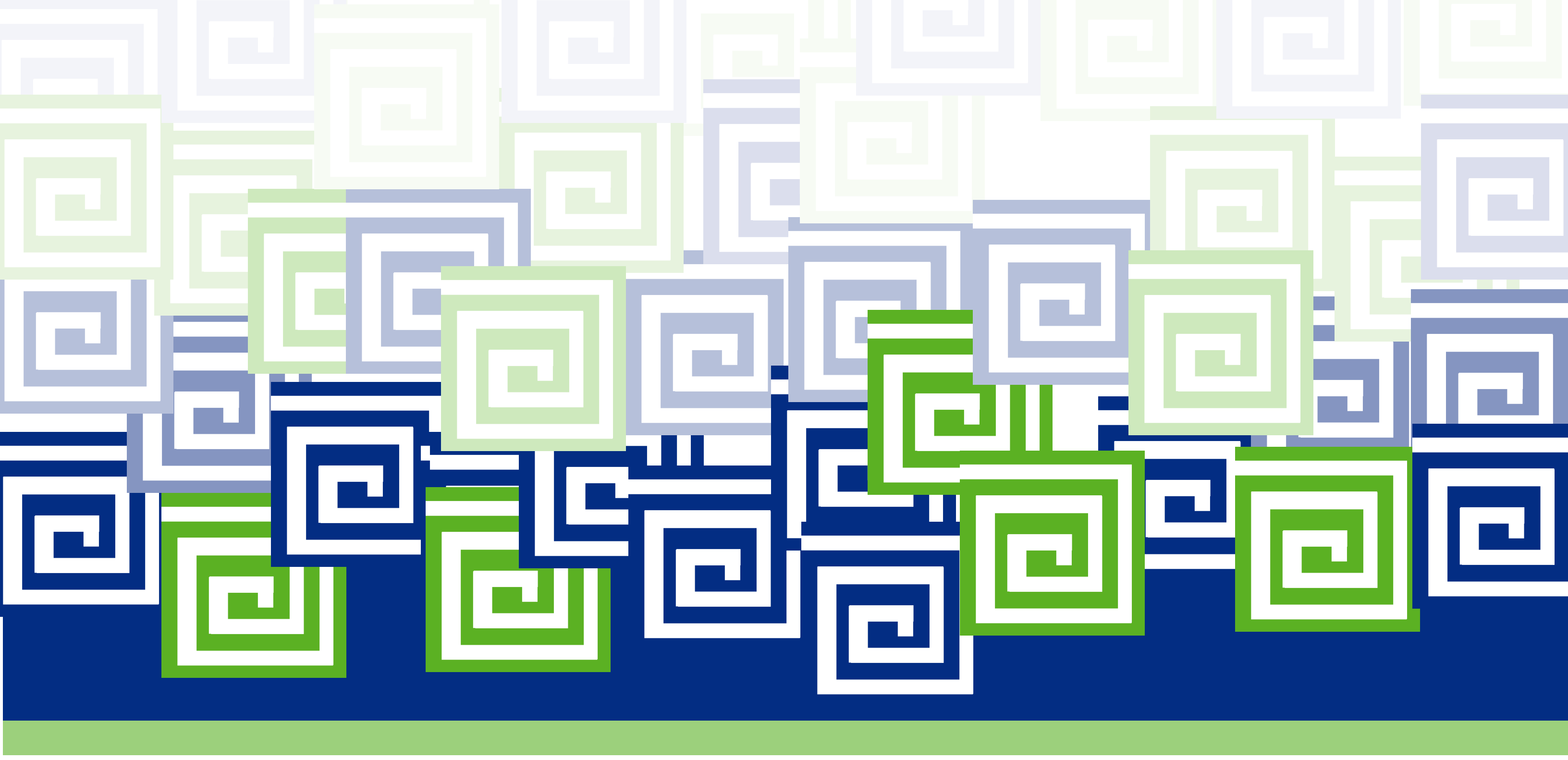

Action Aid | Institute for Development Studies-Participation Group | Just Associates

MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN

Advocacy and Citizen Participation

Making Change Happen:

Advocacy and Citizen Participation

history

In November 2001, forty-nine people engaged in advocacy and citizen participation efforts in countries of Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, North America and Europe came together for a meeting on *Making Change Happen: Advocacy & Citizen Participation.* Co-sponsored by ActionAid-USA, the Asia Foundation, the Participation Group at the Institute of Development Studies, and Just Associates, the purpose of the meeting was twofold:

- Bring together activists, researchers, trainers and other practitioners to discuss the challenges and successes of citizen-centered advocacy in different country contexts and the world's dramatically changing political environment;
- Produce a core set of lessons and recommendations to help donors and international NGOs refine their support strategies for training and action for participatory advocacy.

