

MEASURING ADVOCACY FOR POLICY CHANGE

the case for respectful maternity care

A WORKING BACKGROUND BRIEF

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I. RESPECTFUL MATERNITY CARE BACKGROUND

Despite advances in maternal health, ensuring women have skilled care during delivery remains a challenge. While women around the globe have increasing rates of antenatal care visits, demand for institutional deliveries with skilled attendants remains low in many developing countries. Efforts to overcome infrastructural barriers such as improving geographic and financial access have often not yielded promising results, signaling more needs to be done about other factors affecting delivery decisions. Evidence indicates one deterrent to the uptake of skilled delivery services may be women's experiences of disrespectful and abusive care during delivery. This could include instances of physical abuse, non-dignified care, non-consented care, non-confidential care, discrimination, abandonment of care and detention in facilities.¹ As advocacy efforts around the promotion of respectful maternity care continue to emerge, there is a need to consider how the success of advocacy efforts will be measured.

The purpose of this working brief is to inform discussion around evaluating respectful maternity care advocacy for policy change. Framing the advocacy evaluation approach can facilitate development of policy advocacy strategies in this area. The brief references a number of policy advocacy evaluation guides, applications of evaluation approaches, and best practices documented by experts and practitioners in the field. The aim is to highlight the current approaches, challenges, and lessons learned for measuring policy advocacy. In the context presented here, measuring policy advocacy includes all elements of the monitoring and evaluation process – strategic planning, outcome and metric development, evaluation implementation, and integration of findings. Unless otherwise noted, references to organizations include all which are working to measure policy advocacy – from the global level to the local level.

“Advocacy that influences or informs policy has the potential to achieve large scale results for communities and individuals so there is much interest in how to make this advocacy more effective”

The Evaluation Exchange, Harvard Family Research Project

II. MEASURING POLICY ADVOCACY: AN INTRODUCTION

Policy advocacy is a complex, strategic effort to influence policy makers to distribute resources, create policies, reform policies, and manage implementation of policies that support a specific cause or agenda². Strategies to

¹ Bowser D. and Hill K., (2010) *Exploring evidence for disrespect and abuse in facility-based childbirth: Report of a landscape analysis*. USAID|TRAction Project.

² CARE Website. Promoting Policy Change: <http://www.care.org/getinvolved/advocacy/tools.asp>

advocate for policy change fall across the global, national, and/or local level and can be done through a number of channels: communicating directly with policy makers (campaigning or lobbying); communicating through the media; implementing a campaign for change; or building policy advocacy capacity of community-based organizations³. This engagement is done across a continuum of policymakers and involves complex interactions between a myriad of players including grant makers, grassroots organizations, grantees, and service delivery workers⁴. Further, policy advocacy works in the dynamic, unpredictable policy environment – one of changing contexts and shifting strategies in which success is dependent on the current public policy landscape, rather than advocacy efforts⁵.

Evaluating policy advocacy helps determine which strategies are most effective in creating the desired policy change and also informs advocacy planning efforts⁶. Ideally, the evaluation approach is part of an on-going process which is adjusted as context, policy, and strategy change. Due to the complex nature of policy advocacy, evaluators find it challenging to apply traditional program evaluation methods to policy advocacy evaluation.

III. MEASURING POLICY ADVOCACY: GENERAL APPROACHES

There are several approaches to measuring policy advocacy. Below are some of the key elements highlighted in advocacy evaluation approaches⁸.

ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION
Purpose	Approaches focus on evaluating capacity to advocate for policy change, interim progress as part of a bigger “movement”, or long-term impact of policy advocacy efforts – or a combination of all three.
Scope	Focuses of the current approaches that are either on broad community-level change or on policy advocacy around specific issues.
Client	In general, approaches satisfy evaluation needs of either those guiding grant management of advocacy efforts or to design an evaluation to understand effectiveness of community level efforts. Approaches also differ based on whether an evaluation is being done internally, externally, or a combination of both.
Timing	Depending on resources and timing of evaluation efforts, a policy advocacy evaluation can be done either prospectively or retrospectively. Ideally, a prospective evaluation is built into the original campaign design and interim assessments are done after significant events, actions, or milestones rather than at strict time frames during implementation ⁷ .

