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Global Program Advocacy Grants: What Do They Tell Us About Evaluating Advocacy?

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INTRODUCTION

The impetus for this paper is the Program Planning and Learning Unit's (PPLU) interest in developing some capacity in evaluating advocacy work. The purpose of this paper is to share with Oxfam America (OA) staff some preliminary findings from a survey of Participation for Equity grants that plan to implement advocacy activities. I hope that the findings will stimulate discussions on advocacy and evaluating advocacy at the agency level. For the purposes of this paper I define advocacy as "purposeful action to bring about favourable changes in peoples' lives."¹

THE CHALLENGE OF EVALUATING ADVOCACY

There is a high degree of consensus that evaluating the impacts of advocacy work can be elusive, with the main factors being:

- ❑ impacts are gradual and happen over a long time,
- ❑ complexity in issues and institutions,
- ❑ number and diversity of interests in the outcome,
- ❑ tendency of interested scholars wanting to demonstrate influence by civil society actors, and
- ❑ Non-government organization's (NGO) tendency not to evaluate their advocacy work systematically due to a lack of appropriate tools and frameworks to do so.²

In the context of international development work, an additional challenge is that most advocacy resources go to making a campaign happen, not to learning from it. NGOs tend to focus on identifying issues and developing strategies towards having issues accepted as legitimate and addressed by governments or multinational institutions that we often give inadequate attention to monitoring policy implementation. Resource allocations are often prioritized towards creating organizational change. Correspondingly, evaluation tools tend to measure the institutional dimensions of change. Such changes are significant and important first steps but we must not forget to determine impacts on civil society livelihoods. More specifically, we need to pay particular attention to whether both policy and institutional changes directly result in changes at the household – including individual and collective social arrangements and relationships. For example, will a favourable change in family law for women in Mozambique result in equally favourable social relationships within their homes?

*I want to thank Susan Holcombe, Laura Roper, Liz Umlas, John Ruthrauff, Dave Boyer, Jenn Yablonski and Gabrielle Watson for their valuable comments on the first draft of this paper.

¹ It is not the purpose of this paper to explore a comprehensive definition of Advocacy that embraces all the work of Oxfam.

² (Nelson, 2000, Roche, 1999, Winkelman, 1999, Miller 1994, 1997).

Methodology

The purpose of doing a survey of the Global Program Participation for Equity grants was to identify what types of targets, strategies and expected outcomes OA partners choose to direct social change in their regions. I selected a total of 30 projects from four regions: 10 from Central and South America, 10 from Southern Africa and 10 from Southeast Asia. This sampling is not methodologically rigorous in an academic sense; the purpose of this paper is only to highlight interesting commonalities and differences. The projects were selected in consultation with Boston-based project staff based on the criteria that 1) we jointly considered the projects as supporting some form of advocacy activity and 2) were written in English.

I developed three categories of supported advocacy projects based on three questions: 1) who is the direct change target? 2) what are the key strategies? 3) what are the expected outcomes? I added a fourth question to assess whether the project included a well-developed monitoring and evaluation system. (see appendix B for full criteria details). The projects are categorized based on explicit information given in the grant applications that have relevance to those questions.

Key Findings

Key Change Targets

OA grants invest more funds in trying to target and empower individual civil society actors than in targeting institutions, see Figure 1. This shows that our partners' strategies for advocacy work begin with changing and creating awareness in individual civil society actors. They believe that when these actors are empowered they will become change advocates who then form the movements to influence institutions. Civil society as change targets is strong in all three regions. Slightly more than half of the projects included institutions as direct change targets - these were clustered predominantly (9/10) in the Central and South American projects. Only a few projects *directly* lobby multinationals or governments as their change targets. Overall, these findings suggest that a high percentage of OA partners believe social change starts with individuals as the key innovators to creating social movements. If this is so, it not clear if OA is funding pre-advocacy work, advocacy training, and/or direct advocacy work.

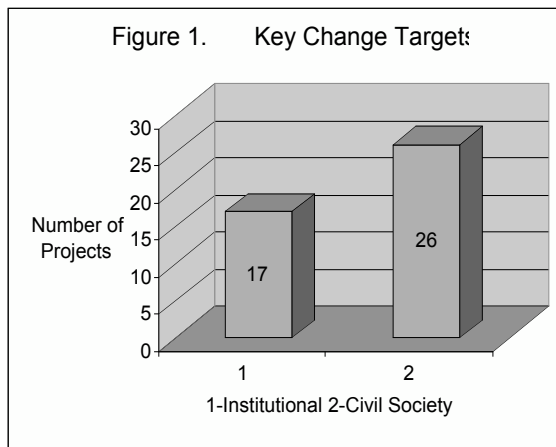


Figure 1 - Legend

Institutional – includes multinational, national, regional, local and indigenous government and non-government organizations.

