in many cases be strengthened by a more active use of ToCs or related tools enabling continuous reflection and adaptation of strategy in light of changing circumstances. The case description box provides an example of how one alliance under evaluation successfully used a specific monitoring approach (power analysis) to keep abreast of changing situations and maintain flexibility to adapt to these, within the wider framework provided by the ToC.

Oxfam's approach to monitoring and acting on changes in the environment

CASE DESCRIPTION

To continually monitor relevant aspects of the situation during programme implementation, the Oxfam Confederation sought to remain constantly reflective and adaptive through its use of power analysis, which was carried out after the development of ToCs for every campaign. The power analysis aimed to identify and explore the sometimes complex power relations involved in a situation. This was done to enhance the effectiveness of campaigns by understanding the changes needed, assessing how these changes could come about and identifying key influential stakeholders.* This approach was key in Oxfam's strategy design, including selecting tools and interventions thought to be effective given the situation and context.

Importantly, the power analysis tool was used in an ongoing way throughout the life of a campaign. Oxfam's teams continuously adjusted their power analysis based on new experiences and information that could influence the effectiveness of the campaign. Oxfam used power analysis to adjust strategies for addressing lobby targets and reaching outcomes. For example, the land freeze campaign started with lobbying many Executive Directors of the International Finance Corporation Board, as well as convening a side event during the Annual Meeting of the World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund. After this event, also taking into account other experiences with the World Bank Group, the focus was narrowed to key persons within the World Bank Group and the Board. This required less Oxfam staff capacity. Similar processes occurred in the Behind the Brands campaign, where specific strategies were developed for each food and beverage company over the course of the campaign.

In this case, the ToC was helpful for providing strategic guidance, whereas the power analysis tool allowed advocates to intervene in a timely and purposeful way. Oxfam's continuous reflection on and adjustment of the power analysis based on context analysis allowed them to assess threats and opportunities for action, select appropriate campaign strategies and interventions, and use momentum for action. This helped them to achieve desired outcomes and enhance their effectiveness.

* For further details on power analysis, see: Oxfam (2014). [*Quick Guide to Power Analysis*](#).

Using ToCs for introspection and for making adaptations explicit could allow advocacy programmes to monitor and, potentially, improve their effectiveness. This would have implications within organisations (making changes, assumptions and strategies more subject to discussion) and in their relations with the outside world (having a more plausible story to tell about achievements and non-achievements). ToCs could enable programmes to find the space necessary for learning and adaptation based on experience. It would also facilitate monitoring and evaluation specifically geared to the complexities and dynamic nature of advocacy. Applying ToC in this way should not, however, be seen as a one-size-fits-all approach for advocacy programmes. Multi-partner programmes and networked organisations, for example, present additional challenges for reflection and learning (see case description).

CASE DESCRIPTION

Networked organisations

Challenges in reflection and learning

GPPAC (Freedom from Fear Alliance) provides an illustration of how not all programmes easily lend themselves to common reflection on ToCs. GPPAC's main goal was to support its network members, rather than to use the network as a tool to achieve objectives. At the same time, GPPAC also sought to engage in advocacy at global level, based on a collective agenda. However, GPPAC's organisational members were highly diverse, with differing commitments and objectives. As a civil society-led network that values inclusiveness, partner organisations varied greatly in their commitment and prioritisation of GPPAC's goals.

GPPAC's overall ToC provided direction and a broad understanding of how change happens, rather than an elaborate mapping of concrete objectives and detailed pathways of change. Members of the network were unified in their support for broadly stated objectives like advancing a shift from reaction to prevention with regard to conflict at global level. However, it turned out to be difficult to achieve involvement in developing collective strategies and actions at the global level. In GPPAC, the centrality of regional priorities and the focus on convening and linking led to tensions between the need to give space to local voices and the desire to integrate and translate these voices into a shared advocacy approach and objectives engaging with global policy processes. This tension between integrating networking functions and advocacy functions was problematic in light of GPPAC's ambition to make contributions to goals like 'a shift from reaction to prevention' among targets such as the UN. Moreover, GPPAC's networked nature made ongoing reflection, learning and adaptation of the ToC especially difficult. It was difficult for members to meet regularly, and interests and ways of working differed. This kind of reflection could nevertheless be very helpful to identify shared issues and to reflect collectively to develop joint understandings and responses.

Approaching effectiveness

When assessing what an advocacy programme has achieved, a long-term perspective needs to be combined with an assessment of specific objectives and anticipated pathways of change. In the complex realities of governance, relations between CSOs, decision makers and other actors often defy a simple relation of advocates influencing targets, and engagements and interactions are diverse, dynamic and often long-term. Evaluators must remain open to a range of possible outcomes, because observed outcomes are often minor steps in a longer-term process. This is also the case for advocates, who may underestimate their outcomes when they define advocacy in a narrow sense. The merits of advocates' ways of strategizing in the face of challenges should also be considered when establishing effectiveness. The ToC can be a very helpful tool for looking into effectiveness, both for assessing advocacy work and for ongoing reflection, learning and adaptation within advocacy programmes.

4

What contributes to effectiveness?

AIRPORT FARMERS ASSOCIATION

SAVE THE FARMERS
FOOD FOR THE NATION

EST. 1988

ACSA
GIVE THE AIRPORT
FARMERS
LONG LEASE

ACSA
DON'T SELL
THE
FARMERS

MINISTER
AGRICULTURE
WE ARE F
SECURITY



Beyond considering how much an organisation has achieved, it is very important to gain understanding about why a programme has been effective (or ineffective). Reflection and self-monitoring processes within an organisation should include questions about what explains why particular things went right and why others went wrong.

Having this knowledge will allow an organisation to take advantage of their strengths and to address their challenges. Multiple things must be considered in seeking to explain effectiveness. These can be categorised as internal factors, external factors, the nature of the issue of focus and, finally, the maturity of the network and issue.

This chapter begins by providing an overview of organisational capabilities we identified as relevant for explaining effectiveness in advocacy. Second, the chapter treats outside factors that can be part of explaining effectiveness and discusses how organisational capabilities and these external factors interact with each other. Finally, the potential contributing factors of the nature of the issues addressed and the maturity of the network and issue are discussed. The chapter ends with a call to organisations to include the consideration of these types of factors in ongoing internal and external monitoring.

Factors explaining successes and failures in advocacy programmes

To explain effectiveness it is necessary to consider internal factors, external factors and the nature of the issue. In terms of internal factors, we found considering organisational capacity to be very helpful.

Internal factors: organisational capacity

Organisational capacity, understood as the overall ability of an organisation to create value for others, is important for explaining successes and failures in advocacy. Organisational capacity is determined by a varied set of separate capabilities. These capabilities are outlined in general terms in the Five Capabilities (5Cs) model, which describes five basic capabilities that give a picture of the readiness of organisations to act effectively in their relevant contexts.¹³ The model includes capabilities

1. to act and commit;
2. to deliver on objectives;
3. to adapt and renew;
4. to relate and
5. to achieve coherence.

¹³ ECPDM (2011). *Bringing the Invisible into Perspective: Reference Document for Using the 5Cs Framework to Plan, Monitor and Evaluate Capacity and Results of Capacity Development Processes*. Maastricht: ECPDM.

PHOTO © Oxfam Novib

The South African Airport Farmers Association protesting the Airports Company South Africa.

However, the 5Cs model is meant for general use and is not tailored for looking at the aspects of organisational capacity most useful in advocacy programmes. Therefore, we adapted the 5Cs model for the evaluation of advocacy, specifically.

The 5Cs model

adapted for advocacy programmes

1. The capability to act and commit

The capability to act and commit is about strategic intent and the ability of an organisation to act on this intent. As part of the relations within an organisation and its wider network, this capability includes the ability to develop focus, take decisions and plan and to turn this information into organisational action. Specifically for advocacy, this capability includes the following abilities:

- The ability to mobilise the constituency, the public, resources, allies or the media
- The ability to express the constituency's views and needs in language and images that will be heard while still reflecting the views of the constituency. This ability may include the following:
 - Communicating arguments and goals in ways that are meaningful to targets
 - Managing interactions with targets so that arguments and goals continue to reflect constituency views
 - Building trustworthy and convincing cases
 - Being acknowledged by targets for having a constituency
 - Gaining and maintaining acceptance for strategy and goals within a constituency

2. The capability to deliver on objectives

The capability to deliver on objectives concerns an organisation's ability to access financial resources, knowledge and information sources, human resources, facilities and standards on measures of performance. For advocacy, this also concerns the ability to relate to decision-making actors, arenas and processes, including the following specific aspects:

- The ability to mobilise financial resources
- The ability to plan and carry out campaigns and activities. This ability may include the following:
 - Knowing and selecting arenas
 - Monitoring what's going on in those arenas
 - Estimating threats and opportunities
 - Selecting and carrying out suitable strategies
 - Acting in a timely fashion (e.g. following policymaking cycles, building or using momentum)
 - Building, sustaining and working through useful relationships with the right people

3. The capability to adapt and self-renew

The capability to adapt and self-renew is about the ability to learn internally and adjust to changing contexts. This is influenced by internal openness to learning, the ability to analyse important external factors, flexibility and openness to change. It can be argued that this is the core capability required for advocacy. Specifically for advocacy, this capability may include the following characteristics:

- The ability to adapt advocacy to external actors and factors (changing the ToC)
- Having knowledge of shifting contexts and relevant trends
- Involving network partners in learning and decision making
- Having a culture of learning and self-reflection
- Being able to make use of opportunities and adapt the scope of the issue to the changing context

4. The capability to relate

The capability to relate is about the building and maintaining networks with constituents, allies and external actors. For advocacy, this may include the following:

- Translating constituents' understandings, viewpoints and interests into an agenda that resonates with them
- The ability to address a broad audience and engage with a growing number of members
- The ability to frame advocacy issues in a way that fits with relevant networks
- Maintaining appropriate communication with the larger network
- Maintaining clarity about relations with relevant networks
- The ability to deal with tensions in the broader network
- The ability to adapt the scope of the issue to be relevant for the broader network.