In general, experts agree policy advocacy evaluation is most effective when done prospectively as this allows for the integration of planning and evaluation efforts⁹. The main steps in a prospective evaluation approach are as follows¹⁰:

³ CARE Website. Promoting Policy Change: <http://www.care.org/getinvolved/advocacy/tools.asp>

⁴ The Evaluation Exchange, Harvard Family Research Project, Spring 2007.

⁵ Guthrie, K., Louie J., David T., and Foster C. *The Challenge of Assessing Policy and Advocacy Activities: Strategies for a Prospective Evaluation Approach*. Blueprint Research & Design and The California Endowment, 2005.

⁶ Reisman, J., Gienapp, A., and Stachowiak, S.. *A Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy*. Organizational Research Services and Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2007.

⁷ Guthrie, K., Louie J., David T., and Foster C. *The Challenge of Assessing Policy and Advocacy Activities: Strategies for a Prospective Evaluation Approach*. Blueprint Research & Design and The California Endowment, 2005.

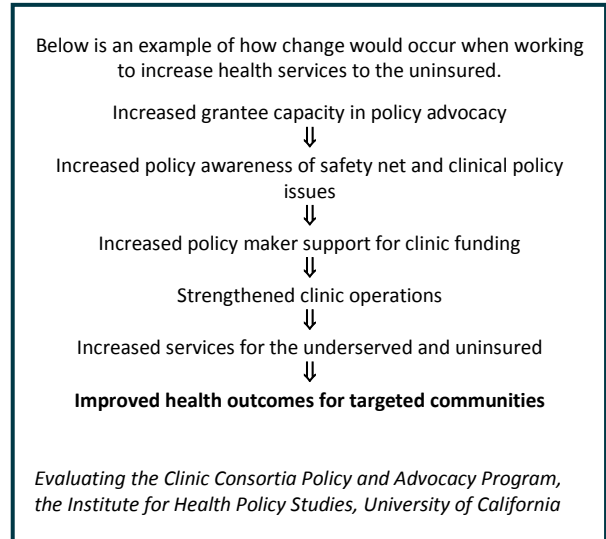
⁸ This approaches matrix was adapted from J. Coffman’s *Overview of Current Advocacy Evaluation Practice*, Innovation Network, October 2009.

⁹ Reisman, J., Gienapp, A., and Stachowiak, S.. *A Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy*. Organizational Research Services and Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2007.

¹⁰ Guthrie, K., Louie J., David T., and Foster C. *The Challenge of Assessing Policy and Advocacy Activities: Strategies for a Prospective Evaluation Approach*. Blueprint Research & Design and The California Endowment, 2005.

Understand the context and policy environment: Given the importance of understanding the impact of advocacy on policy efforts, it is important to understand the policy environment in which organizations function.

Develop a theory of how change occurs: It is important for organizations to understand the steps involved in desired policy change. This can be done using several approaches. For example a theory of change is a strategic picture of intermediate outcomes and assumptions behind strategies to reach the ultimate goal¹¹. Another is a logic model which is a more tactical explanation of how outputs of advocacy program inputs and activities link to intermediate and long-term outcomes. Logic models can be used to provide further understanding of how specific advocacy efforts connect to outcomes defined in the theory of change¹². Other approaches include pathways to change, critical path analysis, and a contingency logic model. Although there are slight differences in the approaches, all work to demonstrate how intermediate outcomes will lead to success¹³.



Organizational Research Services identifies six distinct **categories of outcomes** which can provide direction in defining policy advocacy:

- Shift in social norms
- Strengthened organizational capacity
- Strengthened alliances
- Strengthened base of support
- Improved policies
- Changes in impact

These outcome categories can serve as the foundation for defining specific outcomes, strategies, milestones, and metrics in the evaluation approach.