Making Change Happen was organized to explore an expanded view of advocacy and citizen participation. Organizers and participants were concerned about a tendency to view these activities as technical projects, devoid of power and politics. In reality, advocacy and civic participation involve a complex interaction of power and resistance, as those working for change in different contexts face different levels of openness and pluralism, risk and corruption. The workshop brought together innovative activists and thinkers to *reclaim* advocacy and citizen participation as deep and ongoing processes of organizing, consciousness raising, political empowerment and social transformation to benefit the poor and marginalized.

The workshop featured structured, participatory analysis and reflection in small groups and in plenary sessions, roundtable discussion of critical issues and concepts, and case study presentations on advocacy training and action strategies geared to engaging citizens in political change. Over a period of three days, participants shared experiences, reflected on lessons learned, addressed concerns arising from their work, and expressed their hopes in planning new directions toward a common goal of making change happen.

key themes

This report is structured around the key themes addressed during *Making Change Happen*:

Engagement in advocacy

When is a policy space strategic and when is it just window dressing?

Issue-based struggle or struggle-based issue

Linking social transformation and policy advocacy

Who's who in advocacy

Identity, representation and legitimacy

How to assess success

Evaluation for learning

Engagement in advocacy...

When is a policy space strategic and when is it just window dressing?

Engagement in Advocacy

There was a time when most advocacy was about trying to gain access to or change closed decisionmaking spaces. Over the last decade, many of these spaces have begun to open to participation, with institutions such as the World Bank even making civil society participation a conditionality in some cases. With so many apparent opportunities for advocacy, activists must be selective in choosing where and when to engage with different institutions and spaces. The experience of many advocates has shown that all too often, rather than a commitment to change, many institutions have opened spaces for participation as a way to silence their critics, offering little, if any opportunity for real influence on policies and decisionmaking processes. One participant described the phenomenon of the "policy mirage" where the rhetoric around opportunities for policy change attracts many people to engage, but at the end of the day much energy has been spent and the policy is still eternally postponed. Given their limited time and resources, advocates are developing criteria to help them determine when a space offers real opportunities for change and when it is simply a tool for public relations.

One important consideration is the **nature of participation** involved. Is the space only for consultation, without a clear idea of what will be done with the opinions and information that are gathered? Are there opportunities to influence decisions regarding the agenda, timing, and participating groups, or have such decisions already been made behind closed doors? In some cases, there may be advantages to participating in an established agenda in the hopes of incorporating different interests. At other times, energy may be better spent focusing on the development of an entirely different and independent agenda. Thus tension exists between what can be termed **"invited" and "created" spaces**. Effective participation in pre-determined, "invited" spaces will require not only clear demands for change, but demonstrating considerable clout as well. Simply participating to take advantage of an opportunity to engage with powerful institutions is insufficient without aiming to ultimately transform existing power relations. "Created" spaces that are opened by advocates themselves may require more resources to develop, but are likely to offer stronger negotiating positions for advocacy.

"…when you are marginalized and you don't participate and you have no openings; when somebody comes to you and tells you 'okay, you have the right to participate' … it is like a fish, it throws a hook to you and catches you up."

Daoud Tari Abkula presented the experiences of Pastoralists in their engagement with the process leading up to the Kenyan national Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) for the World Bank.

He described how many Pastoralists felt that not participating in the PRSP process would only further marginalize them, so a tremendous effort was mobilized to conduct a large consultative process to facilitate pastoral input to the document. Pastoralists felt they were successful in including a substantial share of their demands in the final PRSP. However, when the World Bank decided not to release the PRSP funds to Kenya, the promised benefits were not realized and the Pastoralists were highly frustrated and disillusioned with the process. This experience highlighted the importance for advocates to carefully weigh potential advantages and drawbacks to opportunities for engagement.