5. The capability to balance diversity and achieve coherence

The capability to balance diversity and achieve coherence involves both engaging with diversity and maintaining consistency within an organisation. This coherence will be seen in the vision, strategy and practices of an organisation. Because of the importance of large networks for many advocacy programmes, this capability may include internal processes as well as those extending to the broader network. Specifically, for advocacy, this capability includes the following:

- Internal processes of participation and clarity of roles
- The inclusion of different layers and geographical areas represented in agenda-setting, policy influencing and changing practice
- The inclusion of different layers and geographical areas in the representation of the organisation and its activities
- The ability to deal with diverging opinions, voices, interests and objectives within an organisation

This section highlights how the five capabilities proved relevant for explaining effectiveness for the advocacy programmes evaluated and provides concrete examples of these capabilities.

Capability to act and commit

First, the capability to develop and commit to a longer-term vision, including the ability to develop focus, take decisions, plan and translate these into organisational action, was important. For example, the capability to develop focus and act jointly to achieve shared goals was demonstrated by the SRHR Alliance in their mobilisation of SRHR ‘champions’ within parliament and communication of their messages and goals to parliamentarians and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Closely related is the capability to select and carry out a strategy effectively, based on a ToC and adjusting to changes: judging what can or cannot be achieved and adapting strategies accordingly. In light of the internal strategies used in many programmes, the ability to express the constituency’s views and needs appropriately by building trustworthy and convincing cases and arguments was also critical.

PHOTO © Michiel Wijnbergh
Seeking parliamentary support for SRHR by offering new parliamentarians boxes containing new facts about issues such as maternal mortality, AIDS and sexual violence in developing countries.



Capability to deliver on objectives

The internal strategies often used also meant that accessing and using relevant information and maintaining a good level of knowledge of the issue was important. The capability to plan and carry out public campaigns was also relevant, as was the capability to establish oneself as a legitimate civil society representative in the eyes of partners, other CSOs and targets. In part, this capability is determined by an organisation’s credibility and reputation. Reputation is often built over time and through repeated successful interactions with targets. These successful interactions improve an organisation’s visibility, access and influence.

Advocacy success also has to do with the ability to contribute content that targets value, for example, because of its quality, timeliness and legitimacy. These capabilities are well illustrated by African Child Policy Forum's (ACPF) work over the past decade to build and sustain its reputation and gain credibility through providing evidence-based research on child rights and wellbeing in Africa. ACPF has become known as an independent pan-African voice and open and user-friendly source of knowledge and expertise for all actors at all levels of the institutional landscape. Through these efforts, ACPF has been able to make sure that their message remains usable so that it can be passed on and implemented.

Also important is the capability to develop oppositional voices that resonate with the media, citizens and targets in a way that allows such voices to gain space, attention and support. An example of this can be seen in part of the Oxfam Confederation's Behind the Brands campaign, where global audiences were encouraged and enabled to put public pressure on food and beverage companies using social media.

Capability to adapt and self-renew

Closely linked to the above is the capability of staff members of an organisation to monitor environments and act or adapt appropriately to these environments and changes in them and to be visible in relevant arenas. This capability involves constant context analysis and making adjustments over time. It also means selecting suitable strategies for the context, target and moment, and using momentum to make the most of opportunities.

An example of this is Oxfam Novib's (IMPACT Alliance) timing of their public land freeze campaign to occur when the World Bank Group was already considering adopting the Voluntary Guidelines on Land and Natural Resources Tenure and needed a further push to commit publicly to these guidelines. The launch also coincided with the Annual Meetings of the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund, which was one of the arenas used for direct engagement with World Bank Staff. At that time, the World Bank Group launched the review of its Environmental and Social Safeguards, presenting an opportunity for Oxfam to start lobbying for the integration of land governance and tenure concerns in the new safeguards. Additionally, because Oxfam was aware that the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman was conducting audits on financial intermediaries and on a land grab case in Honduras as well as seeking to solve Oxfam's land grab case in Uganda, they had a further opportunity to lobby to improve relevant World Bank Group policies and practices. Finally, Oxfam and its allies were able to use the momentum when the audits and management response by the International Finance Corporation were made public to seek publicity.

In the evaluation, we found that the capability to adapt and renew also had a more internally focused side. Some evaluated programmes were flexible and able to learn from experience and make adjustments. The Hivos Alliance can serve as an example of the ability to learn internally and to adjust to changing contexts. Within the Access to Energy campaign, Hivos was able to use its newly established networks in 11 Southern countries to assess the progress of the national-level components of the UN Sustainable Energy for All initiative. Hivos learned that progress was much slower than expected and then decided to continue with the focus of the campaign but to adapt their strategy and interventions to the new reality by continuing to build capacity among their CSO partners.

In a few cases, programmes showed a limited capability to question assumptions in their ToCs. In these cases, the ToCs served to organise actors and activities, rather than as starting points for continuous reflection and review.

Capability to relate

Capabilities linked to building and maintaining relationships were very important for the advocacy programmes evaluated. The capability to build and maintain associations and co-operative relationships with partner CSOs was crucial. Particularly important here were the capability to relate to other CSOs working on similar themes, networking, building coalitions and alliances, as well as collaborations with partners in the South. Additionally, the development of agreements on objectives and commitments, effective communication and the coordination of roles and actions were highly relevant.

Concerning targets, central factors explaining success involved the capability to relate, including the capabilities to identify and engage relevant targets, to convincingly present oneself or one's organisation as creating added value, to relate constructively and maintain and develop relations, and to identify the most effective strategy to influence particular targets.

Capability to balance diversity and achieve coherence

For explaining effectiveness, we found that how partners in the South were involved in the programmes' advocacy work and the credibility of that involvement for reflecting 'Southern', 'local' or 'on the ground' voices and information were also important. For example, Women Leadership in Peace and Security (WLPS) was able to create space for the voices of their partners from the South by bringing partners to relevant meetings at global and regional levels. The increase in invitations to these meetings during the evaluation period reflects the long-term efforts on the part of WLPS to build strong relations and a credible voice.

An issue that played a role in different alliances was an implicit or explicit tension about the approaches for advocacy. Some programmes worked through focused and coordinated action, which contributed to their success. However, this focus may also risk limiting involvement and diversity. An example of this tension can be found in the case of the Fair Green and Global Alliance, which works within large networks, actively seeking diversity. Within these broader networks, tensions may exist. Northern international CSOs often work in institutional environments (e.g. the Netherlands or international policy processes) that are conducive to focused strategies geared to professional collaboration and open dialogue with companies. In contrast, many Southern CSOs work in environments where the disagreement between CSOs and companies is much deeper, and where collaborative approaches may be seen as forms of co-optation. The realities in the North and South are very different, and it is not easy understand each other's discourses, specific contexts and development of ideas. These types of issues can be challenging factors when seeking alignment on objectives and strategies. However, the mix of partners with different backgrounds in alliances can also enhance and deepen discussions and challenge all partners to reflect on and question their advocacy routines.

External factors

In addition to these internal factors related to organisational capacity, understanding external factors can be useful for explaining achievements and limits to these. It is important

to see here that external conditions and changes can provide openings or present barriers for advocacy programmes. However, although advocates can sometimes influence external factors and create openings, external factors are largely outside of the advocates' control. Past work on advocacy evaluation has included external factors that can be grouped into four categories:

1. Characteristics of the targets

including their power relevant to the issue, agendas, opposition to the issue and openness to influence

2. Characteristics of the context

surrounding the issue, including the presence and capacity of an organised opposition against or support for the advocacy goal on a particular issue

3. Characteristics of the public

in terms of their support for or opposition to an organisation's position on an issue, the degree of similarity between the advocacy objectives and societal values or agendas, and the role of mass media and social media

4. Characteristics of the general context

including the socio-political, socioeconomic and sociocultural contexts and the political or legal space open to CSOs

In the evaluation, we found several external factors to be relevant for explaining advocacy successes and failures. First, we can consider the way other actors (targets, other CSOs and other audiences) relate to an advocacy programme. We found that targets' agendas, positions on issues, power to influence developments around an issue and ways of using power were important factors. Changes around targets, such as personnel turnover within target organisations, power changes among targets and the timing of policy processes, were sometimes decisive for advocacy opportunities. A beneficial example of a change in a target was seen in 2012, when a new World Bank president was nominated and chose climate as one of the key issues for the World Bank. This individual was more supportive of Hivos' Access to Energy campaign than was his predecessor and shared the Oxfam Confederation's concern regarding the consequences of large-scale land acquisitions for the poor in developing countries. This turned the target into an ally, to some extent, which likely contributed to some of the achievements of both alliances.

Across the evaluated programmes, some aspects of the context came up as important for explaining achievements. Political space for CSOs in specific geographic contexts affected the possibilities for carrying out activities, which, in turn, affected the outcomes achieved. The cultural context where advocacy is conducted sometimes also influenced opportunities to carry out activities, be heard or set up co-operation with others. Institutional openness to civil society participation and influence was also a factor. For example, ACPF worked in a climate of shrinking socio-political and legal space for CSOs to operate at national level. These restrictions had negative consequences for ACPF being able to have their message 'trickle down' to the various levels of outreach and to push the message on child rights further than agendas alone. Conditions that changed because of wars and disasters also had an

effect on the extent and nature of achievements. For example, again turning to ACPF, the Mali conflict and the Ebola disease restricted the opportunities of ACPF to work for children's rights. Even though the plight of children and children's rights are arguably especially important in these conditions, ACPF found it harder to get attention for their issues during the crises. Another contextual factor was the political support for advocacy by civil society, including the amount of money spent on advocacy efforts.

The issue addressed

Finally, the nature and context of the specific issues addressed by advocacy programmes play a part in explaining advocacy success. In the evaluation, we found that the way specific audiences (i.e. targets, the public and partners) related to issues partly defined opportunities for programme achievements. How the issues were framed and how important they were considered in societies and by targets provided part of the explanation for whether the evaluated advocacy programmes were effective.

Gaining attention can be very difficult or relatively easy, depending on the issue. An example of this is seen in international arbitration and dispute settlement bodies, one of the issues addressed by the Fair, Green and Global Alliance. International arbitration issues have typically been very difficult for CSOs to attract attention for among the general public in Europe, because it seems to be a very remote and abstract subject. However, during the evaluation, FGG and other CSOs were able to take advantage of the EU-US free trade agreement to show the relation between international arbitration and the general European public and to attract attention to the effects of investor to state dispute settlement procedures in this agreement for developing countries. This also made it possible for the issue to attract the attention of the Dutch and European parliaments. This example highlights the link between the nature of the issue addressed, which may change rapidly because of external events, and the capability to adapt and self-renew.