"A Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy". Organizational Research Services and Annie E. Casey Foundation

Define benchmarks and indicators: A benchmark is similar to a milestone; it measures the progress of an initiative towards meeting outcomes – the long term goals of policy advocacy efforts. Indicators define how benchmarks will be measured. Several organizations developed frameworks to define outcomes to guide benchmark and indicator development, each with slightly different perspectives on measuring the intended shift or change.

Collect data: Several data collection tools and guides are available for reference. Methods for data collection depend largely on the outcomes needed to be assessed, the context of the advocacy work, the purpose of the evaluation, and who is conducting the assessment. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are leveraged, depending on the outcome to be measured. Examples include focus group discussions to evaluate stakeholder attitudes towards an issue, observation at a community meeting to measure changes in community beliefs, case studies, and quantitative

surveys to collect feedback on media campaigns. When collecting evaluation data, it is important to keep it simple, to build on existing knowledge of data collection, and refer to tools used in similar studies¹⁴.

DATA TOOL REFERENCES

- ✓ The **Aspen Institute** supports an online *Advocacy Progress Planner* which allows organizations a step-by-step interactive guide for advocacy evaluation. Tools are available for organizations in the early planning stages of advocacy efforts as well as for those looking to monitor current global or domestic work.
- ✓ The **Innovation Network** has an online *Logic Model Builder* which walks users through the development of a logic model.
- ✓ **Organization Research Services and the Annie E. Casey Foundation** published *A Handbook of Data Collection Tools: Companion Guide to "A Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy"* which outlines methods and examples of tools measuring key outcome areas.

¹¹ Whelan J., *Advocacy Evaluation: Review and Opportunities*, 2008.

¹² Anderson, A. *The community builder's approach to theory of change: A practical guide to theory and development*, Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change, 2005

¹³ Reisman, J., Gienapp, A., and Stachowiak, S. *A Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy*. Organizational Research Services and Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2007.

¹⁴ Guthrie, K., Louie J., David T., and Foster C. *The Challenge of Assessing Policy and Advocacy Activities: Strategies for a Prospective Evaluation Approach*. Blueprint Research & Design and The California Endowment, 2005.

IV. MEASURING POLICY ADVOCACY: BENCHMARK AND INDICATOR EXAMPLES

Examples of major milestones include adoption of the intended policy, integration of priority training materials into the health worker curriculum, or adoption of intended norms among targeted community workers. Though these milestones are important to define, interim benchmarks and indicators will need to be collected as advocacy efforts are implemented to account for changes in political, social, or economic conditions¹⁵.

Changes made at the community level as well as strengthened advocacy capacity within an organization can be a strong indicator of movement towards long term goals. Some examples of indicators at different stages of change include¹⁶:

What changes within the organization indicate improved capacity for effective policy advocacy?

- The number of key partnerships in which the organization is engaged
- The number of constituents the organization can reach
- The number of presentations provided by the organization on the issue

What changes within the community indicate greater exposure to the issue and a shift in support for the issue?

- The number of community groups working on the issue
- The percent of voters who vote for a priority issue
- The total number of news stories published on the issue
- Increased number of people taking action to send letters to elected officials
- The total number of billboards posted on the issue
- Number of health care or other workers trained on policies

What changes at the policy level indicate support for the issue in the policy agenda?

- Number of policymakers who support the issue
- Amount of government dollars invested in programs which support the issue
- Number of regulations and policies passed which support the issue

V. MEASURING POLICY ADVOCACY: CHALLENGES

Common challenges within the field of advocacy evaluation include¹⁷:

Lack of practical guidance: Although there is a breadth of guidance available on evaluating advocacy efforts, little information is available on how to put advocacy evaluation guidance into practice.

Differences in the utility of evaluation: While some see evaluation as a way to hold foundations and grantees accountable, others want to assess efforts as part of a broad social movement.

Differing perspectives on methods for measuring social change: Though grantmakers may require quantitative measurements to demonstrate the impact of policy advocacy efforts, many evaluation experts argue that more qualitative approaches need to be considered as many elements of advocacy cannot be quantified. Others insist that social change cannot be measured at all and efforts to do so impede on already scarce resources.