"Is your engagement for good things with a fundamentally illegitimate institution strengthening and legitimizing that institution?"

"The challenge of the new politics for our century is how to build strong states which are also strongly held accountable by citizens."

Another consideration in evaluating advocacy spaces and entry points is the **legitimacy of the institutions (and agendas)** to be engaged. Groups must decide if they will critically engage or not with institutions that they consider to be fundamentally illegitimate — whether undemocratic national governments or unaccountable international financial institutions. Some participants felt that it was necessary to limit engagement so as not to validate the activities of an illegitimate institution. Others felt that, in many cases, not engaging could do even more harm. Participants from Bangladesh and Pakistan emphasized the complex realities for advocacy, citing instances where authoritarian institutions or regimes that had taken over power illegitimately implemented initiatives that improved people's lives, such as better access to health care or (ironically) more open political space for people's participation. In cases such as these, resistance and engagement has proven to be a delicate balancing act.

At the heart of many questions around the legitimacy of institutions is tension regarding the role of the state. Should groups advocate to limit the powers of the state and replace state institutions and functions with alternatives? Or should civil society defend state functions aimed at protecting the common good? Part of this tension arises from situations where democracy and freedoms are juxtaposed with people's basic needs — as if there were a choice required between one or the other. Some participants felt that the goals of equity, justice and protection of freedoms do require an active and strong state. But somewhat paradoxically, a strong and active state cannot be achieved without a strong and active citizenry.

As for actual **criteria for engagement**, participants agreed that decisions to engage depend on the particular political and social context, as well as the nature of the institution being engaged. An analysis of available resources and opportunity costs is important to determine when, and under what circumstances, engagement is worthwhile, and when resources could be used more effectively elsewhere. Such an analysis requires some basic information, both about the external institution interested in engagement and the advocacy group's internal capacities and interests. For example, why is the agency or institution interested in engagement — what are its motives? What is the history of the institution and how is its philosophy reflected in its work? What is it seeking to gain from the engagement? What are the rules or terms that are to guide engagement? These sorts of questions are relevant, for example, to PRSP proceseses which keep such poverty related matters as structural adjustment and privatization of essential services off the agenda.

Groups preparing for engagement must also look internally to answer other questions. What are the negotiable and non-negotiable points of the agenda? If the engagement will involve representing a constituency, how will that constituency be included in the process? What are the organization's organic linkages to this constituency and what is its capacity to be accountable to those people? The rapid pace of policy advocacy often works against building participation, however it is crucial not to give in to such pressure at the expense of constituency interests.

"What are the opportunity costs of engagement? How much time and resources will the meetings, research, and other activities consume? To what alternative activities could those resources be dedicated? If more could be gained from other advocacy activities, then perhaps the policy opportunity has lost its value, and another strategy is more appropriate."

Issue-based struggle or struggle-based issue...

Linking social transformation and policy advocacy

After exploring these tensions and issues around spaces, questions were posed as examples of criteria to help groups determine whether or not engagement is worthwhile.

How will engagement:

- Change awareness of the people involved about core issues?
- Promote citizen decision-making?
- Build capacity for future engagement?
- Strengthen alliances for future engagement?
- Create a new model for the policy process?
- Contribute to strategic change and the transformation of power relations?

Issue-based struggle or struggle-based issue

As advocacy has become increasingly recognized as one of the current trends among development organizations, many groups emphasize the importance of examining the **history of advocacy** around the world, to keep a critical perspective on what some see as the latest development fad. While the present-day language of advocacy is often assumed to have been exported from countries in the North, in fact advocacy has a long history throughout the global South, though with different names in different places. In many countries it is known as a tradition of critical resistance. It is situated in the context of social movements, and as such is a struggle that is part of daily life — more than a profession — through which people seek to advance social transformation.

Understanding advocacy as a process of social transformation implies a recognition of historical change processes and a responsibility to root advocacy work, not in a short-term issue campaign, but as part of a much longer-term effort to shift existing paradigms. Such a distinction is key to how different groups approach advocacy. Many participants in this meeting felt that policy advocacy could not be considered separate from social transformation — that the two are intertwined and that **policy advocacy has to be seen in the context of social transformation**. However, it was also recognized that many times in practice, policy advocacy has become depoliticized and separated from social transformation — indeed this disconnect is a major concern of many groups.