Organisations and networks must be prepared and able to respond when serendipitous external events create unexpected opportunities. When advocates know how to deal with these situations, they can create breakthroughs that help to advance the advocacy agenda quickly. Issues can also be very sensitive in specific contexts. We found that this sometimes influenced the possibilities for advocacy, because advocacy on such issues may be considered controversial and may be opposed by other actors, including targets and other CSOs. For example, in the UN context, the SRHR Alliance and their international network faced a very vocal opposition, especially on issues linked to sexual rights. This played a part in limiting rapid advances at international level. Similarly, advocacy on certain issues was found to be controversial because it threatened key interests of certain actors. For example, Oxfam Novib's work on land grabbing challenged vested interests of local and national elites seeking to make large-scale land acquisitions. This same campaign also challenged the practices of multilateral organisations, donor countries and food and beverage companies. Such situations had consequences for the space available for advocacy work, sometimes because the opposition threatened civil society actors' security.

**VAN
CHOCOLA
WORDEN
VROUWEN
NIET
GELUKKIG**

Foto: Carli Hermès

Bij de productie van cacao worden vrouwen in ontwikkelingslanden gediscrimineerd. Deze cacao wordt bijvoorbeeld gebruikt voor jouw M&M's, After Eight en Toblerone.

KOM IN ACTIE OP WWW.OXFAMNOVIB.NL

 **Oxfam Novib**

PHOTO © Carli Hermes

'Chocolate does not make women happy.' Poster from Oxfam Novib's Behind the Brands Campaign. Sylvana Simons protests against women's labour conditions in the cocoa industry.

Finally, we found that the complexity of the issues addressed by the evaluated advocacy programmes may have influenced the chances for achieving results. The international advocacy that was the focus of the evaluation often involved multiple actors, understandings, agendas, institutions and levels. This resulted in complex issues, making major achievements challenging.

The maturity of the network and the issue

Finally, the maturity of the networks involved with advocacy and of the particular programme played a part in explaining success. It can take years to build relations with CSOs and targets, agree on objectives and actions, and execute strategies. For that reason, the amount of time that has passed since the start of programmes can help to explain achievements. Some results suggested that more mature programmes had an advantage over those that were less mature in terms of attaining outcomes. Funding cycles lasting only a few years may in many cases work against effectiveness (see case description on page 54).

The benefits of a built-up network and issue development

At the start of the evaluation period, the member organisations in the Fair, Green and Global Alliance (FGG) had already been in the advocacy 'business' for a long time. The Alliance was composed of six organisations, of which two (Milieudefensie and ActionAid) were working on the issue that we take here as an example: biofuels. Milieudefensie has been a lobby organisation since 1971 and is one of 75 member groups of the umbrella organisation Friends of the Earth International, whereas ActionAid Netherlands is part of the ActionAid network, which is active in 45 countries.

Both organisations were able to mobilise their constituencies (e.g. by asking them to write letters to companies or politicians, or to sign certain petitions). To bring certain topics to the attention of parliamentarians and relevant stakeholders in the Netherlands, FGG invited resource persons from their networks in Southern countries to give testimonies. They also produced reports of case studies showing the impact of EU policies and/or the behaviour of certain companies in Southern countries. These studies were executed together with Southern partners. With the results of such studies, the Alliance focused on accessing and influencing decision makers directly in the Netherlands, while other members in their network focused on influencing members of the European Parliament and European Commission. For the biofuels issue, this is vital, because biofuel policy is made at EU level, rather than within the separate member states.

Concerns about biofuels appeared prior to 2008. These concerns included biofuels production competing with food, pressure on land and land rights ('land grabbing'), the environmental consequences of deforestation and negative climate impact, and the lack of set criteria on these issues. Protests against biofuels from CSOs then increased rapidly in 2008, following a sharp increase in food prices. Before the beginning of the evaluation period, there was already a built-up network around biofuels, and a great deal of issue development had been conducted. Campaigns on specific aspects of biofuels, such as biofuels for aviation, misconduct of oil palm companies and large-scale expansion of plantations, had been carried out. Additionally, the issue of 'biofuels' has strong relations with land rights ('land grabbing'), an issue focused on by specific campaigns not included in the evaluation. In such campaigns, co-operation was often sought with other organisations striving for the same goals. In short, these two FGG member organisations benefitted from the prior development of networks as well as the arguments and evidence that had already begun to be built up by them and many others. The maturity of both the issue and the network surrounding it benefitted FGG strongly, because they were able to build on a great deal of past work. FGG worked with formal and informal global networks, as well as with their Southern partners, to achieve their goals.

Reflecting and acting upon contributing factors through monitoring and evaluation

In seeking to enhance effectiveness, organisations must have a process where they look into what they are doing and reflect on that in an ongoing manner. Organisational capacities, external factors and issue-related factors, in varied and often interrelated ways, contribute to explanations of success and failure. As part of an organisation's process of monitoring, evaluation and reflection, it is therefore important to look into these types of factors when it comes to analysing whether what they are doing is effective. Including an analysis of these factors will help organisations to identify their major strengths as well as challenges and to respond to these in appropriate ways. A good place to begin is an overview of how an advocacy programme is doing on each of the five advocacy-specific capabilities listed above. Not only should this process allow an organisation to see how they are doing, but it will also provide guidance on what may be playing a role in whether they are successful and what they can do to improve their effectiveness.

Including a consideration of internal, external and issue-related factors in an organisation's ongoing process of monitoring and evaluation makes it possible to determine how opportunities and threats faced contributed to the overall results of an advocacy programme. A key point here is that engaging in analysing how these factors contribute to what, and how much, is achieved is most helpful if it is carried out while programmes are still running. If the kind of understanding discussed in this chapter is reached along the way, it will sometimes be possible to adjust ongoing programmes to make them more successful. Organisations can have very different sets of strengths that contribute to their effectiveness, and they also face different challenges in terms of the issue that they are engaged with or the contexts where they operate. To gain an understanding of what makes something effective, it is necessary to engage with all of the different factors – organisational capacity, external factors and the issue. Having this understanding of the reasons behind an advocacy programme's effectiveness will enable advocates to respond appropriately, building upon strengths and tackling challenges in appropriate ways.

Explaining effectiveness

Organisational capabilities, external factors, the nature of the issues addressed and the maturity of the network and issue may all contribute to explaining effectiveness in advocacy. Organisations should include a consideration of these types of factors in their ongoing internal monitoring to improve their understanding of their effectiveness. It is important to engage with these factors while programmes are ongoing so that efforts may be adjusted to improve effectiveness where necessary.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

5

How does a project
contribute to change?



Amb. David
Donoghue

Understanding to what extent an advocacy programme contributed to a change and how this contribution was made is a significant part of advocacy monitoring and evaluation. For understanding contribution, it is important to recognise that advocates work in complex and constantly changing situations, along with many other actors. Achievements are rarely made with an organisation or alliance as the sole contributor. Rather, organisations tend to be part of coalitions and networks that include other CSOs.

Many other types of stakeholders (e.g. politicians, national governments, international institutions, the public, the media and private actors) also often make contributions. These other actors outside the sphere of control of the advocacy programme can be allies or lobby targets. Additionally, outcomes where targets have been influenced can sometimes be based on an alignment in objectives that already existed and can result from long-term civil society activities and the broader activity of the organisation. For those reasons, an impressive outcome should not be taken automatically as the same thing as an impressive contribution. Most often, it is not possible to prove the direct link between activities and outcomes (attribution). In the evaluation, we tried to find out whether a reasonable case could be made that the advocacy intervention contributed to a change. Realising that other actors are nearly always involved, the key here is to look for *value added* by the advocacy programme rather than asking whether the programme *caused* a change.

We were able to establish plausible links between activities and outcomes for all of the evaluated programmes, but the degree of plausibility differed for different alliances, outcomes and contexts. It was often possible to establish that a programme had a role in shaping policy processes, but the extent of the influence often remained hidden. As is common in advocacy work, we found that some of the activities did not appear to contribute to outcomes, and contribution could not be made plausible for some outcomes. It is important not to automatically label these activities as failed interventions, because the process of change can last several decades, and activities currently being carried out may lay the groundwork or contribute to achievements in coming years. However, such non-achievement is cause for reflection on the assumptions underlying the ToC, possibly resulting in adjustments to the programme's strategy.

This chapter outlines the approach followed to measure contribution in the evaluation and highlights lessons learned about carrying out a contribution analysis on advocacy outcomes. The chapter begins with an overview of contribution analysis, particularly for advocacy work. We then discuss the feasibility and applicability of contribution analysis under certain conditions often confronted by advocates. The chapter ends with a discussion of strategic choices for using contribution analysis in internal monitoring processes.

PHOTO © GPPAC

GPPAC, Cordaid and the Women Peacemakers Program present their global research during a panel discussion on Women, Peace and Security at the UN Headquarters in New York.

Overview of contribution analysis

There is wide agreement that, when looking at advocacy, we have to talk about contribution rather than attribution. The logical choice for assessing contribution is contribution analysis. In general, compared with other parts of the evaluation of advocacy, assessing contribution is not very developed. This aspect of the evaluation was somewhat 'uncharted territory', especially in an evaluation of this scale.

After considering several approaches, the evaluation team decided to use a specific method of contribution analysis, also incorporating process tracing to provide a means for weighing the available evidence to ensure that evidence was rigorous, traceable and credible.¹⁴ We selected this method to reach an evidence-based, in-depth understanding of the processes leading to a change. Contribution analysis allows evaluators to decide whether a reasonable case can be made for the advocacy intervention contributing to the outcome observed.

We set out to follow Mayne's contribution analysis framework,¹⁵ adapted to make the framework more specific for the evaluation of advocacy. Contribution analysis involves a set of steps: First, evaluators must be very clear about which intervention is claimed to contribute to which outcome, what kind of contribution is claimed and what other factors influenced the situation. The next step is to develop the ToC to understand the pathway through which an outcome is thought to have happened and to look for other possible explanations. Next, evaluators use existing evidence for the ToC and alternative explanations to put together and assess a contribution claim. Further evidence should then be gathered to support or refute the contribution claim. After all necessary evidence has been collected and analysed, evaluators can formulate and assess the final contribution story and then draw conclusions.

