M&E TOOLS FOR ADVOCACY WORK

Many different tools and methodologies can be used to support advocacy work. Some are designed specifically for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) purposes. Others are designed to support the planning and management of advocacy interventions, but can be used or adapted for M&E purposes. CSOs often employ several different tools and methodologies over the course of an advocacy intervention.

Many different tools and methodologies can be used to support advocacy work. Some are designed specifically for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) purposes. Others are designed to support the planning and management of advocacy interventions, but can also be used or adapted for M&E purposes. Most of these tools and methodologies are not complicated, and require no specialist knowledge.

CSOs – either individually or jointly – often employ several different tools and methodologies over the course of an advocacy intervention. The best way for CSOs to select tools or methodologies is to examine the available options, select the ones that best suit their purposes, and then adapt them to suit their own particular context. Selection can depend on many factors, including:

- the advocacy activities carried out;
- what questions about the advocacy intervention need to be answered;
- how the information will be used;
- the amount of resources required; and
- the expertise available.

In addition, sometimes external stakeholders such as funders or governments may insist on particular tools or methodologies as a condition of support.

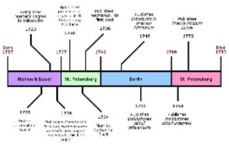
The remainder of this paper covers a selection of different tools and methodologies commonly used in advocacy work. Many of the tools and methodologies overlap to some degree or other, and they are sometimes known by different names.

Although they have been grouped together for convenience, many are multi-purpose. For example, observation checklists may be used during lobbying meetings. However, they can also be used when meeting CSOs to try and coordinate advocacy work around an issue.

M&E tools used in advocacy work

Many tools and methodologies used in advocacy work are just electronic or manual **logs**, with space to record what has been done in an advocacy intervention, what changes have resulted, and what has changed in the surrounding environment. Logs can capture information on predicted objectives, indicators, questions or progress markers. However, advocacy work often has unexpected results, and logs are usually designed to capture these as well.

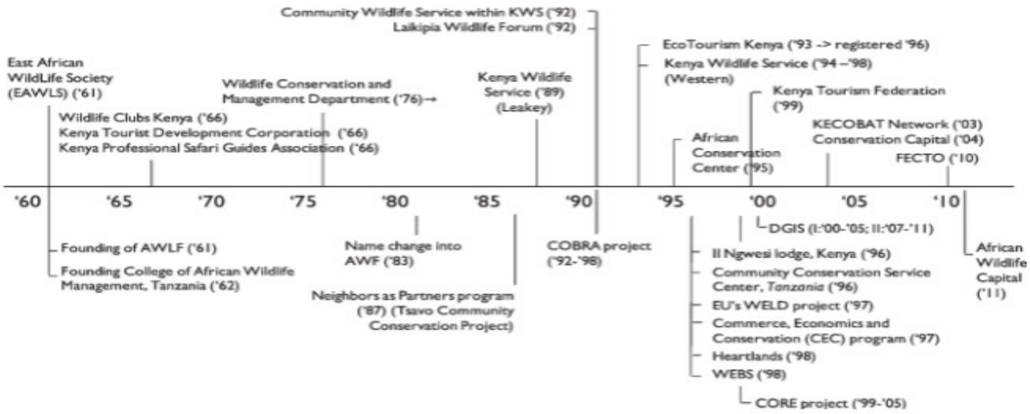
Journals and diaries	Journals and diaries are designed to store information chronologically (according to time). They can be developed and updated centrally within an advocacy intervention. Or in larger interventions, they can be maintained by staff at different levels.
Impact logs, logbooks and scrapbooks	A scrapbook, logbook or impact log is a large, blank book or an electronic file or folder, where small pieces of information can be collected as an advocacy intervention progresses. They are similar to journals, but provide more scope for attaching pictures, media coverage, notes following discussions, key quotes, gossip, informal discussions, etc. They may be kept centrally, or allocated to different team members. Like diaries, they can help advocates look back at activities and changes over time.
Quotes or correspondence logs	A quotes log is a simple electronic or physical log, used to collect quotes from different stakeholders within an advocacy intervention. Pages or files might be divided into different headings, such as 'the quote', who made it, when, and on what occasion. They are often used to collect quotes or verbal feedback from the targets of advocacy work. However, they can also be used to collect quotes from allies or partners.
Meeting documentation forms	Meeting documentation forms are physical or electronic forms that are used to record what happened at a meeting. They help to ensure that advocates are prepared for meetings, and that notes taken during or after the meetings are properly structured. Meeting documentation forms are often divided into columns covering the date and venue of a meeting, the participants, the objectives of the meeting, key decisions made, key quotes or comments, impressions of how the meeting was conducted, follow-up actions required, or any other kind of information considered useful.