The discussion around this separation revealed underlying challenges that reflect different understandings of strategy and change. Traditional policy advocacy is often undertaken with the assumption that it can produce relatively quick tangible results by using skilled lobbyists, solid information and occasional demonstrations of public backing to influence government institutions. Questions about the political nature of advocacy or how gains can be sustained over the long run are not usually addressed. This dominant understanding of advocacy, often promoted by donors, stresses technical steps and capacities with little attention to strategies of consciousness-raising, constituency building, grassroots leadership and structural analysis which are fundamental to social transformation. While including policy change as one strategy among many, social transformation processes conceive of change as a slower, long-term political process of transforming power relations that frequently is more difficult to measure. Focused on broader issues of injustice and citizenship, more complex strategies are used to grapple with power on many different levels and build more democratic and inclusive alternatives. However, pressures for quick results by donors can lead groups to focus on narrow policy opportunities that sideline more deeply felt but conflictual justice issues and eliminate more comprehensive strategies necessary for long-term change. This tendency marginalizes movements and struggles that are more rooted with people and their priorities. Similarly, funding that is product-oriented will seldom invest in long-term processes of social transformation that may have few tangible benefits that will be visible to the donor after the first year or two.

"Advocacy can be seen from a perspective of social transformation where policy is a means, one of the many means, for social transformation."

"Advocacy is both a means for social transformation but in some cases, just being able to engage in advocacy can be transformational, so advocacy can also be an end in itself."

The notion of an "issue-based struggle" or a "struggle-based issue" was used to make the distinction between advocacy efforts or struggles that begin and end with a single (often policy-focused) issue, and advocacy that addresses an issue as a strategic step in a longer-term struggle for justice. While many agree that there is a clear need for issue-based campaigns that can help build momentum for long-term advocacy, participants emphasized that it is key to consider how to focus on "struggle-based issues" so that advocates do not lose sight of how the desired policy change can open opportunities for action around broader changes in power structures and people's living conditions.

Addressing the disconnect between advocacy and social transformation requires a thorough analysis of power dynamics and what some call — **injecting the politics back into advocacy**. Different theories and frameworks for analyzing power were discussed during the meeting. Participants highlighted the importance of recognizing the potential contradictions between visible power that appears to move in one direction (for example, constitutions that guarantee equality for all citizens) and hidden or invisible power that moves in the opposite direction (for example, a culture that values some people more than others on the basis of race, caste, gender or other factors). It is important for advocates to highlight these contradictions and use them to bring about change. "We need to strengthen our capacity to ... look beyond the laws and the constitution to actually see what is it that supports these laws or not." Part of the challenge is to not think of power as a thing, person, or institution but as a set of relationships, some of which undermine people's capacity to participate. At the same time, advocates must also be conscious of how they themselves exercise power and the multiple arenas (intimate, private, public) where power is exercised. It is also important to distinguish between power as authority (institutionalization of norms, laws and rules), power as potential, and power as perception (power is what you are perceived to have). For advocacy linked with social transformation, some participants highlighted the relevance of building alternative forms of power: "the power of poetry versus the power of politics" and "building power as a social reform process, not as policy change."

Advocates often face the challenge of taking advantage of political moments and opportunities – even when these aren't the first priorities of poor or marginalized people.

For example, the case study of the People's Assemblies in Pakistan, presented by Rashida Dohad, illustrated the decision by advocates to take advantage of the opportunity to influence the government's decentralization process, even though communities were not ranking it as a priority. This case highlighted the tension between starting where people are at and taking advantage of opportunities within policy spaces, bringing people to where those spaces and opportunities are.

The case further illustrated that when entering policy-focused opportunities, which often require work to be carried out in a very short timeframe, the work tends to become centralized, generating tensions among those involved. At times like these, it can be easy to lose sight and balance between long-term work and responding to "things that need responding to". Yet despite these tensions, the People's Assembly process was enormously successful in terms of massive mobilization of popular participation, including women, and effectively influencing a number of public policies.

Who's who in advocacy...