For identifiable reasons, differences between the alliances evaluated and the contexts where they worked meant that different evaluation sub-teams were able to follow the planned steps to varying extents. The evaluation of advocacy in the IMPACT Alliance serves as an example that generally followed the planned steps. As the case description box demonstrates, the data collection and analysis efforts for this alliance were consequently very intensive (see case description on page 63).

Over the course of the evaluation, we learned about assessing the contribution of advocacy work, and specifically about applying contribution analysis in this field. Key lessons relate to feasibility issues, applicability issues and strategic choices regarding what level of evidence to attempt to gather and which outcomes to select.

14 To collect stronger and more accurate evidence for the contribution analysis and to evaluate the quality of the evidence collected more systematically, elements of process tracing were integrated into Mayne's framework. Process tracing is an analytical tool that emphasises systematic assessments of evidence collected in light of the questions posed by evaluators. It is about identifying the causal mechanisms, processes and chains behind an outcome. For more information, see: David Collier (2011). 'Understanding Process Tracing'. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 44(4): 823–830.

15 John Mayne (2012). 'Contribution Analysis: Coming of Age?' *Evaluation* 18(3): 270–280.

Key steps

in contribution analysis

adapted for advocacy evaluation

STEP 1

Define the cause-effect issue to be addressed

- Acknowledge the causal problem
- Determine the specific causal question being addressed
- Explore the nature and extent of the contribution expected
- Determine the other key influencing factors
- Assess the plausibility of the expected contribution given the intervention size and reach

STEP 2

Develop the ToC and risks to it, including rival explanations

- Elaborate on the ToC behind the change where the organisation claims a contribution, including strategy, planning and activities
- Find out how much agreement there is about the ToC in the organisation, networks, coalitions and/or partnerships
- Determine what factors and actors played a role
- Casting a wide net, seek out alternative stories of how the change happened (rival explanations)

STEP 3

Gather the existing evidence on the ToC and rival explanations

- Identify information required to confirm or reject the pathways in the ToC and rival explanations for the outcome
- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the links in the ToC
- Gather existing evidence from past evaluations and relevant research for 1) the observed results, 2) each of the links in the ToC, 3) other influencing factors and 4) the rival explanations

Read more on page 62

STEP 4

Assemble and assess the contribution claim, as well as challenges to it

- Set out the contribution story: the causal claim based on the analysis so far
- Assess the strengths and weaknesses in the contribution story in light of the available evidence
- If needed, refine or update the ToC

STEP 5

Seek out additional evidence

- Determine what kind of additional evidence is needed to enhance the credibility of the contribution claim
- Gather new evidence

STEP 6

Revise, strengthen and assess the contribution story

- Build a more credible contribution story
- Reassess its strengths and weaknesses
- As necessary, return to Step 4

STEP 7

Draw conclusions

- Determine which pathway is the most plausible explanation of the outcome
- Revisit the contribution claim, ToC and pathways of change through feedback or a workshop

Contribution analysis

of the **IMPACT Alliance's** land grab campaign

An illustration of the extensiveness of the method



© Grigory Fedukovich

The contribution analysis of the IMPACT Alliance was largely able to follow the steps laid out in our planned approach. Based on internal interviews and documentation, two outcomes from Oxfam Novib's (IMPACT Alliance) land grab campaign were selected for in-depth contribution analysis. The first of these involved changes in policies and practices of the International Finance Cooperation (IFC) with regard to financial intermediaries (FIs, e.g. banks, insurance companies, microfinance institutions and private equity funds).

The second outcome relates to a land grab case described by Oxfam during the campaign launch in 2011, in which the IFC provided a loan to a corporation in Honduras that was accused of forcing farmers to leave their land (land grabbing) and being linked to violence against farmers on and around the plantation (human rights violations). The IFC addressed the situation in Honduras, and the IFC's analysis of this and other cases under mediation with the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman (CAO) led to changes in relation to the assessment of loan requests; the development of guidance notes on land, land-intensive investments following the Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment on the use of security forces by clients; stronger advisory support for clients to put in place the mandatory environmental and social risk monitoring systems; more involvement of senior management on high-risk transactions; and the use of the 'high-risk list' to prioritise supervision and collaboration with external partners.

Read more on page 64 and 65

Contribution analysis of the IMPACT Alliance's land grab campaign

Oxfam claimed a key role in both of these outcomes. Including Oxfam's explanation of the outcomes, three potential pathways were identified. According to Oxfam's contribution story, important strategies for achieving these changes were based upon direct engagement with World Bank staff and Executive Directors, using the media to put the World Bank Group under pressure and collaborating with other nongovernmental organisations. Oxfam and other nongovernmental organisations prepared themselves to react to a CAO audit on FIs as soon as plans for this audit were announced (2011). Oxfam's preparation activities included networking with other nongovernmental organisations, publishing a paper on land conflict cases and monitoring progress on ongoing audits. The launch of Oxfam's land freeze campaign coincided with the publication of this audit in October 2012. Oxfam then joined other nongovernmental organisations in publicly criticising a weak management response to FI audits made by the IFC, while continuing to lobby the World Bank and attracting international media attention to the cause. Oxfam and other nongovernmental organisations also continued to lobby the World Bank Group for broader structural changes in the working procedures of the IFC to increase oversight.

A second potential pathway to these outcomes reaches the same results but without the external pressure from nongovernmental organisations. This pathway assumes that the World Bank Group's internal accountability systems are strong enough to decrease the risks of land grabbing and human rights violations through both intermediate and direct financing.

The third pathway identified follows the original ToC put forward by Oxfam Novib in 2012. In this pathway, the land grabbing-related outcomes are achieved when developing countries improve their regulations and land governance mechanisms and information on large-scale land acquisitions is disclosed. Oxfam Novib originally wanted to contribute by creating spaces within the World Bank Group where decision makers and staff would debate the effects of large-scale land acquisitions on food security. These spaces were to be created by mobilising a global audience and opinion leaders to put pressure on the World Bank Group, directly engaging with World Bank Group staff and World Bank member governments represented on the Board of Executive Directors, and ensuring global media coverage of the campaign through working with allies.

To assess Oxfam Novib's contribution of these outcomes, interviews were conducted with external resource persons, and documents were consulted to identify rival pathways explaining the outcomes and to collect additional information. Further interviews were then conducted with both Oxfam staff and external resource persons, and Internet searches were performed to complete the information necessary to confirm or reject all identified pathways. The evidence collected for or against each pathway was also assessed for strength.

As an example of how evidence may be used to make a conclusion about whether a pathway is feasible, several strong pieces of evidence were collected to reject the alternative pathway arguing that the same outcomes would have been achieved without external pressure from nongovernmental organisations. Some of the evidence drew upon the long-term (going back to 2010) lack of appropriate management responses and follow-up on plans from the IFC in following CAO recommendations for the IFC to make sure its investments led to local development impact.

Because Oxfam Novib worked together with many other CSOs to achieve these outcomes, further evidence was required to determine how important Oxfam Novib was within these networks. To judge this, interviews with respondents in the network were used to determine whether the achievements could have happened without Oxfam Novib's participation.

Across the evaluation period, for this campaign, interviews were conducted with seven Oxfam staff members (multiple interviews per person) and eight external resource persons. The contribution analysis also drew upon 80 different sources specifically linked to the contribution to these outcomes. The contribution analysis for the land grab campaign relied mostly on external resources (both interviews with individuals and written documents). Interviews with external respondents, mainly representing CSOs, provided a consistent contribution story. However, it was not possible to include the perceptions and opinions of different actors from the World Bank Group. Even in this rigorously researched case, additional information from these actors, as well as more inside information from Oxfam, might have enriched the contribution story further.

Feasibility issues

Contribution analysis, as should be clear from the above summary of the steps involved, requires a great deal of work to be done well. The contribution conducted for the IMPACT Alliance (only part of which is summarized in the above case description box) took up many of the resources for the evaluation of that alliance, especially in terms of the evaluators' time. In our efforts to carry out a contribution analysis, it was necessary to balance the need for accuracy and evidence with the resources available.

One way of keeping this balance was to limit the full contribution analysis approach to two outcomes for each alliance evaluated. In practice, however, even after limiting the contribution analysis in this way, we faced multiple challenges related to the availability of evidence. In some cases, the nature of the outcomes selected meant that there was little objective evidence accessible to our team. For example, often when the evaluators sought to get a glimpse of how change happened from the targets themselves, no information was provided, or the information may have been biased in favour of the targets themselves being solely responsible for the change. In other cases, evaluators were faced with an information overload. In both cases, the search for appropriate evidence to verify contribution claims required a very large amount of work.

Applicability issues

Through our work with contribution analysis, we learned several things about its applicability. In some cases, contribution analysis was useful for assessing a programme's added value in achieving a change. Outcomes were almost always reached through advocates' work with networks and sometimes involved many other CSOs. Additionally, other types of stakeholders, such as politicians, national governments, international institutions, the public, the media and private actors, also often contributed to changes. In this context of coalitions, networks and influences of varied additional actors, contribution analysis opened possibilities for tracing the contributions of the evaluated alliances.

Ultimately, plausible links between activities and outcomes were established for all of the evaluated programmes. In some programmes, we found evidence of many direct interactions with targets, as well as change processes that indicated a relatively high degree of plausibility of the influence of the advocacy programmes' activities. This was the case, for example, when an alliance was frequently consulted directly by politicians who used the alliance's feedback in forming their arguments. A strong example of this can be seen in the SRHR Alliance's continuous monitoring and analysis of developments in the budget and policy on development co-operation in the Netherlands. Written input produced by the Alliance was taken up and used by several parliamentarians during the debates around the budget. For changes like increasing access to targets, gaining recognition as a legitimate civil society actor or credible source, being invited to participate in meetings and having alliance-developed content taken up by targets and other actors, the roles of the evaluated alliances were often very clear. These outcomes often resulted directly from the efforts of advocates. However, such outcomes do not lend themselves well to contribution analysis, because other actors' activities tend to have also contributed to these changes. At the level of policy change,

Challenges establishing contribution of the Hivos Alliance's 100% Green IT campaign

We selected Hivos' 100% Green IT campaign for contribution analysis. The selected outcome package contained results of the change process of Dutch data centres becoming more transparent and using more sustainable energy. Specifically, the outcomes to be explained involved 1) the majority of the 23 largest data centres in the Netherlands paying more attention to sustainable energy supply and formulating plans or taking action to increase the sustainability of their energy supply, 2) four data centres increasing their transparency regarding their energy supply and 3) Hivos being accepted by relevant actors as a stakeholder and an organisation to approach on discussions related to transparency and sustainable energy use.