Timelines are used in many advocacy interventions. Timelines are large sheets of paper, or electronic files, with a calendar or timeline ruled across the page (or up and down). The idea is that an advocacy intervention can chart in one place what it has done on an issue, what has changed (both positive and negative), what others have done, and what has changed in the external environment in order of when things were done, or when changes were observed. Important historical events from before an advocacy intervention, or key future events, might also be included.

Timelines are often developed in workshops, sometimes bringing together a mix of internal and external stakeholders. They provide an opportunity to document and synthesise institutional knowledge, often capturing information on the history of an intervention that is only known to those who were directly involved. They help people look for visual patterns over time between advocacy activities, and changes. They can also be used to identify influences that are enhancing or constraining the achievement of advocacy outcomes.

Timelines can be developed at a point in time (for example, during a review or an evaluation) or they can be conducted as part of ongoing monitoring with an advocacy team. As well as being useful for continuous management of advocacy interventions, they can also be powerful communication mechanisms that enable discussion both within an advocacy team, and outside as well.



Many **basic tools of data collection**, such as interviews, focus group discussions and observation, are common to most social development interventions. These tools are used for management purposes in many advocacy interventions, whether or not they are considered to be M&E tools. However, they all generate useful data that can be analysed for M&E purposes. Most of the tools in this section are described in detail in other M&E Universe papers.

Interviews	Interviews are routinely carried out with different stakeholders during advocacy interventions. They can be carried out individually or with groups. They may be carried out with key informants, members of the public who are being targeted with advocacy messages, key decision-makers, or any other relevant stakeholder.
Focus group discussions	Focus group discussions are facilitated discussions, held with a small group of people who have specialist knowledge or interest in a particular topic. They are used to find out the perceptions and attitudes of a defined group of people. In advocacy work they are particularly useful for looking at changes in knowledge, attitudes, practices and behaviour amongst targeted populations.
Observation	Observation is one of the most basic data collection methods. It involves 'seeing' things, and then recording and analysing what is seen. All advocates engage in observation during advocacy interventions. When used for M&E purposes, observations, thoughts and analyses are recorded, shared and discussed. Sometimes, observation checklists are developed before meetings or events to identify what to look for. This can be important for understanding the level of engagement of key advocacy audiences in an issue. For example, checklists could contain questions such as when did a Member of Parliament looked bored in a meeting, when did they look engaged, and what questions did they ask?
Case studies	Case studies or stories of change are used to present in-depth coverage of an issue. They may be focused on any aspect of an advocacy intervention. They are sometimes used to support advocacy messaging, but can also be used for M&E as well – demonstrating what has been done or what has changed as a result. However, case studies used for M&E purposes are often selected and generated differently from those used primarily for communications purposes.

Sensemaking exercises

Sensemaking is a process in which people jointly make sense of information, and develop a shared understanding. When used for M&E purposes, sensemaking can draw on information acquired through both formal and informal M&E processes. Sensemaking is routinely applied in most advocacy interventions to review information, and to inform decision-making. Sensemaking mechanisms include reviews, team meetings, workshops, conferences, retreats, field visits and e-meetings. Sensemaking events may take place on a regular basis. However, within advocacy interventions they might also take place at specific times, such as after a critical event (sometimes known as after action reviews).

Activity recording sheets

Activity recording sheets are routinely used to plan activities, and record whether those activities actually took place. They help ensure that all activities relating to an advocacy intervention are recorded. They are probably the most basic kind of M&E tool.

Many tools used in advocacy interventions have been specifically designed to help keep track of **policy outcomes**. These can be used for M&E purposes. They can show what has been done, or what has changed over time.

Policy or legislative tracking forms

Policy or legislative tracking forms are designed to track the progress of legal policies or bills until they have been accepted or rejected. They are simple forms designed to hold key information, such as who is sponsoring or supporting a policy or bill, who is against, the stage of legislation, dates and records of votes, etc. Sometimes, they also include space to record measures taken by an advocacy intervention to influence the process. This can be particularly useful if the advocacy intervention is working across a range of different contexts. Policy tracking forms can be used at the start of an advocacy intervention to provide a baseline of the legislative context, and later to show any shifts over the lifetime of the intervention.