Identity, representation, and legitimacy

In a summary discussion around what advocacy for social transformation involves, participants emphasized the importance of being explicit as to the *whys* of advocacy and not simply the *how-tos*. The basic principles and values underlying advocacy are what help to guide strategic decisions that will link policy advocacy to longer-term struggles for social transformation. Similarly, rooting an advocacy issue in long-term struggle requires situating the issue and the objective of the advocacy in an over-arching vision of change. Otherwise, it can be difficult to sustain interest, and people get disappointed as they do not see where their efforts are leading. Another crucial point is that advocates must bridge their words and deeds — it is not enough to simply say that one's heart is in the right place, yet still operate in a way that is perpetuating marginalization. One participant explained that in much advocacy there is a **political language but a depoliticized practice**. The language of rights can create an illusion of change, when in fact some institutions use it to sustain the status quo.

Advocacy that is linked to social transformation requires multi-dimensional, multi-directional communication among all those involved and impacted. Such an approach implies power sharing and an opening of space. It requires a capacity to analyze power and power relationships, to address questions of transparency and how the use of technology, geography, and language impact power relationships. Advocacy rooted in social transformation involves horizontal linkages and bottom-up strategies that build informed and critical consciousness. In this sense, advocacy may involve a process of education that provides information, but also creates linkages among people and decisionmakers.

Who's who in advocacy

One participant characterized advocacy for social transformation as ***people-centered*** advocacy meaning that it comes out of people's struggles to survive, question and change their lives. The many different levels and layers of participation in advocacy are shaped by guiding values and politics. So if advocacy is to be people-

One of the points made by John Samuel in his presentation analyzing power relations between social movements and NGOs was about the politics of language. He noted that on one hand many organizations are facing the appropriation and misuse of their language by actors that are driven by different interests. As a result, concepts eventually lose their meaning as they are employed by different actors in very different ways. Such dislocation of words and meaning is a tactic to gain power. For this reason, he encourages advocates to recapture the language of participation and voice in advocacy and clearly establish meanings from their perspective.

On the other hand, in relation to the politics of language between organizations and communities, Samuel noted that language appears as both an enabling and an oppressive agent. It becomes a passport for groups to be global or national, but it also can turn NGOs into brokers or 'marketing managers' of concepts, at the expense of communities that do not manage the language. How these different languages are legitimized or not has a tremendous impact on the power of the actors involved. Likewise, technology has a very mixed impact — email eliminates many people at the same time it helps to connect others; it decreases the distance between New Delhi and New York but increases the distance between New Delhi and the nearest village.

“Advocacy is not just about challenging a policy but challenging the paradigm …What are the broad struggles that these issues fit in – neoliberalism, capitalism, patriarchy, exploitation?”

centered, it is important to examine who is determining those values and the nature of the relationships and roles played by organizers, supporters, and people directly affected by a problem.

One of the principle questions being asked by many actors is *who* should be responsible for advocating. An examination of the history of advocacy efforts in various contexts points to changes that have taken place over time in the nature of social movements and the role that they once served as places for people to express their demands for change. Some people believe that **real social movements are being replaced by institutional spaces**, as organizations are formed to advocate for and represent people who otherwise would express their own demands through social movements. While recognizing that this trend exists, other advocates emphasize the complexity of roles and relations among the various actors and caution that simplistic demarcations do not exist between social movements and organizations. They say it cannot be assumed that one is necessarily legitimate and the other is not, but recommend a focus on values and ways of working together in practice to help distinguish allies from opposition.

Yet if we accept that there has, in fact, been a shift in the nature of modern social movements, it is important to explore the implications of that shift for advocacy. Whereas in the past, movements were most often seen in the streets, the spaces of social movements have increasingly been taken over by organizations with professionalized, highly trained staff that claim to have mastered the technical skills required for advocacy. Such an emphasis on skills has led some institutions to undervalue the role of organic social movements for advocacy. Some advocates question the impact of this **professionalization**, expressing concern that as policy organizations have become an industry through which people make their livelihoods, there is a loss of commitment to systemic transformation. For example, the political perspective of some staff in NGOs is more likely to be determined by the institutional perspective rather than belief in a cause. Consequently the individual’s priorities will shift with the organization in which s/he is based. In addition, as groups become increasingly institutionalized, they are exposed to new pressures related to the demands of building and sustaining an organization. As one participant noted, the result of this trend is that within NGOs “we talk about transformative ideology in an essentially status quo-ist way.”