The main activities Hivos engaged in to contribute to the changes were conducting and distributing research, collaborating with research institutes and building and maintaining relationships with the data centres. Hivos claimed that these outcomes would not have taken place without Hivos' contribution. The evaluation sub-team considered this claim to be plausible.

External informants were approached to gain a better understanding of Hivos' contribution to these outcomes and to identify and collect evidence on rival explanations. However, of the eight potential informants approached, only three responded. The respondents interviewed agreed that Hivos contributed to the outcomes through their research and publications, but the respondents disagreed about the proportional weight of the contribution of Hivos' activities on these outcomes. For example, one respondent from a data centre said that his company did change as described, but felt that the motivation to change came from within the company rather than external influence.

With very few external respondents being willing and able to be interviewed on this issue, it was not possible to follow all of the steps in the planned contribution analysis. It was difficult to identify plausible rival explanations for the outcomes in general. Further, if the interviews had led to promising suggestions for rival explanations, it is doubtful that more knowledgeable people could have been found to test the rival stories as planned in the contribution analysis step of gathering additional evidence. Finally, the evaluation of the Hivos Alliance demonstrates that it is extremely difficult to interview the target group, especially about the question of who contributed to the change in their position, policy or practice. Not many people are willing to answer this question openly, especially if their activities are visible and examined by their constituencies, stakeholders, shareholders and/or opponents. Therefore, even if the representatives of a target group respond, the quality and nature of their answers will be unclear.

Ultimately, this contribution analysis determined that Hivos' contribution claim could only be partially substantiated. Overall, the evaluation team concluded that Hivos did contribute to the outcomes as they described, but the extent to which Hivos contributed to these outcomes could not be established.

although contribution could often be confirmed, for example by tracing how an organisation's position was brought into debates structuring formal policy, establishing the extent of the contribution was more difficult. Leading up to a policy change, many actors often contributed to the change process, making it difficult to trace the level of contribution of a particular programme or organisation.

We found that applying the selected contribution analysis method was not possible for all types of outcomes. In general, the more complex the change process and the more actors contributing to the change, the less we were able to say about the extent of the contribution. In cases where many actors are acknowledged to contribute to the same change, the evaluated programme may claim contribution without claiming exclusiveness. This was observed, for example, in the assessment of the SRHR Alliance's contribution to international-level changes through the UN's International Conference on Population and Development process and of several Ecosystem Alliance programmes, such as the work in Indonesia involving the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil. In these cases, identifying a rival explanation that conflicted with the contribution claim was difficult or impossible, because the alliances' contribution stories already acknowledged the contributions of other actors.

A related point is that it was also often impossible to establish the nature and extent of contributions to outcomes taking place at international level. International-level outcomes are often highly complex in terms of the relevant processes, and a large number of actors are often involved – both allies and opponents of the advocacy programme being evaluated. For example, in the evaluation of the SRHR Alliance, we were able to verify many of the specific activities alliance members engaged in within the international network, and external experts involved in this network affirmed that SRHR Alliance members played a strong role in their functioning. However, as was true for other alliances in the evaluation, it was difficult to make a concrete link between the alliance's activities, the different actions of the network and the more distant international-level outcomes. Additionally, in some cases, contribution may remain hidden because of the sensitivity of the question of influence. Both advocates and targets may want to keep such influence away from public view.

We also found that important changes like network building and creating collaborations with key actors do not lend themselves to being understood through contribution analysis. Here, establishing contribution is often hindered by the lack of clearly defined, concrete outcomes, the nonlinearity of change and, again, the influence of many other actors and factors. An analysis focusing on the nature of the outcome itself, and how it came to be, is then more appropriate to obtain a sense of the achievement and the advocacy programme's role in attaining it.

Strategic choices

As an individual organisation or partnership considering conducting a contribution analysis, it is useful to make an honest assessment of the resources available before beginning. Although contribution analysis is sometimes the only possible way to assess the contribution of an advocacy programme to an achieved outcome, because of the time- and resource-intensive nature of conducting an in-depth contribution analysis, we caution against proceeding automatically into using this method without the initial step of realistic reflection.

There are several possibilities for making contribution analysis more feasible. First, as was done in the evaluation, organisations may consider limiting the number of outcomes they subject to contribution analysis. It can be helpful to think in related clusters or 'packages' of outcomes that can be seen as part of the same pathway of change. Second, it may be advisable to adapt the ambitions of what you can achieve with your contribution analysis where the outcomes of interest are less amenable to the method. For example, outcomes achieved through the work of very many actors, those taking place in international arenas or those that are highly complex may require adjustments to the goals of contribution analysis. Outcomes of this type are very common in advocacy, making contribution a relatively complicated aspect of evaluating advocacy work. In the evaluation, we found that establishing rival explanations was often impossible because of the lack of access to the other actors and processes involved. The evaluated alliances generally acknowledged the involvement of other actors, describing their work in larger alliances, coalitions and networks. When dealing with such outcomes and contribution stories, contribution analysis works best for determining the added value of an organisation. However, determining exactly what was contributed by a particular organisation, as compared with other actors involved, will often be impossible.

In some cases, an in-depth contribution analysis of advocacy outcomes may not be appropriate or feasible, and organisations would be better off aiming for a more overview-like analysis of contribution. Especially in international arenas involving multiple CSOs, targets and institutional levels, the more modest ambition of establishing the plausibility of the claim of having contributed is often a more realistic option. In short, the different possibilities and barriers encountered for particular contexts and organisations require addressing contribution flexibly.

Contribution analysis

Contribution analysis is an important method, and sometimes the only workable way to assess a programme's role and added value in a change process. However, the contribution analysis of advocacy programmes presents several unique challenges in terms of feasibility and applicability, especially when many actors or levels are involved or changes are complex. Whether evaluators are faced with lacking information (or access to information) or information overload, contribution analysis of advocacy work takes up significant resources (especially human resources), and organisations should reflect honestly to set realistic goals for establishing contribution.

6

How relevant are a project's contributions to change?



Relevance means the extent to which advocacy programmes and outcomes are consistent with political and public needs and priorities at global, interregional, national and/or local levels. The evaluation team spent significant time considering the basis on which the assessment of relevance should be made. As external evaluators, it had to be acknowledged that we were necessarily far behind the evaluated alliances in terms of knowing and understanding the specific contexts, processes, policy issues and different actors' perspectives on what needed to be changed.

Because of this, we decided to use the ToC for evaluating relevance (described in Chapter 3). We asked to what extent an achievement represented a step forward in light of the ToC. Specifically, as a starting point for determining relevance, we aimed to check how an achieved outcome was related to the needs addressed in the relevant ToC. However, it was also important to look beyond the ToC to remain critical and not simply take any claim of relevance for granted. We also asked to what extent an achieved outcome engaged with other processes that might be going on in that particular context. This chapter presents both aspects of assessing relevance, taking the ToC as a starting point and then looking beyond the ToC to evaluate whether achieved outcomes linked with needs at various geographical levels.

Relevance and the Theory of Change

We took relevance in light of the ToC as the basic starting point for assessing how relevant an outcome was. Fundamental in our approach was the understanding that the relevance of any particular outcome is going to be subjective. For example, for a given policy change, different actors will often interpret its relevance in very different ways. The organisations' ToCs could be used as a more stable reference. Especially important elements of the ToCs for assessing relevance are the overall objectives, the expected outcomes and how these are linked to each other.

The pathways of change represented in an advocacy programme's ToC are useful for placing a particular achievement in the broader understanding of how smaller changes eventually lead up to reaching the programme's ultimate objective. Understanding where in the pathway of change an outcome has a role allows us to see how relevant that change is in light of the overall objective. The underlying question being asked is whether the advocacy programmes under evaluation addressed the needs identified in the applicable ToCs and to what extent the changes played a part to addressing the organisations' overall advocacy aims. The case description box below uses a selection of outcomes reported in the evaluation to illustrate how a ToC can be used as a starting point to establish the relevance of outcomes.

PHOTO © GPPAC

GPPAC researchers presented their findings to the UN Peacebuilding Commission and advocated for more effectiveness in peacebuilding. In the background is the non-violence gun sculpture at UN Headquarters.

Critical reflection is an important part of the evaluation of relevance, even when looking at relevance purely in light of the ToC. For substantiating the relevance of outcomes, we generally began by asking staff members of the evaluated alliances to explain the alliance's view on the relevance of each outcome. Then, having a good understanding of the issue and the context, as well as the alliance's ToC, we assessed whether the alliance's view of an outcome's relevance was plausible. We strengthened the substantiation of relevance by interviewing external respondents specifically about how relevant certain outcomes or groups of outcomes were.

Overall, we generally concluded that the achieved outcomes have been relevant in light of the evaluated advocacy programmes' ToCs. This suggests that the outcomes contribute to shaping and influencing civil society on a range of key issues and objectives supported. Outcomes can be said to be relevant for achieving programme objectives when they represent significant steps in the envisioned pathways of change. In some cases, this kind of relevance of outcomes was high. In these cases, policy changes were clearly relevant to programme objectives, or there were significant signs that policy was being translated into actual action (see, for example, the case description box on page 75 highlighting the link between commitments made, policy and funding levels for SRHR in the Netherlands).

In other cases, the steps taken towards the larger objectives were smaller, with the ultimate desired changes were still far off. For example, the Global Partnership for Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC, Freedom from Fear Alliance) achieved changes that were judged to be relevant considering their objectives and ToC, especially on emphasising principles of inclusiveness and advancing regional priorities. However, in relation to GPPAC's overall objectives, the achieved outcomes at the level of changes to policy and practice were limited compared with the programme's long-term ambitions. For this alliance, most of the reported changes concerned achievements internal to the network or related to the development of relationships with external actors.

Relevance and constituencies

Separate from assessing relevance in light of an organisation's ToC, relevance can also be thought of in terms of whether or not an outcome is in line with political and public needs and priorities at other levels (e.g. global, interregional, national and/or local levels). It is possible that outcomes judged to be relevant in light of an organisation's ToC would not be relevant to actors at another level.