EXAMPLE INTERIM BENCHMARKS MEASURING PROGRESS TOWARDS POLICY CHANGE:

- Contributing to the debate
- Raising awareness of the issue
- Changing minds
- Willingness of the public to support an issue
- Developing champions to spearhead change
- Influencing decision-makers
- Getting an issue onto the agenda
- Building capacity of partners and civil society organizations

Tracking Progress in Advocacy: Why and How to Monitor and Evaluation Advocacy Projects and Programmes, INTRAC, 2009.

¹⁵ Fagen M., Reed E., Kaye, J.W., and Jack, L. "Advocacy Evaluation: What it is and where to find out more about it" *Health Promotion Practice*, 2009

¹⁶ Reisman, J., Gienapp, A., and Stachowiak, S.. *A Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy*. Organizational Research Services and Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2007.

¹⁷ Reisman, J., Gienapp, A., and Stachowiak, S.. *A Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy*. Organizational Research Services and Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2007.

Methodological challenges: The dynamic environment in which policy advocacy functions and the long time frames to realize impact makes the identification of outcomes challenging. These realities coupled with low organizational capacity in evaluation make traditional methods of evaluation unsuitable.

Diversity among organizations challenge best practice identification: The organizations advocating for policy change are not only diverse in structure but also in philosophies and practices. Further, organizations are in different stages of public policy and social change and have different purposes for implementing advocacy evaluation. Therefore, it is challenging to identify best practices which can be universally applied to policy advocacy evaluation.

Delineating advocacy and community organizing: It is important to understand the difference between the two as community organizing involves a bottom-up versus top-down approach and a strong focus on the development of leaders in the community.

VI. Measuring Advocacy: Lessons Learned

Strategic learning requires collaboration: Strategic learning, a term defined as “using evaluation to help organizations or groups learn in real time and adapt their strategies to the changing circumstances around them” requires collaboration and trust across all players contributing to advocacy efforts including evaluators, advocates, board members, and funders, ideally from the onset of planning¹⁸.

Define interim and meaningful benchmarks: To account for shifts in policy and strategy, it is important to define metrics and milestones which assess progress along the way. It is important that these benchmarks be defined to capture meaningful information that can be used to assess true progress¹⁹.

Assess advocacy capacity as well as policy impact: While the policy environment is unpredictable and sometimes ruled by external forces, advocacy capacity is within the control of an organization and can serve as the foundation for success²⁰.

Track contribution, not attribution: There are many players involved in the advocacy environment so it is challenging to attribute impact to one specific source. Therefore, the overall contribution of all actors should be evaluated to measure policy change²¹.

Flexibility is important: The political environment is constantly shifting so evaluators need to be ready to adjust data collection tools as the context of the advocacy efforts change²².

VII. MEASURING POLICY ADVOCACY: NEXT STEPS

While not comprehensive, this working brief provides a foundation for an advocacy evaluation discussion for policy change to advance respectful maternity care. In identifying existing and potential strategies for measurement, some key questions should be considered:

- (1) What is the mode of advocacy to be measured?
- (2) At what level do we want to see change (global, national, local)?
- (3) What do we want to change?
- (4) What is the mechanism(s) for change?
- (5) Who are the allies we need for change?

¹⁸ Coffman J, Beer T. *Evaluation to support strategic learning: Principles and practices*. Washington, DC: Center for Evaluation Innovation, 2011.

¹⁹ Devlin-Foltz et al. “Advocacy Evaluation: Challenges and Emerging Trends”, *Health Promotion Practices*, 2012.

²⁰ The Evaluation Exchange, Harvard Family Research Project, Spring 2007

²¹ Devlin-Foltz et al. “Advocacy Evaluation: Challenges and Emerging Trends”, *Health Promotion Practices*, 2012.

²² Gienapp A. and Cohen, C., *Advocacy Evaluation Case Study: The Chalkboard Project*. Center for Evaluation Innovation, 2011