In the worst cases, it appears that such “professionalized” NGOs appropriate the spaces of social movements, particularly through funding dynamics. Donor-supported projects are a basic staple of organizational survival in many cases. The short-term nature of these projects means that organizations work on short time frames even though it is widely recognized that social transformation is a long-term process of struggle. In addition, in contrast to the ideological orientation of social movements, “professionalized” NGOs are more likely to pick up a ‘hot’ issue for a short period of time and then move on to something else. This means that rather than being people-centered, advocacy issues are determined by other considerations — donor priorities or political opportunities, but not necessarily the interests of those affected by the issue. Further exacerbating the tension between NGOs and social movements, in many countries there is a small group of ‘elite’ NGOs, often led by people who were trained in the US or Europe, who know and speak the language of donors (generally English). Although these groups may have few ties to local communities, they tend to be the ones that regularly receive external funding. Grassroots groups that do have authentic connections to social movements, but do not speak the donor language or use the buzzwords of the day, find that they are unable to access funding. As described by one participant, this tendency “creates an elite of NGO mercenaries.”

"We think that we are the right people to address urgent issues and that's dangerous … [there is a] danger of assuming that there is urgency, more to justify our existence instead of looking for alternative approaches to equip the people who are affected to voice their concerns."

The objective is not to villainize NGOs or formal organizations. Neither is it productive to dichotomize social movements and organizations, because as previously stated, it cannot be generalized that one role is legitimate and another is not. What is important is to focus on the integrity and values of people occupying those different spaces and to recognize that actions being taken in one sector will invariably impact others in multiple ways. Change processes led by organizations can perhaps help to advance an agenda of social transformation. However, the concern of many advocates is that professionalized organizations not block the unique contributions of social movements. Structural change will not come about from the work of NGOs alone, therefore the various legitimate roles and contributions of different actors should be recognized and appreciated. As some advocates grow increasingly frustrated with how their effectiveness is limited by the nature of the project cycle in which they work, they are beginning to explore new formulas and possibilities for other ways of making a livelihood and taking action for social transformation.

Many organizations believe that they are in strong positions to advocate on behalf of marginalized groups. However, **representation** is a highly charged issue, in part due to cases where advocates have claimed to represent a particular group of people or organizations, when in fact they had little or no relationship with them. There is growing debate around the notion that representative advocacy is inevitable and many advocates are committed to assisting excluded people to build their own organizations and do their own advocacy, rather than represent them.

Some participants noted alternatives to representation, for example the distinction between representing someone else and speaking for common values and politics. Given the reality that a small number of individuals and groups have

On intra-organizational power dynamics, Meenu Vadera discussed some of the common challenges and contradictions advocates face as they try to reconcile the requirements of a strong organization with a commitment to social transformation, or face internal practices that are inconsistent with espoused goals and agendas. For example, an organization's need for a strong management structure (often vertical) can contradict the need for a horizontal structure that facilitates development and sharing of innovative work. In the tension between the two structures, what work takes primacy? Who makes decisions? In addition, there is often a spoken value on downward accountability to communities that is contrasted with a strong internal push toward upward accountability to donors. When facing contradictory interests between the Board or other upper levels within an organization and the community, how do staff determine who receives more primacy?

As many organizations move from a service delivery to a rights-based approach to development, the discourse of power becomes even stronger within organizations, in some cases propelling them to recognize that they cannot use the "same old paradigm" in their work but must demonstrate different ways of relating, understanding, and educating. Yet, in the need to gain power, to win quick victories, organizations are tempted to adopt the old paradigms they are trying to change. Processes of organizational change and learning require change in systems and policies as well as spaces for dialogue around these issues and tensions.

"I think we've gotten into a bind … [about] representation … I may not know anything about brick-makers, but I know that they must be paid better wages. And because I have the platform to speak at the ILO and the brick-makers do not, should I sit back and wait for the time when the brick-makers can speak on behalf of themselves at ILO?"

access to certain decisionmaking spaces, many advocates felt it appropriate to take advantage of opportunities to represent shared values or tell stories of the experiences and activities of the people they work with.