In the evaluation, in addition to answering whether advocacy programmes addressed the needs identified in the alliances' ToCs and to what extent the changes were relevant for achieving the alliances' overall advocacy objectives, we examined whether programmes were relevant for the Southern partners and constituencies involved. We found that relevance to these constituencies was largely present when outcomes were judged to be relevant using the organisation's ToC. However, there were some inconsistencies. For example, external experts had diverging perspectives on the relevance of the Ecosystem Alliance's outcomes related to the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil.

Relevance of governmental and parliamentary support

in light of the SRHR Alliance's Theory of Change

The SRHR Alliance achieved many outcomes related to positions taken and commitments made on SRHR (sexual and reproductive health and rights) by the Netherlands government and parliament. These changes took place in agendas, policies and practices. The ToC that the evaluation team reconstructed with the Alliance for how change happens at the Dutch national level works mostly through the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and parliament. Clearly, this means that Dutch government support for SRHR is absolutely necessary for reaching the larger goals of maintaining or increasing Dutch funding for SRHR as a percentage of total Official Development Assistance and ensuring effectiveness in spending on SRHR.

Following the Alliance's ToC, changes in policy and practice, such as amendments being filed to reverse budget cuts to SRHR and actual funding decisions in a given year, have direct and very clear relevance for the funding allocated to SRHR. Changes achieved in agenda setting, such as relevant parliamentary questions being asked and co-operation between CSOs from different sectors, serve as building blocks to achieve further policy and practice changes. These links, and thus the relevance of different types of changes that occurred, become very clear when considered in light of the ToC.

Tracing major changes in more detail in light of the ToC, SRHR has remained one of the Dutch government's four policy priorities through a change of governments, large budget cuts and two rounds of changes to Dutch development policies. The practical relevance of this was reflected by commitments made by State Secretary Knapen and Minister Ploumen regarding the level of SRHR funding. The status of SRHR as a policy priority area has also encouraged parliamentarians from all parties to show active support for SRHR.

Maintaining a strong policy was very relevant in the Alliance's ToC, because the Ministry of Foreign Affairs implements this policy through showing political support, building the expertise of embassies and sending out calls for proposals. A positive policy environment strengthened the work of the SRHR Alliance. The positive policy changes achieved served to reconfirm the efforts of the Dutch government related to SRHR and provide a basis for continuing the position of the Netherlands as one of the few remaining countries that makes SRHR a policy priority, both politically and programmatically, in an increasingly oppositional global context.

Parliamentary support was also highly relevant in the SRHR Alliance's national-level ToC, both because of the influence this can have on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and because it will lead to parliamentary debates on the quality of SRHR spending. Parliamentary support was consistently important for achieving outcomes in Dutch policy on SRHR and in funding allocated to SRHR. Additionally, several relevant agenda-setting outcomes in parliament laid a foundation for building additional support and for later changes to policy and practice.

PHOTO © Shakira Emtage-Cave
Pledges drafted by the National
Youth Council on Rights of Young
People.



Across the evaluated alliances, programmes differed in terms of the extent in which the Northern partners dominated the process. In some programmes, Southern partners were highly involved and occasionally even led the advocacy work. In other cases, there was little involvement of Southern partners, and Northern alliance members sometimes acted more independently than stated in the original planning. For various reasons, North/South collaborations, in a number of cases, did not materialise as expected, and this sometimes led to risks to the relevance of outcomes from the perspective of those in Southern contexts.

Often, the evaluated alliances had difficulty having enough high-quality communication between the lead organisation and the alliance partners to establish common ground. After common ground has been established, coordinating action can be challenging, and significant effort continues to be required to find places where the different organisations fit together and how they can best collaborate. Developing and maintaining a commitment to shared objectives can also be a challenge, especially for organisations working across wide geographical and cultural distances. All of these characteristics of collaboration between partners are important for achieving inclusive results. Finding common interests and co-creating activities and programmes are very important for establishing ownership among partners (see case description box on page 78).

Relevance of changes

The Ecosystem Alliance's achievements on palm oil

The Ecosystem Alliance achieved several outcomes in the palm oil sector linked to the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), where they invested much of their effort in the palm oil sector. Specifically, the RSPO endorsed and established a dispute settlement facility to help communities and plantation companies resolve their conflicts (2014); the RSPO Board adopted a proposal of an Ecosystem Alliance partner regarding outreach to local non-governmental and community-based organisations (2013); the RSPO adopted the revised Principles and Criteria, including stronger social and environmental protections (2013) and key actors in the RSPO brought alternative land use and participatory land use planning onto their agendas. At the Dutch national level, another related outcome was that the Dutch government supported the RSPO, dispute settlement facility mechanisms and building communities' capacity on related issues.



Some evidence supports the relevance of these outcomes. The process of awareness raising, discussing and agreeing on the establishment of the dispute settlement facility mentioned above took about five years, and the result was the first ever agri-commodity roundtable mediation facility. Further, it is exceptional that a commodity sector, by endorsing the RSPO outreach proposal, assumed responsibility for proactively informing, facilitating and funding local civil society to enable them to perform the roles of watchdogs, intermediaries and actors of community empowerment. At the time of the evaluation, about five cases had been handled by the dispute settlement facility, and the RSPO had plans to use an external professional agency to extend the reach and to follow up with field offices. The existence of the dispute settlement facility increased the credibility of RSPO-certified palm oil by helping to ensure that members working in the production, trade and buying of RSPO-certified palm oil follow RSPO standards in actual practice.

However, though these changes were undoubtedly positive, some actors question the relevance of these changes in agendas, policies and practices of the RSPO. Not all of the external experts contacted as part of the evaluation agreed on how relevant these changes were in terms of achieving the Ecosystem Alliance's larger goal of the palm oil sector becoming more sustainable, with some experts citing the weak implementation of RSPO rules.

GPPAC's pursuit of relevance through ownership

Although all evaluated programmes collaborated with partners and addressed questions of ownership, the Global Partnership for Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), part of the Freedom from Fear Alliance, made advancing ownership fundamental to its way of working. GPPAC worked to strengthen civil society networks for peace and security and to link local, national, regional and global levels of action. GPPAC also sought to enhance the collaboration between CSOs in designing and implementing conflict prevention strategies and catalysing partnerships with relevant stakeholders. In doing so, it aimed to engage with governments, regional intergovernmental organisations and the UN system.



GPPAC's focus was often not on advancing specific positions, but rather on advancing the development of civil society collaboration and engagement, people-centred peacebuilding or conflict prevention practices. The key message was often towards the advancement of a normative framework centring on inclusiveness, advancing openness to 'local voices' and awareness of their prime importance, through positions and recommendations on this and by embodiment of the message embedded in the global network. This message was about inclusiveness, embracing the diversity of the field and the stakeholders involved.

GPPAC facilitated regions' functioning by supporting, financially and organisationally, network interactions and the development of approaches and activities. Membership mostly revolved around the development and implementation of peacebuilding and conflict prevention initiatives with GPPAC support. Many of the achieved outcomes relate to this. GPPAC thus advanced peacebuilding and conflict prevention by members. Regions reported the development of relations and collaborations among member organisations in peacebuilding and conflict prevention activities of many kinds, matching regional priorities.

Linking the regional and global was embedded in the ambition to develop and work through a collective agenda. Progress was made on the operationalisation of key concepts and objectives and the clearer articulation of positions and recommendations. At the same time, GPPAC faced challenges in advancing ownership and coherent, coordinated action towards desired changes.

First, with an emphasis on linking and convening, the network developed internally and externally. Many meaningful connections and relations developed, leading to a situation where GPPAC reached an almost global scope, offering extensive opportunities for making relevant connections. However, within GPPAC, there was a tension between the starting point of seeing regional priorities as guiding and the perspective that GPPAC should have global ambitions. An implicit assumption in GPPAC's ToC was that networking would ca-

talyse activity oriented towards shared objectives. In practice, regional and global activities often tended to develop in parallel. Members often did not relate their work much to efforts that were removed from their local contexts and priorities. However, the credibility of such global activities depended on explicit and concrete links to regional organisations, and on their direct involvement. Although the basic credibility of the network opened doors at international levels, this promise also has to materialise in practice for it to be sustainable and to develop further.

The fundamental philosophy of 'regional priorities first' implies diversity as the living reality of the network. Indeed, GPPAC's energies were divided over many themes, regional contexts, strategies and targets. Within GPPAC, the question of 'are we perhaps spreading ourselves too thin?' has been asked in recent years, contributing to an enhanced focus on a limited set of shared objectives. However, at the time of the evaluation, this had not involved a re-consideration of the space for regional priorities. Not safeguarding this space might indeed impact a fundamental source of legitimacy for GPPAC, and one that has opened many doors for members and ensured that relevance for members came first.

In some of the evaluated programmes, we observed a lack of adequate processes working towards establishing the common ground that would encourage such ownership between geographically distant partners. This sometimes led to situations where problems with achieving ownership and commitment came up – especially between alliance members and Southern partners. In these programmes, we observed that the objectives of alliance members and of their Southern partners were not very closely aligned in actively used ToCs. Where a close link is not maintained between goals and priorities in the global North and the South, it is uncertain to what extent achievements desired in one geographical region are relevant to the needs of the other. To further inclusiveness of advocacy outcomes, funders, advocates and evaluators need to make communication, collaboration and accountability structures in relation with Southern partners and constituencies integral to the development, execution, monitoring and evaluation of advocacy programmes.

Using Theory of Change to reflect on and improve relevance

The findings described in this chapter highlight the potential worth of using tools like the ToC in an active way throughout the life of a programme to achieve alignment between objectives and activities in the North and the South. By design, the ToC makes visible the assumptions and assumed pathways of change, contributing to a more explicit consideration of, and reflection on, the relevance of certain outcomes in the light of programme objectives. This is especially important because demonstrating impact tends to be extremely difficult for advocacy work. Additionally, if the process of developing and adapting the ToC is practiced jointly or shared with Southern partners, as suggested in Chapter 3, it can help to identify differences in views on obstacles and pathways of change, making these differences explicit

and negotiable. Taken together, these possibilities for using the ToC as a tool for reflection and adaptation should encourage improvements in programmes' relevance in light of constituency needs and priorities.