Civil society – includes non-formally organized community of individuals.

Key Strategies

Gaining an understanding of key strategies is relevant in assessing the process of advocacy work. Overall, OA funded advocacy projects rely frequently on five out of the ten strategies identified. They are:

- ❑ information dissemination,
- ❑ training,
- ❑ education,
- ❑ lobbying, and
- ❑ research (see figure 2).

The legend for figure 2 differentiates what is included in each of the ten strategies. The Central and South America projects indicate a good comprehensive balance of training, lobbying, research and monitoring as key reinforcing strategies. Surprisingly, the strategy of networking was less explicitly used overall, but given some importance in the Southeast Asia projects (5/10). This is particularly worrying in the case of Southern Africa where 9/10 projects use information dissemination as a key strategy with only 3/10 projects explicitly networking beyond their already formed, urban-based coalitions.

An interesting finding in the projects surveyed is the lack of attention given to intra-organizational dialogue for reflection, learning and strategic planning. This is a necessary strategy for learning in planning and implementing advocacy work, yet it is often not given the time and attention it deserves. It is not clear from the grant application why there is this lack of attention but OA should take a proactive approach to understand the reasons.

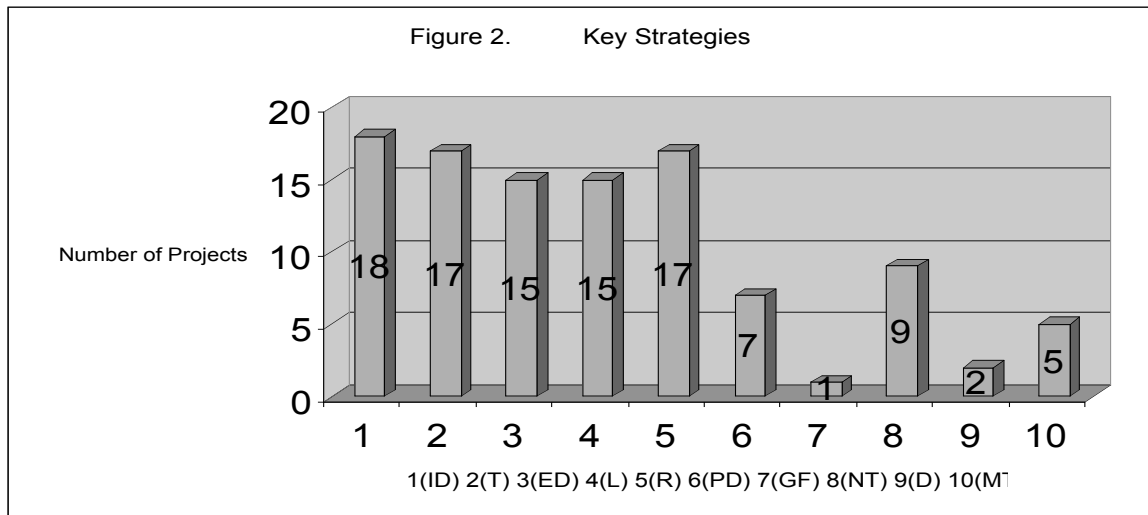


Figure 2 - Legend

1. *Information dissemination (ID)* – as stated through various mediums (audio, print, etc.) to change targets.

2. *Training (T)* – includes capacity building, improving practice, leadership roles through practice.

3. <i>Education (ED)</i> – explicitly stated with purpose to advise or give information for particular purpose.
4. <i>Lobby (L)</i> – explicitly stated with purpose to directly advocate or lobby change targets.
5. <i>Research (R)</i> –collection of information for analysis or baseline surveys.
6. <i>Policy documentation (PD)</i> – explicitly stated purpose to draft alternative laws, policies, briefings or plans.
7. <i>Group formation (GF)</i> – creation of a new formal entity.
8. <i>Networking (NT)</i> – multi-agency linkages, information sharing and collaborative work.
9. <i>Dialogue (D)</i> – intra-agency dialogue.
10. <i>Monitoring (MT)</i> – tracking change in actions of change targets.

