

Tracking progress in advocating for an enabling environment for evaluation

Key messages:

- Monitoring and evaluation of advocacy can shape and define its strategy to ensure maximum results. This requires embedding evaluation and evaluative thinking into strategic advocacy decision-making.
- However, there may be challenges in monitoring and evaluating advocacy given long timeframes, complexity of advocacy tactics used, attribution, unpredictability and adjustments in strategy and outcomes as the advocacy process unfolds.
- This Toolkit suggests five questions for planning advocacy monitoring and evaluation:
 - M&E Question 1: Who are the monitoring and evaluation users?
 - M&E Question 2: How will monitoring and evaluation be used?
 - M&E Question 3: What evaluation design should be used?
 - M&E Question 4: What should be measured?
 - M&E Question 5: What data collection tools should be used?
- This section should be read together with UNICEF M&E Companion to the Advocacy Toolkit, which contains an explanation of the monitoring and evaluation designs and the data collection tools for measuring advocacy outputs, outcomes and impacts. The M&E companion is available at: http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/Advocacy_Toolkit_Companion.pdf

Challenges in monitoring and evaluating advocacy

Within advocacy work there are a number of recognized challenges in monitoring and evaluating policy influencing initiatives that can add complications.¹

Long timeframe. Advocacy work can take several years before the objective of building an enabling environment for evaluation is reached. Normally donor project timeframes are much shorter than the time it takes to complete an advocacy campaign and observe the impact of policy changes. This makes it necessary to identify interim outcomes. Due to the long timeframe of some advocacy work, resources may not always be available to continue the work.

Complexity. Advocacy for building an enabling environment for evaluation has many different components from media and lobbying work to monitoring the implementation and the impact of evaluation policies.

Attribution. Advocacy for building an enabling environment for evaluation cannot be done alone but requires contributions from multiple actors. Policy change is also affected by other external events. As a result, it is usually impossible to identify causality, i.e. to prove that a particular actor or activity had a direct effect. One solution to this challenge is to focus on *contribution* rather than attribution. In other words, to focus the analysis on identifying likely influences and assessing how much influence the campaign appears to have had. (Patton, 2008)

¹ Adapted from Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance. (2010). *Monitoring & Evaluation of Advocacy Campaigns, Literature Review*.

Unpredictability. Because of the role of external forces, advocates may do everything right in a campaign and still not achieve the goal. Advocacy is not linear and there may be back-tracking or suspension of a campaign when it is overtaken by other events. Triumphs are not written in stone and may be reversed.

Changing strategies and objectives. Advocacy strategies must adjust to current events and be open to compromise. As a result, the advocacy interim outcomes may change over time, so that at the time of the evaluation the outcomes no longer correspond to the original stated ones.

Five questions for planning advocacy monitoring and evaluation

Good planning, monitoring and evaluation are essential for effective advocacy and accountability, and to make sure lessons are learned to improve any future advocacy. However, advocacy is not straightforward as it aims to influence complex social and political environments in order to build a culture of evaluation. As a result, there is no specific way of measuring progress and impact in advocacy. Different methodologies have been developed and applied by different organisations, coalitions and networks.

KEEP IN MIND

For advocacy, performance monitoring and formative evaluation are more prevalent than impact evaluation. Impact evaluation is less common because most advocacy evaluation focuses on whether advocacy strategies achieved their goals – changing the national evaluation system, increasing funding for an evaluation policy, changing an evaluation policy – rather than extending it to impacts such as whether people are better off as a result of the advocacy effort. But impact evaluation is an important tool. More attention is needed on monitoring and evaluating what happens after an advocacy goal is achieved, focusing on the implementation and sustainability of that goal and benefits for people.

This Toolkit suggests five essential questions for all monitoring and evaluation planning:

M&E Question 1: Who are the monitoring and evaluation users?

M&E Question 2: How will monitoring and evaluation be used?

M&E Question 3: What evaluation design should be used?

M&E Question 4: What should be measured?

M&E Question 5: What data collection tools should be used?

Each of these questions is explained in detail in UNICEF M&E Companion to the Advocacy Toolkit. The table below summarizes possible answers to these questions.

Summary of M&E questions and options

M&E Question	Options			
1. Who are the monitoring and evaluation users?	CSOs and VOPEs and their partners. External donors. Allies – government bodies, UN agencies, M&E experts, academia. Other external users – media.			
2. How will monitoring and evaluation be used?	Accountability, transparency. Informing decision-making. National and global learning.			
3. What design should be used?	For accountability	For informing decision-making	For national and global learning	
	Single- or multiple-case studies. General elimination method. Contribution analysis. Participatory performance story. Reporting. Cost-benefit analysis. Performance monitoring.	Developmental evaluation. Real-time evaluation/rapid assessment.	Success (or failure) case studies.	
4. What should be measured?	Activities	Interim outcomes	Advocacy goals	Impacts
	Digital outreach. Earned media. Media partnerships. Coalition building. Organizing rallies/marches. Voter education. Briefings. Polling. Pilot projects. Policy analysis. Policy development. Policymaker education. Relationship building. Litigation. Lobbying.	Organizational advocacy. Capacity. Partnerships. New advocates. New champions. Organizational or issue. Visibility. Awareness. Salience. Attitudes or beliefs. Public will. Political will. Constituency growth. Media coverage. Issue reframing.	Policy development. Placement on the policy agenda. Policy adoption. Policy blocking. Policy implementation. M&E Policy. Policy maintenance. New donors. More or diversified Funding.	Improved services and systems. Positive social and physical conditions.

5. What data collection tools should be used? (Each of these tools are elaborated in the UNICEF M&E Companion to the Advocacy Toolkit)	Pre-intervention assessment and mapping	Ongoing monitoring of advocacy activities	Interim effects for advocacy audiences	Policy or system change results
	Advocacy capacity assessment. Network mapping (before advocacy). System mapping (before advocacy).	Media tracking. Media scorecards. Critical incident. Timelines. Intense period debriefs. 360-degree critical incident debriefs.	Research panels. Crowdsourcing. Snapshot surveys. Intercept interviews. Bellwether methodology. Policy-maker ratings, Champion tracking. ECCO analysis. Network mapping (during/after advocacy).	Policy tracking, System mapping (after advocacy),

Here it is also useful to consider whether evaluation of your advocacy work will be undertaken internally or externally. Depending on your context, the evaluation could be peer-led, or conducted by another VOPE, for instance.

To revisit the big picture of your advocacy campaign, it might be useful to evaluate your advocacy effort each year or at the end of your prescribed decision-making cycle (e.g., the end of the parliamentary session or fiscal year). Mid-year reviews can be undertaken to determine the changes in the external and internal advocacy environment such as changes in the political scenario, changes in national policies and priorities, new emerging partnerships, changes in donor funding, increase in staff capacity to advocate etc. New insights, lessons and experiences obtained during the first half of the advocacy cycle should be used to reformulate advocacy interim outcomes and tactics.

In addition, reporting out and reflecting on what is learned from monitoring and evaluation is an essential part of the advocacy process. Reflection based on both data and experience is a critical discipline for advocacy practitioners. Regular strategy meetings during which monitoring and evaluation data are discussed are one way of fostering reflection. Another is through write-ups that chronicle good practices, lessons learned, innovations and stories from the field (see [Section 7](#) on *how put together such experiences*). Open-minded and adaptable organizations will also identify what could have worked better, and see critique as a learning method.