As critiques of NGOs as unrepresentative of people's interests become increasingly common, some organizations are trying to reach out to social movements to establish a base or constituency. However the ensuing relationship is too often extractive, in the sense that the NGO consumes information, leadership and many times seeks to thrive off the **legitimacy** of social movements. Thus NGOs should question whether they are engaging in an extractive relationship to derive legitimacy or if they are embarking on an enabling relationship. Many groups dodge critiques of their legitimacy by citing use of participatory techniques; yet, there are also extractive forms of participatory advocacy — groups may use participatory methods and tools for research to justify their results even though there is little decision-making input at the community level where the research is conducted. Many advocates emphasize that the whole process of participation needs to be expanded so that it is not viewed simply as consultation but as a process of awareness-building, critical analysis, and decision-making all the way from a family level to an international level, as appropriate. Just as groups must be careful in determining when to engage with institutions and spaces for advocacy, they must also remember to reflect the values and treatment they themselves demand in their relationships with the communities with whom they work.

The **politics of identity** have an enormous impact in determining the relationships among the various potential advocacy actors, and the legitimacy of those actors. Identity may be reflected by dress, language or other characteristics, but it can also vary according to its source

Jennifer Chapman presented elements of her research into the challenges and complexity of inter-organizational collaboration for international advocacy efforts. One organization cannot fulfill all roles in an international advocacy strategy so it is common to find multiple actors collaborating at multiple levels. Yet interactions among them are often quite complicated and can generate tremendous conflict and tension. Tension can build due to different approaches to advocacy (people-centered or issue-centered), disagreement on tactics to be used, or different objectives at the different levels. A further challenge is that these collaborations often suffer from problems of scarce information and limited communication among local level and regional or international organizations, as well as within individual organizations.

Chapman discussed the significance of the structuring of groups for collaboration. For example, communication structures may have information flowing up and down to a central authority, more horizontal structures with one or more focal points for information, or information flowing freely without any central coordinator. Each structure has advantages and disadvantages and is better suited to some goals than others. The type of structure groups use for collaboration can also be linked to the type of success being prioritized — for example policy change or civil society building, changing power relationships between men and women or between an industry and government.

"The mainstreaming of participation, the adoption of the language, has opened many opportunities for people to come to the table, but many of the groups that we work with don't necessarily have the advocacy skills to get to that table, particularly in areas that don't have a history of this kind of work."

— is it assumed by an individual, or perceived by others? Is it acquired or given? Individuals frequently have multiple identities, whether from perception — for example "I am grassroots in Washington D.C. , but if I go to an Indian village they'll say I'm elite" — or, as gender theory has helped illuminate, there may be variations among one's public, private and intimate self. Increased self-awareness of the existence of multiple identities and how advocates use them is crucial. At the same time, advocates must also recognize that gaps between self-perception and public perception of one's identity are very significant in terms of legitimacy and credibility for advocacy.

In summing up the discussion around the various actors in advocacy, many of the participants agreed that multiple representations of multiple voices in advocacy are both possible and desirable. There is no single voice, be it from an institution, social movement, or individual that can appropriately represent by itself the interests of a particular population. In this sense, there are many different ways that institutions and individuals can facilitate dialogue and contact without having to be interlocutors or speaking on behalf of other people. If and when an advocate represents the interests of marginalized groups with decision-makers, it was emphasized that this must always be tied to feedback mechanisms so that the mandate for representation is both clear and consistently refreshed.

Many advocates emphasize a focus on supporting marginalized people in acquiring the tools needed to speak for themselves—tools such as knowledge, awareness, consciousness, security, and resources. The role of NGOs or other organizations in providing this support may be understood as facilitation of necessary research, capacity-building, and organizational development. At the same time, it is important for advocates to recognize the responsibility involved in these processes. Critical consciousness involves risks, for example in contexts where there is limited or no security to exercise rights. Likewise, empowerment itself can be a very painful and difficult process. For this reason advocacy must involve a process to surface risks, both personal and public, to analyze alternatives, and from that information to make choices.

As with any process involving an 'outside' facilitator, some advocates and advocacy organizations note that there is a delicate balance between respecting people's knowledge and voice and also recognizing that an organization brings its own perspective to the table and that it is legitimate to let people hear the voice of the organization. In this context, advocates must have a strong commitment to negotiate roles and relationships in advocacy in an open and honest way. As advocates strengthen their capacities for self-criticism and self-reflection, they will be moving toward mutual capacity building with those with whom they work.