Expected Outcomes

In this survey I developed six categories to organize the expected outcomes listed in the grant applications: media attention, knowledge resources, identity resources, consolidated resources, political space and policy change (see figure 3 legend). The categories are useful in indicating the types of benchmarks OA should consider in evaluating policy change efforts. Figure 3 shows the number of grant applications that look to achieve each expected outcome within each of the six categories. Most projects expect to build knowledge resources while just over half of the projects expect to have consolidated resources and almost half expect to affect policy change. This finding is consistent with the focus on strengthening civil society individuals as the key change target shown earlier. More Southern Africa projects highlight media attention than policy change or political space. Conversely, the Central and South America projects focus heavily on policy change with little attention to media coverage. One outcome that was not explicitly identified in any project is that changed policies are implemented.

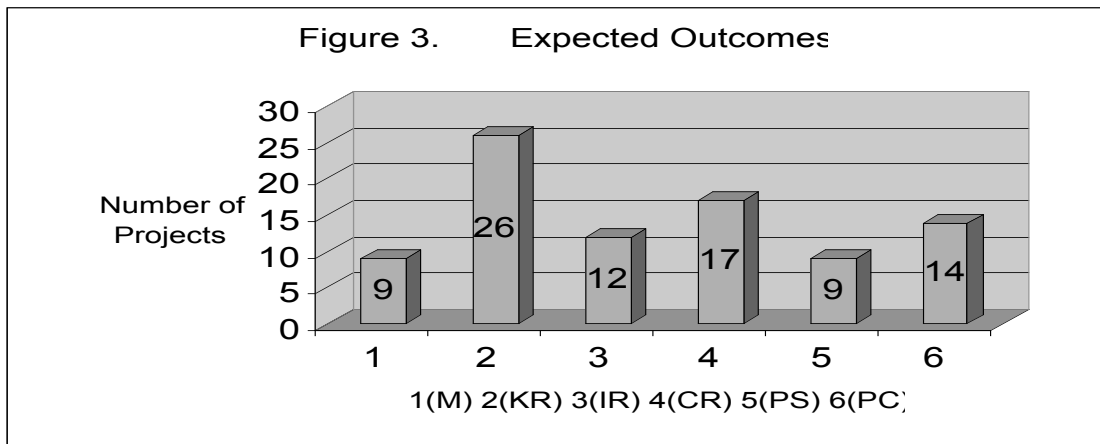


Figure 3 -Legend

1. <i>Media attention (M)</i> – attention from various mediums.
2. <i>Knowledge resources (KR)</i> – interactions that increase awareness, knowledge and experience resulting from a greater flow of information. This includes written documentation of policy papers, briefings, etc...as well as knowledge of peoples values, interests, etc...

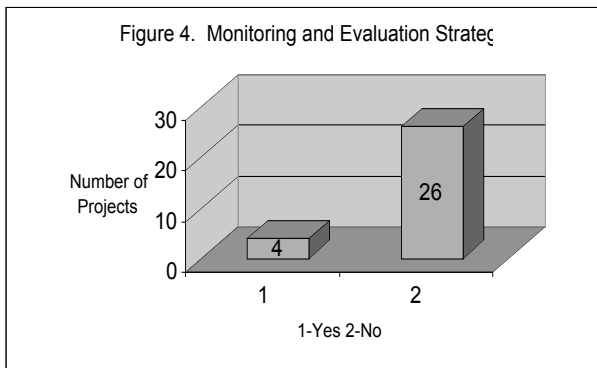
3. *Identity resources (IR)* – interactions that increase the sense of belonging through a shared understanding and voice. For example, shared voice on control over rights and resources.

4. *Consolidated resources (CR)* – interactions that aggregate resources such as through stronger networks, connections and institutions. This can result in the gain of stronger leadership.

5. *Political space (PS)*- room gained and acknowledged in the public political and legal sphere for greater open dialogue.

6. *Policy change (PC)* – direct or indirect change in official policy to allow for more inclusive recognition of rights, including the acceptance of community resource plans.

Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy



Finally, the survey looked at the proposed monitoring and evaluation strategies of each project to explore how partners propose to track changes and measure their success. Only 4/30 projects include an attempt to develop an explicit monitoring and evaluation strategy with indicators or benchmarks. Most grant applications include a general descriptive paragraph on monitoring and evaluation indicating dates and people responsible. It is not clear whether this is a capacity issue or a priority issue and whether it is located

within OA and/or within partner organizations.

