Advocacy for building an enabling environment for evaluation

The enabling environment for evaluation is often a challenge within countries, due to insufficient broad political support, lack of allocated funds for national evaluation capacity development and/or too few incentives for using evaluation information. One way to build an enabling environment for evaluation at the national level is to ensure robust equity and gender sensitive national evaluation policies and systems are in place, which are adequately resourced and implemented. However, there is a no 'best' model of a national evaluation policy, as they must be shaped according to the national context.

Range of National Evaluation Policies[1]
There is a broad range of national evaluation policy, from formalized and codified (Mexico, the Netherlands, the UK, Ireland) to looser evaluation arrangements (Italy, Sweden and Germany) to none whatsoever. In other cases, polices have been formulated, but not implemented due to changes in government or other conditions in the country (Sri Lanka). Some National Evaluation Policies require so many evaluations that they cannot be read and used at the same pace that they are being produced. Thus the central purpose of requiring evaluation is lost. The pattern seems to be that countries formulate a policy and then revise it in response to context as a work in progress. In many cases countries do not have an official, legislated evaluation policy, but evaluation is conducted in many if not all of the government ministries (Israel, Australia, Malawi) as a matter of course.

It is important to recognize that establishing an enabling environment for evaluation is as much a political exercise as an issue of developing a technical capability.[2] Using advocacy in a well-coordinated and strategic way is a potential way forward for CSOs, VOPEs and other stakeholders to influence decision-makers to build an enabling environment for evaluation. Strategic advocacy can influence policy-makers to make use of evaluation and evaluative thinking when making laws and regulations, distributing resources, and making other decisions that affect peoples' lives. However, advocacy is not only about creation or reform of policies, but also about effective implementation and enforcement of policies.[3]

There are many different ways to conceptualize advocacy. For the purpose of this toolkit, **advocacy can be understood as a deliberate process, based on demonstrated evidence, to directly and indirectly influence decision-makers, stakeholders and relevant audiences to support and implement actions that contribute to the fulfillment of human rights.**[4]

In other words, advocacy represents a set of strategic organized activities and actions that at its most vibrant will influence the policies, practices and decisions of others. Advocacy frequently involves building **constituencies** – groups of people and organizations who support a particular policy viewpoint. Since advocacy usually occurs in the public domain, advocates must be prepared to consider the views of many people, and understand how decisions are made in a particular context.[5]

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[1] Rosenstein B., (2013). *Mapping the status of National Evaluation Policies*. Parliamentarians Forum on Development Evaluation, EvalPartners.

[2] UNEG Task Force on National Evaluation Capacity Development. (2012). *National Evaluation Capacity Development: Practical tips on how to strengthen National Evaluation Systems.*

[3] Sprechmann S., Pelton E., (2001). *Advocacy Tools and Guidelines Promoting Policy Change*. CARE.

[4] UNICEF. (2010). *Advocacy Toolkit: A guide to influencing decisions that improve children's lives*.

[5] Sprechmann, S., Pelton, E., (2001). *Advocacy Tools and Guidelines Promoting Policy Change*. CARE.

Effective advocacy for building an enabling environment for evaluation has the following characteristics:[6]
- Clearly articulates the problem.
- Offers positive and credible alternatives.
- Is directed at those with the power to make changes.
- Has clear and measurable plans.
- Can be monitored and evaluated.
- Is a long term process, not a one off event or output.
- Is a means to achieve a goal, not an end in itself.
- Follows through to ensure policy changes lead to improvements in practice.
- Is based on a belief that change is possible – and inspires others to feel the same.

In practice, there are several terms used interchangeably to describe advocacy work: upstream engagement; lobbying; public relations; policy development; awareness raising; networking; empowerment; mobilization; campaigning; media work; and, communications can all be terms for advocacy. Rather, all these are techniques that are part of advocacy.

With this introduction, the toolkit ahead hopes to create a common understanding of advocacy and its tools among CSOs, VOPEs and other stakeholders in building an enabling environment for evaluation. In doing so, the toolkit takes into account the specific needs of the VOPEs in advocating for a culture of evaluation.

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[6] Adapted from Womankind. (2011). *Women's Rights Advocacy Toolkit.*