"Sometimes we restrict our thinking on social movements to transforming social relationships, but we should always emphasize that social movements are for enabling poor people to the take control over their life, over resources, not just changing relationships."

How to assess success?

Evaluation for learning

How to assess success?

Evaluation is another area that highlights some of the tensions between policy advocacy and social transformation. It is often conceived of as a donor-imposed process of bean counting to show impact and justify funding. A critical question for advocacy evaluation is, "whose success?" — the donor's, NGO's or community's? Many advocates are in the process of reclaiming evaluation and shifting its emphasis away from upward accountability to donors to include accountability in all directions. This shift can help groups clarify their goals for change, articulating the work in a way that is better aligned with the long-term nature of social transformation.

Another key for making assessment efforts useful for advocacy is to focus on learning from experiences rather than simply passing judgment on them. Learning requires the same capacities for self-criticism and self-reflection discussed earlier. In addition to individual capacities effective evaluation for learning also requires safe space within organizations and movements to reflect on and analyze both successes and shortcomings. Many problems around assessing success in advocacy have to do with power dynamics that limit opportunities for open and honest dialogue—between donors and organizations, organizations and their constituencies, and even within organizations or communities. Fear of exposing one's weaknesses to peers and others is a tremendous challenge for advocacy evaluation and learning.

If advocacy for social transformation values both process and outcomes, there must be spaces structured throughout the advocacy to think about and define what success is and how it will be measured in an iterative way. Evaluation, like other

There can be insignificant successes and significant failures in advocacy. Nani Zulminarni introduced her presentation on experiences working for women's empowerment in Indonesia by explaining it was a "failure story" that she would be discussing. She described how her organization has been working for over 15 years with a strategy for women's empowerment that has evolved as the political and social context has changed — first organizing women around economic activities, then literacy programs, then organizing around health issues, in particular reproductive health, and most recently, with an opening in the political space, programs to develop critical awareness around how women's status is shaped, the role of government, impact of laws on women, and training women to run for elected office.

Zulminarni explained that she termed this work a "failure" because empowerment is an incredibly slow and difficult process, and many women who start the programs eventually drop out. She recognized that progress has been made but that there are still major barriers to changing people's beliefs around gender equality. As several participants responded, the tremendous success apparent in this case is perseverance in the work over time and the gradual movement towards building power for women.

This case serves to highlight the challenges of traditional monitoring and evaluation that would not capture the important impact of this gradual process of transformation aimed at helping women gain greater control over their lives and a power base from which to negotiate with their husbands and communities.

"Success is often measured solely in terms of policy change, but if our advocacy is to be effective long-term we must look at how it is strengthening our organizations, our critical thinking, and people's voice, awareness, and decision-making."

moments in advocacy strategies, is an opportunity to generate an empowering process and build capacities. Such an opportunity will build on a needs assessment and ensure that those involved in the advocacy are developing their own definition of success as well as evaluation norms and measures. In addition, the process of evaluation should seek to uncover many of the 'intuitive' advocacy skills and talents so that they can be shared with others and learned from.

Incorporating a power analysis into advocacy also has consequences for assessment, in particular understanding that there are multiple potential dimensions of advocacy impact. While much evaluation focuses on visible forms of power (for example, policy change), it is important to find ways to also describe impact at hidden and invisible levels of power — for example, changes in people's understanding of themselves as subjects of rights. Articulating impact at the level of ideology or belief systems is an enormous challenge, but as advocates increasingly define objectives and evaluate at multiple levels, they will not only reflect the impact of the work more effectively, but also educate others as to the many dimensions of change involved in social transformation.

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A summary statement from *Making Change Happen* was produced in December 2001 and is available on-line at http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids.particip/workshops/makchhapstatm.pdf. This report expands on that summary statement, offering further detail to the insights that emerged during the meeting. However, the richness of the discussions over those three days cannot be captured in so few pages. Anyone who would like a copy of the meeting transcript can request one from Cindy Clark at cac@justassociates.org. In addition, select articles and case studies by meeting participants can be found in the journal *PLA Notes 43: Advocacy and Citizen Participation.* Copies of PLA Notes can be ordered from Earthprint Limited (www.earthprint.com).

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