WHAT CAN GLOBAL PROGRAM PARTICIPATION FOR EQUITY GRANTS TELL US ABOUT EVALUATING ADVOCACY?

The survey of the Global Program grants highlight what partners and OA program staff believe are the steps required for social change in their regions of expertise. The survey shows that advocacy efforts consist of a continuum of activities that are dynamic, targeting both individuals and institutions. The grants also show that many projects are planned with complementary multi-pronged strategies. My analysis shows that these advocacy grants highlight four implications for evaluating advocacy efforts.

The first implication is that OA should consider both institutional and individual impacts. Since most projects have individuals rather than institutions as their direct change targets, attention should be given to evaluating whether this type of advocacy can be effective in challenging and changing change target institutions, since educating people does not necessarily lead to change. For example, in the case of the project “ZIM 252 Educating Communities on Gender, Law and Rights in the Framework of the Constitutional Reform Process”, an evaluation of the strengthened institutional capacities of the Association of the Women’s Clubs will not give a complete assessment because the intermediate goal is to educate while the end goal of the project is a favourable constitution framework. A full assessment should attempt to measure impacts at several levels: individual, institutional and policy.

The second implication is that there is considerable diversity in the strategies used by OA partners and thus any advocacy evaluation framework must recognize these differences. This points out the importance of developing indicators jointly with relevant stakeholders to ensure they are appropriate and meaningful to each situation. For example, partners in Southern Africa tend to use information dissemination as a common strategy in advocacy work, while partners in South and Central America tend to use lobbying, research and training activities as their key strategies. By working with stakeholders to develop indicators it may be possible to learn why one strategy is favoured over others or how strategies can be complementary in differing cultural, socio-economic and political contexts.

The third implication is that OA can use the six categories of outcomes that partners would like to achieve to inform further discussions of how we evaluate advocacy. These outcomes may or may not be achieved but they are useful in illustrating partners' visions of a changed society. OA staff should be aware of these visions so that we can best align our resources with our partners in a collaborative fashion. Having an understanding of partners' desired outcomes also highlights that tangible change, such as a policy change or greater political space are critical in sustaining the long-term effectiveness of advocacy work. Hence, in developing frameworks for evaluating advocacy, OA needs to consider a gradation of outcomes that are essential in sustaining advocacy efforts. The gradation can range from awareness building at an individual level to mass social movement efforts targeting institutions for policy change.

The fourth implication is that there is limited capacity and/or resources dedicated to developing indicators for monitoring and evaluating OA funded advocacy projects. OA is currently in the process of developing frameworks, tools and systems to support program staff in monitoring and evaluation. OA should encourage and provide incentives for program staff to spend more time per grant thinking through the monitoring and evaluation indicators and strategies. This does not mean there should be a trade-off between planning and evaluation and so it is essential that additional resources be allocated to support staff. It is hoped that the forthcoming frameworks and tools will facilitate a smooth transition to a culture where monitoring and evaluation are important steps in project development.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS AND NEXT STEPS

This survey of 30 OA funded advocacy projects has highlighted some key issues that represent a filter for evaluating specific advocacy activities and for monitoring the success of implementation. The short answer to what Global Program advocacy grants can tell us about evaluating advocacy is that they identify only proposed activities not operational activities; therefore, the implications are limited by how well the grants are written.

At the agency level, there are a number of unanswered questions:

- what is advocacy?
- how do we define it?
- how do partners define it?
- are we really funding advocacy work?
- how do we measure advocacy effects?

A small working group from the Global and Policy departments formed and met to grapple with some of these questions. The discussions will continue as we try to come to consensus on some acceptable dimensions of evaluating policy change efforts.

I hope to provoke wider agency interest in having more open dialogue as OA evolves in defining itself as an advocacy organization.