Bellwether methodology

The Bellwether methodology is designed to find out how an issue or proposal is positioned, how people are thinking and talking about it, and how likely it is to be acted on. It involves structured interviews with influential people who track a broad range of policy issues as part of their jobs or positions. These 'Bellwethers' could include policymakers, media actors, funders, researchers/think tanks, the business community, trade associations, or advocates. Interviews cover issues such as the political will behind a policy, the likelihood of change, and whether advocacy messages have broken through (Coffman and Reed 2017).

Champion tracking

Policy champions can facilitate the uptake of a policy. Tracking forms can be used to record interactions with them, and what actions they have taken in support of (or against) an issue. Some CSOs also maintain records on champions' jobs, positions, perspectives and interests.

Policymaker rating

This is a method for assessing political will or support for a particular advocacy issue among a defined group of policymakers (e.g., a legislature or council). The method utilises advocates' inside knowledge about policymakers' stances on policy issues. Advocates rate policymakers of interest on their level of support for an issue, and their level of influence. They also state how confident they are that these ratings are accurate. Information can be captured on simple forms, and used to inform decision-making.

Textual analysis and preference attainment

Textual analysis can be carried out on policy documents, speeches, media articles, strategies or plans. It is designed to show whether advocacy messages have been incorporated. When carried out on final laws or legislation it can indicate whether proposed changes or amendments have made their way into final decision texts. Preference attainment is a narrower methodology that involves examining final policy outcomes, and judging how far they reflect different actors' ideal positions (Jones 2011).

Policy implementation tracking

There are many ways of tracking policy implementation. This kind of work is often conducted by multiple groups or communities with interest in an issue. Policy implementation tracking forms are not standardised because they depend to a large extent on the type and nature of the policy.

Some tools and methodologies can be used to access the views of many different stakeholders at once, and are therefore particularly useful for **public campaigning**. They can be applied before an advocacy intervention to help design and plan it. Or they can be applied (or repeated) during or after an advocacy intervention, and used for M&E purposes.

Surveys and questionnaires

Surveys and questionnaires can be used in many different circumstances. They are good at testing how large numbers of people respond to advocacy messages. If carried out at different times, surveys and questionnaires can help establish what is changing because of an advocacy intervention. Surveys may be large, costly exercises, with clear rules around sampling, data collection and analysis.

Straw polls

Straw polls are usually lighter-touch exercises, designed to find out public opinion on an issue. They could be conducted face-to-face on street corners or in villages, or they could be administered online through social media. They would not normally be expected to conform to the same strict rules as properly conducted surveys, and are designed more to get a sense of what people know or feel.

Exposure analysis Exposure analysis is a particular kind of survey that looks at the degree to which a target audience has encountered an advocacy campaign. It might examine how many times they have been exposed, whether they paid attention, and what they did as a result. An exposure survey can be backed up by statistics on access to media messages to form an overall picture of whether or not advocacy messages are effective.

Rolling sample surveys In rolling sample surveys, a random selection of people in a target audience are questioned at regular intervals. This enables advocates to know what people think at any one time. Critically, it also enables them to see how views are changing over time.

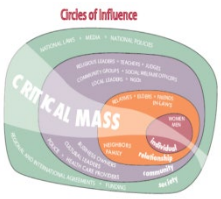
Some tools are designed to assess how advocacy issues are being covered in the **media**. These include media tracking forms, media content analysis and media analytics.

Media tracking forms Media tracking forms are electronic or manual forms, used to record how particular advocacy issues or messages are covered in the media, including printed, audio-visual and electronic media. Information recorded can range from the simple (such as how often a message was covered, or what type of media was used) to more nuanced information, such as the tone of newspaper articles or radio interviews.

Media content analysis Media content analysis consists of qualitative analysis of how the media cover and frame advocacy issues, or opinions in social media forums. It can be used to see how opinions have shifted in target groups. It can also be used to see how much, or how, an organisation or its advocacy messages are referenced or quoted.

Media framing analysis Framing analysis is a more specific form of media content analysis which looks at how issues are presented or discussed by examining key themes, arguments and descriptions (Jones 2011). Analyses can then be compared to the language and messaging of an advocacy intervention to see whether or not it is influencing media or public debates.