In conclusion, it cannot be assumed that outcomes that are relevant in light of the ToC are also relevant in the eyes of constituencies. To make sure that outcomes are relevant across levels, communication, collaboration and accountability with partners needs to be an integral part of an organisation's reflexive monitoring and evaluation. If organisations approach this process with the intention of making explicit and assessing their advocacy programmes' relevance in light of constituency needs and priorities, they can work with and adapt their ToCs to achieve this kind of relevance.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

Relevance of contributions to change

Theory of Change can be used as a first point of reference to assess relevance, but this requires critical reflection. Findings of relevance in light of the ToC do not guarantee that outcomes and larger objectives will be relevant from the perspective of the constituency. Meaningful communication and collaboration with partners, as well as accountability in these relations, need to be an integral part of reflexive monitoring and evaluation. This will help to ensure relevance to constituencies and, where necessary, to make timely adaptations to achieve this type of relevance.

7

How efficiently is the work being done?



NO MORE
EXCUSES!

over
120
workers
dead.

 **Take responsibility!**



**Clean
Clothes
Campaign**

improving working conditions in the global garment industry

**The human cost
of fashion**

Over 120 workers died in a fire in Bangladesh

On 24th November, they stitched fashion for C&A when their factory
flashed. Fashion went up in flames.

We want C&A to take action!

- Meet us at the factory
- We want an independent investigation
- Help the victims
- We want full and fair compensation
- Avoid another 'Rana Plaza'
- We want C&A to join sector-wide safety program.

Tell  to take action!

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Clean
Clothes
Campaign



Efficiency concerns how economically resources (inputs) are converted into results (outputs). Most evaluations of advocacy work do not deal with issues of efficiency, seeing these as either irrelevant or impossible to measure. There are clearly a number of difficulties involved. For example, how can the efficiency of holding a meeting in a five-star hotel be judged? What if that is the only way to convince your primary lobby targets to participate? Efficiency in advocacy work cannot be measured unless the story behind expenditures is understood. This chapter describes the Theory of Efficiency, a method of assessing efficiency designed specifically for the evaluation, and explores the use of such an approach for policy, practice and evaluation.

Theory of Efficiency

Many evaluations on advocacy skip the question of efficiency because of the lack of benchmarks for advocacy efficiency and because the outcomes are often intangible and contribution can be difficult to assess. We also grappled with the question of incorporating efficiency, exploring and finally discarding the usual methods applied in development as having little relevance for the field.¹⁶

The breakthrough came when we realised that the question of efficiency is not only a concern of evaluators but even more of advocates dealing with limited resources for their work. This gave us an opportunity to incorporate the study of efficiency coherently into the methodology of the evaluation. Instead of introducing external benchmarks for efficiency, we decided to base our assessment on the strategies and norms the alliances used – implicitly or explicitly – to maximize their resources. We labelled this the ‘Theory of Efficiency’, and dealt with it analogously to the Theory of Change: taking the Theory of Efficiency as the starting-point of the analysis.

The Theory of Efficiency comprises procedures to ensure the efficiency of interventions and those meant to monitor efficiency. This approach to monitoring efficiency has the advantage of being more user-oriented and realistic for use in ongoing learning. At the same time, the Theory of Efficiency method also provides possibilities for accountability, because it brings to light how organisations take responsibility for efficiency in practice.

¹⁶ Other approaches to assessing efficiency considered include benchmark evaluation, establishing and comparing costs per unit, and establishing alternative pathways of action. This overview of existing methods was informed by Markus A. Palenberg (2011). *Tools and Methods for Evaluating the Efficiency of Development Interventions*. Bonn: Bundesministerium für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung.

PHOTO © Clean Clothes Campaign
The Clean Clothes Campaign demonstrates in front of a C&A store to urge the company to pay fair compensation to families affected by the Tazreen factory fire of 24 November 2012 in Bangladesh.

Constructing the Theory of Efficiency

QUESTION 1

What is the Theory of Efficiency of the advocacy programme?

- What are the procedures and mechanisms to maximise efficiency?
- How are efficiency considerations incorporated in decision making on proposed contributions to change and in budget allocation?
- What mechanisms exist to monitor efficiency in the advocacy programme (e.g. feedback, cost-benefit reviews or audits)?
- How are budget deviations (e.g. over-/under-spending) dealt with in the advocacy programme?

QUESTION 2

How is the Theory of Efficiency translated and upheld in practice?

- Compliance with or deviations from written procedures and mechanisms to maximise and monitor efficiency
- Checks among participants in the advocacy programme on whether they are familiar with the Theory of Efficiency, including efficiency considerations, procedures and mechanisms
- Evidence on how efficiency is operationalised: Were procedures followed in concrete practice, and what evidence is there of this?
- Perspectives of stakeholders within the advocacy programme on whether a particular intervention was efficient and how observed inefficiencies and wastes were handled

QUESTION 3

How is the organisation improving and/or adapting its efficiency?

- Have there been changes in the Theory of Efficiency over time?
- What lessons have been learned from efficiency problems over the course of the project and/or from the mechanisms that exist to monitor efficiency?
- How have these lessons been translated into new or adapted rules, standards or procedures?
- Are there examples of processes and choices that were not efficient, and how was this dealt with in the advocacy programme?

For each evaluated alliance, we asked about the Theory of Efficiency and then worked to evaluate the quality of this theory, also assessing how the theory was applied in practice. Constructing and evaluating the Theory of Efficiency has three key parts. First, the overall procedures and mechanisms to ensure efficiency are made explicit. This includes both formal and informal understandings within an organisation of how efficiency will be safeguarded, as well as how deviations from budgetary plans will be handled. The second step is to gather and evaluate strategic and operational evidence about how the Theory of Efficiency is translated and upheld in practice. The third step gathers data on how organisations adapt their efficiency-related theories and practices over time as a result of experience and learning.

For addressing each of these questions in practice over the course of the evaluation, the data collection methods that were most useful were interviews (primarily internal) and document analysis. For the first question, which sought to understand the advocacy programme's Theory of Efficiency, we drew primarily on interviews with staff members including advocates, finance officers and directors. Document analysis was also useful for understanding which internal mechanisms were in place to maximise and monitor efficiency. The second question, on how the Theory of Efficiency was upheld in practice, drew upon interviews with a range of staff members to examine the extent to which the Theory of Efficiency was known and applied by staff members at different levels and in different locations, as well as what was done in cases where it was not applied. The analysis of audit reports and other evidence of how procedures were carried out in practice also proved useful in some cases. The final question dealt with learning and adaptation of efficiency. Interviews with staff members were especially useful here, as lessons learned about efficiency were not always written down. Meeting minutes sometimes also contained information on this point, as did internal monitoring reports, in cases where there were procedural changes.

Did alliances have a Theory of Efficiency?

We found that all of the evaluated programmes included systematic approaches to efficiency and accountability as part of their broader operations, of which advocacy efforts were a part. The alliances under evaluation generally considered efficiency a fundamental part of their way of working, with their concerns for efficiency largely driven by the desire to maximise their effectiveness. The Theory of Efficiency, which was often implicit rather than spelled out formally, sought to find a balance between effectiveness and efficiency. By introducing the idea of the Theory of Efficiency, we were able to tease out how programmes viewed and dealt with the issue, and how they incorporated ongoing learning in this regard. As is illustrated in the case description box on page 86, we were thus able to bring out a number of elements characterising the efficiency of the organisations' decision-making processes.

Balancing efficiency with effectiveness

as an integral part of Cordaid's way of working



PHOTO © Cordaid

The evaluation assessed the efficiency of the Women Leadership in Peace and Security Processes (WLPS, part of Communities of Change Alliance) lobby and advocacy programme as part of the WLPS business unit, located within the organisational structure of Cordaid. Although there were operational and organisational structures in place for efficiency such as monitoring systems and databases, focused on the organisation as a whole, there was no formal Theory of Efficiency. Rather, it was part of the whole operation as 'it is ingrained in the way of working'. As one respondent noted, 'You can be effective without being efficient, but you cannot be efficient without being effective'.

WLPS advocacy focused on the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women's rights, in which the connection between local needs and voices and global policy arenas is central. However, the organisation was struggling with the usefulness of the 1325 agenda and language, because, although the issues were relevant and important in local areas, the language was not. For that reason, WLPS considered it important to include local voices in

global arenas, while also translating the global 1325 agenda into specific local relevance by co-operating closely with local organisations. This was often costly because travel is involved, and requires consultations and meaningful engagement of local women, which often take time. This process was not necessarily or clearly reflected in effectiveness. However, these are considerations organisations discuss on an everyday basis related to efficiency and effectiveness.

Reflecting on this and relating it to the implicit theory and practice of efficiency within WLPs advocacy, we noticed that efficiency was not only considered to be cost effectiveness; it was ingrained in decisions on partnerships and focus, related to capacity, time, networking and learning. For example, WLPs chose to connect with the Global Network of Women Peace-builders (GNWP) based in New York. This was a strategic decision, because this network strengthened the outreach and capacity of WLPs advocacy as it had the capacity and geographic location to lobby the UN. Additionally, the WLPs partnerships provided advocacy with a global outreach through which partners from diverse organisations could connect worldwide to share, learn and build their capacities and thus maximise effectiveness.

Moreover, a core dimension of their efficiency was 'time', which is related to finding strategic partners to strengthen capacity, but also for being able to define a niche. For WLPs advocacy, besides working closely with partners and networks, this meant that they sought connections within their own organisation, for example through linking WLPs advocacy with the gender agenda. This linking meant working more efficiently (in terms of both time and costs), because one person instead of two could represent the issues at meetings. However, time constraints on staff sometimes worked against this principle. Outsourcing was also an issue of efficiency in terms of capacity and time, as this did not always work out effectively and sometimes took more time than anticipated. Sometimes it is efficient to not continue a partnership or outsource work. In other cases, it is efficient to travel across the world to an expensive high-level meeting, even though it is costly in terms of money and time. Efficiency and effectiveness also applied through critically finding Cordaid's niche. For example, working on financing for WPS agenda at national and global level has become a very strategic niche for Cordaid, especially with the establishment of the Global Acceleration Instrument, WPS and Humanitarian Action. Thus, the elements of strategic decision making, focus, time and partnership integrate both efficiency and effectiveness.

During the evaluation, we noticed the increased efficiency of choices and decisions made internally along with the constant balancing between effectiveness and efficiency on questions of content, quality work and outsourcing, as well as partnerships and networks, internal coherence and communication and the nature of the relationship between partners and Cordaid.