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APPENDIX A

LIST OF OXFAM AMERICA FUNDED PROJECTS SURVEYED

SOUTHERN AFRICA

1. Zim 253/99 Support for Constitutional Reform
2. Zim 252/99 Educating Communities on Gender, Law and Rights in the Framework of the Constitutional Reform Process
3. Moz 71/98 Mozambique Civic Education on Gender Aspects of the Land Law
4. Zim 255/99 National Women's Convention and Media Campaign in Support of Constitutional Reform
5. Zim 259/00 Support for Ongoing Work of the Women's Coalition
6. Zim 260/00 Women's Participation in Monitoring Parliamentary Elections
7. Zim 259/99 Documentary on Gender Mainstreaming in Constitutional Reform
8. Moz 84/99 Coalition Building for Participation in the Reform of Family Laws
9. Moz 83/99 Participation of Grassroots Women in the Reform of Family Laws
10. Moz 86/00 Community Radio-Maputo

SOUTHEAST ASIA

1. Cam 110/99-00 ADHOC Institutional and Program Support for Two Years
2. Cam 117/2000 Kirirom National Park Resource Management: a Sectoral Approach to Environmental Awareness and Education
3. Cam 118/2000-2001 Kirirom National Park Resource Management: a Sectoral Approach to Environmental Awareness and Education Extension
4. Cam 105/99 Support for the NGO Forum
5. Sea 45/00 Strengthening East-SE Asia Networks for Sustainable River Development on the Occasion of the World Commission on Dams' Regional Consultation in Vietnam
6. Cam 112/99 CEPA's Advocacy Skills Building
7. Cam 109/99 Support to USG's Community Organizing and Network/Advocacy Program for 1999
8. Cam 107/99 Program Support for the Legal Aid of Cambodia in Defending People's Land Cases
9. Mkg 48/00 Yali Falls Dam Research and Community Fisheries Planning in Ratanakiri Province
10. GB-Cam -1/0 Oxfam America/Oxfam Great Britain support of Global Witness's program on Natural Resources, Conflict and Resolution Campaign in Cambodia

CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA

1. Pru/95-00-01 Defense and Sustainable use of Natural Resources in Communities affected by mining activity
2. Pru/43-00 Consolidation and Defense of the Lower Urubamba Machiguenga Territory
3. Gua/101-99 Legal Services for the Mayan Community
4. Els/67-00/01 Advocacy for the Defense and Protection of Consumer Rights of the Users of Basic Health Services
5. Els/104-99 Advocacy for Public Policies for Rural Development and Strategic Planning for the 2000-2003 period
6. Pru/100-00 Development of Local Communities' Capacity for the Environmental Management of Mining
7. Bol/91-00 Securing Chiquitano Indigenous Territory
8. Pru/70/99 Economic Self-dependence and Cultural Affirmation
9. Bol/21-00-01 Strengthening the Ayllus through the exercise of Indigenous Rights
10. Ecu/71-99 Technical and Legal Assistance for Lobbying on Environmental Contamination

Appendix B

SURVEY QUESTIONS AND CRITERION USED

Questions	Categories and Corresponding Criterion
1. Who are the direct change targets?	Institutions (I) – includes multinational, national, regional, local and indigenous government and non-government organizations.
	Civil society (CS) – includes non-formally organized community of individuals.
2. What are the key strategies?	Information dissemination (ID) – as stated through various mediums (audio, print, etc.) to change targets.
	Training (T) – includes capacity building, improving practice, leadership roles through practice.
	Education (ED) – explicitly stated with purpose to advise or give information for particular purpose.
	Lobby (L) – explicitly stated with purpose to directly advocate or lobby change targets.
	Research (R) – collection of information for analysis or baseline surveys.
	Policy documentation (PD) – explicitly stated purpose to draft alternative laws, policies, briefings or plans.
	Group formation (GF) – creation of a new formal entity.
	Networking (NT) – multi-agency linkages, information sharing and collaborative work.
	Dialogue (D) – intra-agency dialogue.
	Monitoring (MT) – tracking change in actions of change targets.
3. What are the expected outcomes?	Media attention (M) – attention from various mediums.
	Knowledge resources (KR) – interactions that increase awareness, knowledge and experience resulting from a greater flow of information. This Includes written documentation of policy papers, briefings, etc...as well as knowledge of peoples values, interests, etc...
	Identity resources (IR) – interactions that increase the sense of belonging through a shared understanding and voice. For example, shared voice on control over rights and resources.
	Consolidated resources (CR) – interactions that aggregate resources such as through stronger networks, connections and institutions. This can result in the gain of stronger leadership.
	Political space (PS)- room gained and acknowledged in the public political and legal sphere for greater open dialogue.
	Policy change (PC) – direct or indirect change in official policy to allow for more inclusive recognition of rights, including the acceptance of community resource plans.

4. Does the project include a well-developed M & E system?	Yes (Y)- includes a framework with some explicit indicators or benchmarks.
	No (N) – general discussion of monitoring and evaluation only.