Media analytics Many quantitative and qualitative indicators can be generated quickly and cheaply through online analytics. These include social media hits or likes, downloads of resources, comments left, retweets, profiles, numbers of supporters joining online campaigns, etc.



Social norms include the knowledge, attitudes, values and behaviours that compose the structure of culture and society (ORS 2007). Some advocacy outcomes can be measured quite easily. However, assessing change around **social norms** is rarely straightforward. If a tool or methodology is used at the start of an advocacy intervention to help better understand social norms and values then the exercise can be repeated at a later date to understand what has changed, and what to do next. In larger advocacy interventions, different organisations usually carry out this kind of work jointly, rather than individually.

KAPB survey A KAP survey can be conducted to collect information on what is known about an issue (knowledge), what is thought about it (attitudes) and what is done about it (practice). Some KAP surveys add a 'B' for behaviour or beliefs. KAPB surveys can be used for many purposes, one of which is to assess changes in knowledge, attitudes, practices or behaviours/beliefs over time.

Power analysis A power analysis is an exploration of the multiple power dimensions that affect a given situation. Having a more complete understanding of power relations around an issue helps advocates identify appropriate strategies and entry points. If a power analysis is repeated during or after an advocacy intervention, it can show how power relationships are changing over time.

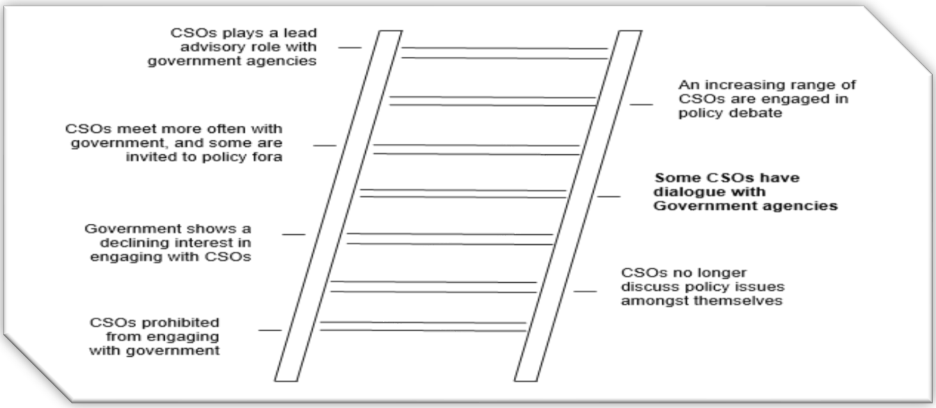
Systems mapping System mapping involves the visual mapping of a system. This helps to identify the parts and relationships in a system that an intervention seeks to change (and how), and to identify ways of capturing whether those changes have occurred. System maps are sometimes like non-linear theories of change (Coffman and Reed 2017).

Political Economy Analysis (PEA) Political economy analysis (PEA) seeks to understand existing political and economic processes in society. It focuses on the incentives, relationships, distribution and contest of power between different groups and individuals. It is designed to contribute to the design and planning of development interventions. Repeated (or refreshed) PEAs can also show how things are changing, and might help an organisation understand its contribution to those changes.

Outcome Mapping Outcome Mapping can be used to support advocacy work in many ways. One way is to map out desired behavioural changes in key institutions which an advocacy intervention seeks to influence. These changes can then be used to help assess how relationships are changing over time. Outcome Mapping involves the development of a series of progress markers, representing changes that an advocacy intervention would expect to see, like to see or love to see as a result of its work. These progress markers can help people think about what information to gather in journals and impact logs. Outcome Mapping usually involves regular reviews of progress markers throughout an advocacy intervention.

Some **advocacy outcomes** are best understood through tools and methods specifically designed for those purposes. Many of these are covered elsewhere in the M&E Universe, and can be accessed through the links at the end of this paper.

- Changes in the capacity of organisations to carry out advocacy work can be assessed in a number of different ways, including organisational assessment tools, scorecards and Outcome Mapping. This is covered in the paper on M&E of capacity development.
- Strengthened alliances, or changes in cooperation and collaboration between different groups in support of advocacy issues, can be assessed through social network analysis. This is covered in the paper on M&E of networking.
- Ladders of change are participatory tools, sometimes used to assess changes in the 'democratic space' in which CSOs can engage with those in power. A ladder of change is a simple graphic that enables a group of people to jointly articulate the current position, and then define different steps up and down the ladder to show how things might get better or worse over time. The exercise can then be repeated at regular intervals. An example is shown in the box below, with the current situation designated in bold letters.