Several key elements of the Theory of Efficiency emerged through the evaluation process as important dimensions of organisations' decision-making processes:

- Organisations often held the belief that clear objectives, a shared vision and clear lines of responsibility and transparency ensure efficiency.
- Efficiency was considered a fundamental part of the philosophy of most organisations, who hope to maximise effectiveness at the lowest cost possible.
- Internal decisions regarding strategy took into account questions of how to do the most with the fewest resources.
- Organisations considered the long-term benefits of investments when allocating funds for activities.
 - Example 1: Spending funds to develop the capacity of local partners is part of the philosophy of giving people a space and voice in advocacy processes, and it can also make interventions more sustainable over the long run. Does that justify additional costs in the present?
 - Example 2: Some organisations needed to uphold their identity and reputation as being green and eco-friendly. This sometimes led to decisions that were less efficient in economic terms, but it was important for future credibility.
- Quality was given priority over cost savings when necessary to ensure effectiveness.
- Time efficiency was considered the most important part of efficiency in all of the evaluated programmes working in the time- and staff-intensive field of advocacy.

Being flexible, adaptive and lean – as long as this does not jeopardise effectiveness – are characteristics used to describe efficiency in the organisations. Additional aspects of efficiency that came up repeatedly included smart collaboration and internal division of tasks within the organisations and between partners.

What were the practices and improvements in efficiency?

We found that in practice, alliances upheld efficiency in different ways, and there were several domains of efficiency to consider: organisational, time, meeting, travel and output efficiency. Organisational efficiency refers to the efficient organisation of working processes, such as frameworks, planning and monitoring, as well as reporting. Being lean and flexible, as well as having clear objectives and division of responsibility, is important for being able to adapt to changing circumstances and opportunities. Partnerships, co-operation and task division underlie this kind of efficiency. Time and staff are considered the main costs in advocacy work, and time efficiency is a very important aspect.

Regarding meetings, policies and decision-making procedures are often in place concerning the venues, representation and sequence of meetings, seeking an optimum balance between outcomes and costs. Representative locations can be costly, and in some cases, relations can be affected by low-budget meetings. An example of the efficient use of time and resources in meetings is the implementation of subgroup meetings to work intensively on certain topics, divide tasks and responsibilities and increase effective decision making. With

regard to the content of the meetings, it is considered efficient to have clear outputs and preparations beforehand and to avoid having too many objectives for one meeting.

Travel constitutes another significant cost in advocacy work, because many advocates seek to influence different geographical arenas. In practice, organisations have policies regarding travel and accommodation as well as daily expenses. Some use partnerships to reduce travel costs while maintaining the ability to advocate in different arenas. Organisations also use email and Skype or other software to communicate across the globe. Often, organisations are invited to present or provide input, meaning that they can travel without costs. Involving regional and local partners is often considered an efficient investment, because they can take issues further in different geographical locations and arenas, and this is assumed to be effective in the longer run.

Output efficiency is also important. Organisations constantly balance effectiveness with cost and time efficiency in their decisions on strategies, activities and types of output to be produced. There are different examples of learning with regard to this. Campaigns are considered effective and can be cost-effective, but not in all situations or for all topics. Additionally, outreach through publications is considered cost-intensive, especially when sending out hard copies, but hard copies were sometimes considered more effective than web-based dissemination (the Internet is not available everywhere).

Application of Theory of Efficiency in reflexive monitoring and evaluation

Most of the organisations uphold efficiency in practice through embedding this concern in their strategic planning, monitoring and reporting, as well as decision making and constant consideration of choices, weighing efficiency against effectiveness. In this exercise, we also determined some main learning points in balancing efficiency with effectiveness. These learning points include strategic decisions on activities and output (decisions on what to do), meeting and organisational structures (adjusted and/or adapted), co-operation with partners (nature of the relation, the task division, the structure of communications) and capacity development.

Although efficiency was certainly carefully considered by the evaluated alliances, the inclusion of efficiency as an element in advocacy decision making was often implicit and invisible. This meant that how efficiency contributed to choices made on strategy and activities tended to disappear from accountability processes (to the donor, within networks and to the end-users), and efficiency considerations were rarely discussed or evaluated in a systematic way.

In general, the evaluated advocacy programmes did not have a specific policy on efficiency to guide everyday decisions. By introducing the idea of the Theory of Efficiency, we were able to tease out how programmes viewed and dealt with the issue, as well as how they incorporated ongoing learning about efficiency. Evaluating the quality of the Theory of Efficiency and using it as a benchmark against which to evaluate what happens in practice, this method allows for a meaningful assessment of efficiency within advocacy programmes.

The Theory of Efficiency method has the potential to improve practice. Compared with efficiency statements that give an absolute or relative score to practice, this method generates insights into theories and practices of efficiency that can be used by organisations to improve their efficiency. This is important, especially in a context of scarce resources. The inclusive and reflexive monitoring of efficiency would be in line with a results-oriented approach and strengthen accountability across partnerships. Working with the Theory of Efficiency method allows for this type of monitoring, reflection, and accounting for efficiency choices and their outcomes.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

Efficiency of the work being done

Efficiency is an important consideration for all organisations, given a climate of scarce resources. In monitoring and evaluating advocacy work, assessing efficiency can be difficult because of the lack of benchmarks. Using the Theory of Efficiency to make explicit how an organisation intends to work towards efficiency and to assess what is done in practice to maintain and improve efficiency provides a great deal of useful information. The approach is user-oriented and geared towards ongoing learning. The approach also facilitates accountability by bringing into light how organisations take responsibility for being efficient in their practices.

8

Conclusion



The lessons we learned emerged on our journey as we worked and were confronted with questions and dilemmas as we went along. The lessons that we share in this book are, to a large extent, not to be taken as tools that are ready for use. Rather, these lessons are contributions to a number of ongoing conversations within the development field on advocacy and its evaluation. We have offered some practical tools, which are developed to a greater or lesser extent, to think about and evolve through experimentation.

There are different publications and guidelines on how to use Theory of Change as a tool to enhance effectiveness in development.¹⁷ This e-book zooms in on the particular relevance of Theory of Change in the context of advocacy for development. We found that the tool of Theory of Change can be highly useful for shared development, reflection and adjustment of advocacy programmes. There were many instances where we found that alliances could have made better use of this potential, and most alliances did not systematically reflect on and adjust Theories of Change during their programmes.¹⁸ In addition, we advance Theory of Change here as an important basis for addressing a broad range of evaluation questions. All chapters in this e-book are coherent with a Theory of Change approach to advocacy evaluation.

It is common for advocacy evaluations in the context of international development to engage in at least some explanation of findings.¹⁹ However, such analyses do not amount to a systematic consideration of explanatory factors that does justice to the complexity of advocacy for development. In this e-book, we seek to fill this gap, presenting the range of factors that can help explain successes and failures, and identify challenges and issues for programmes and advocates.

PHOTO © Frederique van Drumpt
Celebration of Women's Day in
Magwi, South Sudan, with Cordaid's
partner organisation STEWARD
Women.

17 Danielle Stein and Craig Valters (2012). *Understanding Theory of Change in International Development*. London: LSE.

Julia Coffman and Tanya Beer (2015). *The Advocacy Strategy Framework. A Tool for Articulating and Advocacy Theory of Change*. Washington D.C.: Center for Evaluation Innovation.

Harry Jones (2011). *A Guide to Monitoring and Evaluating Policy Influence*. ODI Background Note.

Jane Reisman, Anne Gienapp and Sarah Stachowack (2007). *A Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy*. Baltimore: Anne E. Casey Foundation.

18 Limits in strategic reflection and adjustment by NGOs involved in advocacy are also noted in: Jim Coe and Juliette Majot (2013). *Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning in NGO Advocacy. Findings from Comparative Policy Advocacy MEL Review Project*. Boston: Oxfam America.

19 See e.g.: Norad (2015). *Evaluation of Norway's Support to Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Development Cooperation*. Oslo: Norad.

Glenn O'Neil, Jana Garay, Patricia Goldschmid, Laetititia Linart, Laura Roper, George Ellis Ruano, Nirupama Sarma and Ana Paula Schaeppers (2015). *Oxfam's Global Leaders Empowered to Alleviate Poverty. Evaluation - Final Report*. Boston: Oxfam America.

It is widely acknowledged that the effectiveness of development interventions must be assessed in terms of contribution, rather than attribution, and there are several models to assess contribution.²⁰ So far, however, we see little reporting on experiences from practice in the field of advocacy. This e-book has a range of practice-based reflections that we hope will help others to engage with the question of whether and how to do contribution analysis, and in what contexts.

Evaluation reports in the field of advocacy for development commonly contain considerations of the relevance of outcomes. However, we found that a common problem in advocacy for development is that outcomes tend to be removed from impact. Outcomes are mostly in the agenda-setting and policy-influencing stages of change. We rarely see advocacy outcomes changing lives at the moment of their achievements. Moreover, the future impact of advocacy outcomes is theoretical, banking on future changes in policy development and implementation in order to create change 'on the ground'. Our approach of assessing relevance in the light of Theory of Change offers a way to address the question of relevance systematically, while acknowledging the complexity of change in the field of advocacy, and the need for a longer-term perspective.

The experimental approach to the monitoring and evaluation of efficiency that we offer in this e-book fills a gap in the field. It generates insights into theories and practices of efficiency that can be used by organisations to improve their efficiency, in a way that is consistent with the Theory of Change approach outlined in this book. The method opens up the possibility to evaluate the efficiency of advocacy, which is usually considered impossible. We hope organisations will continue the experimentation we started.

Finally, within the field of advocacy for development, we see a common tendency to seek quantification.²¹ Results are conceptualized as entities that can be numbered, and much of reporting centres on these numbers. While such quantification can help make outcomes and their assessment systematic and tangible in a very basic way, it provides little understanding of the meaning of outcomes, nor does it provide a shared foundation for reflection, learning and adjustment. Throughout this book, we advance a qualitative approach to the evaluation of advocacy for development. We believe this approach does justice to the complexity of advocacy, offering forms of systematic analysis that serve accountability as much as learning needs.

20 John Mayne (2012). 'Contribution Analysis: Coming of Age?' *Evaluation* 18(3) : 270–280; Thomas Delahais and Jacques Toulemonde (2012). 'Applying Contribution Analysis: Lessons from Five Years of Practice'. *Evaluation* 18(3): 281–293.

21 For a discussion of this tendency, see: Jim Coe and Juliette Majot. (2013). *Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning in NGO Advocacy. Findings from Comparative Policy Advocacy MEL Review Project*. Boston: Oxfam America Boston: Oxfam America.