A number of tools and methodologies can be used to help organisations assess their **contribution to advocacy outcomes**. Most of these were not specifically designed for advocacy work, although they were designed to be used in complex situations. These methodologies may require a level of specialist knowledge, although they are not usually difficult to learn.

Contribution analysis, process tracing and contribution tracing

Contribution analysis is probably the most common methodology used by CSOs to assess contribution towards advocacy outcomes. It involves developing a theory of change for how an advocacy intervention believes it has influenced change, looking for evidence at each level of the theory, and then examining alternative hypotheses (theories) of how the change might have come about. Process tracing and contribution tracing work in a similar way. Process tracing involves a series of formal tests to examine evidence, whereas contribution tracing uses mathematical probability techniques.

General elimination methodology and episode studies

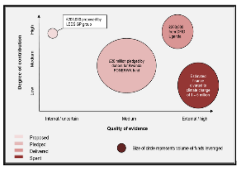
Both these methods are similar to the approaches described above, but are slightly less structured, providing more scope for using different approaches. They are used to gather evidence to eliminate alternative or rival explanations for changes until the most compelling explanation remains. Episode studies have often been associated with examining the role that research played in influencing a policy.

Contribution ranking

In contribution ranking, different stakeholders are asked to rate or rank how they feel different organisations or initiatives contributed to an advocacy outcome or set of outcomes, and how significant the contribution was. Stakeholders could be internal to an advocacy intervention, external, or a mixture of both.

Survey with placebo

Described on the Better Evaluation website, researchers at the Brookings Institution's Brown Center on Education Policy used a form of contribution ranking to evaluate the influence of different advocacy interventions on a specific policy outcome. However, a non-existent advocacy group was also included. This allowed the researchers to compare the ratings for different organisations against the rating for the 'placebo'. This allowed for the elimination of some of the potential biases (Coffman 2014).



Finally, a variety of methodologies can be used to monitor and evaluate across a **portfolio** of advocacy interventions, or a group of changes. Some of these are described below.

Most Significant Change (MSC)	MSC is a form of participatory M&E that involves the collection, selection and verification of stories of change, developed by programme or project staff and/or beneficiaries. It seeks to engage participants in a process of discussing, analysing and recording change. MSC can be used to record and analyse multiple different changes across an advocacy intervention, or across a set of different interventions.
Outcome harvesting	Outcome harvesting is also an M&E methodology used to identify, describe, verify and analyse multiple outcomes. It involves collecting and recording multiple changes (the outcomes), grouping the changes into different areas or domains, and then working backwards to assess whether and/or how an organisation, programme or project contributed to those changes. It is therefore very appropriate for advocacy interventions.
Qualitative Comparative Assessment (QCA)	QCA is a methodology that enables the analysis of multiple cases in complex situations, and helps explain why change happens. QCA could be used across multiple advocacy interventions to help explore why change happened in some cases but not in others, and to examine the key factors that contributed to those changes.
Impact grids	An impact grid is a tool that helps stakeholders involved in a development intervention to analyse multiple changes by mapping those changes onto a grid. A typical grid charts the extent of change alongside the degree of contribution of the intervention. Impact grids are one of many different graphical representations that could feasibly help organisations show how they have contributed to change in different ways across multiple interventions.

Further reading and resources

Further information on many of the tools and methodologies described in this paper can be found by clicking on the links below.

- Basic tools for data collection
- Surveys and questionnaires
- M&E of capacity strengthening
- M&E of network development
- Contribution analysis
- Process tracing
- Most significant change
- Outcome harvesting
- Qualitative comparative analysis
- Impact grids

Other tools can be found in the documents referred to in the references section, particular the papers by Coffman (2014), and by Coffman and Reed (2017). Three 'toolkits' containing different tools used in the M&E of advocacy are:

- A Handbook of Data Collection Tools. Prepared by Organisational Research Services on behalf of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Researched and written by Jane Reisman, Anne Gienapp and Sarah Stachowiak.
- Advocacy Toolkit. A guide to Influencing Decisions that Improve Children's Lives. UNICEF. 2010.
- Monitoring and Evaluation for Advocacy and Influencing: Guidance document. CARE.

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