

Helpdesk Research Report

Democratic governance initiatives, part two: policy advocacy

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Question

Links between democratic governance initiatives and poverty reduction: Please identify some examples of successful democratic governance interventions with a specific focus on supporting policy advocacy, and how do these interventions impact on poverty reduction? Please do a short literature review with an emphasis on lessons learnt. Please also identify and summarise evaluations of implemented development programmes.

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1. Overview

It appears that there are many descriptive case studies of civil society advocacy campaigns to strengthen democratic governance, but **few publicly available evaluations** of the international interventions to provide support to these campaigns and the civil society organisations (CSOs) involved. This may be because many evaluations produced for donors' internal use are not published; moreover many democratic governance initiatives for CSOs are fairly recent¹.

Some studies do mention **links between the policy advocacy initiatives and poverty reduction**, but many do not. The literature includes recommendations to improve interventions' documentation of the links between their outcomes and poverty reduction.

¹ Hinds, R. (2013). *Multi-donor support mechanisms for civil society* (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report 940). Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.

Studies also highlight the **challenges of assessing policy advocacy impacts** and attributing changes to single, short-term advocacy projects. Policy changes take time and tend to be shaped by a combination of processes and actions by multiple stakeholders (Dickinson et al, 2012, p.18).

Key lessons reported in the case studies include:

Lessons for CSOs and policy advocacy

- CSOs have to balance working constructively with governments with not being overly cautious, and must decide when to use challenging tactics to pressure governments to improve their accountability; strategies for working with government to build accountability will need to be calibrated to the **specific socio-political context**.
- CSOs that **mix advocacy and technical skills** can get good results, as their evidence-based research can back their advocacy claims and win over detractors.
- Policy advocacy initiatives need to consider the incentives and disincentives determining **men's and women's participation** and ensure any activities challenge, rather than reinforce, existing inequities.
- The **external environment outside of CSOs' control is important** and will shape CSOs' policy advocacy results; working with **powerful national and international actors** can improve the impact of CSO campaigns.

Lessons for donor support

- Studies have found that **predictable, unearmarked and pooled** (when there is more than one donor) **funding** can help facilitate on-track implementation and build the CSOs' capacity.
- **Transparent grant-making mechanisms involving state and non-state actors** can build trust and provide a good governance model.
- A number of the evaluations call for **more political economy analyses and risk assessments** at the design phase and **more (continuous) monitoring and evaluation**, including better documentation of links between the policy outcomes and longer-term goals such as poverty reduction.
- There are recommendations on **supporting CSOs' engagement with the government** through involving government in the project design phase, working with government change agents, and using broader relationships with the government to advocate for more space for civil society

2. Case selection

Of the evaluations available, this brief review attempts to include an illustrative sample of the different types of interventions that take place. These vary in terms of:

- **Geographical scope and context.**
- **Advocacy objectives**, from single issue campaigns to enhancing citizen 'voice' more generally.
- **Advocacy strategies** from high-level government engagement, building community voice.
- **Modes of delivery**, such as competitive grant funding mechanisms to long-term core support for individual organisations/campaigns, to holistic programmes addressing both supply- and demand- sides for good governance.

- **Support provided:** including core organisational capacity-building, specific training, technical assistance on issues addressed in campaigns (e.g. budget analysis and expenditure tracking), and support in engagement with government.
- **Funding donors:** including multilaterals, bilaterals, international NGOs and other international initiatives.

3. Policy advocacy initiatives

Case 1: World Bank Demand for Good Governance in Cambodia

Background: The project has state and non-state components. On the demand side, the project aims ‘to increase the extent and ability of citizens, civil society organizations, and other non-state actors to hold the state accountable and make it responsive to their needs’ (Carter, 2013, p.6).

Results: The 2013 Implementation Status and Results report finds satisfactory progress towards the project’s objectives (Plummer, 2013). As reported in Carter (2013), the project is considered to have ‘built a relationship that has opened the door to allow (ongoing) negotiations to the Government’s social accountability policy and establishment of a joint social accountability steering committee, in which civil society and government sit together for the first time’ (p.6).

Impact on poverty reduction: The project appraisal document highlights that governance improvements are critical for high growth and poverty reduction, and the programme aims to tackle binding governance constraints on poverty reduction (World Bank, 2008). The project implementation reports do not discuss the impact on poverty reduction. As the project is ongoing (ending March 2014), an investigation of the impact of the intervention on poverty reduction may be premature.

Lessons learned: A series of learning notes identify lessons learned. These include:

- Most NGOs in Cambodia are service providers, and moving over to accountability and advocacy work can require them ‘to fundamentally change their missions, roles and relationships and take on board new ways of working’ (Dolk and Plummer, 2013a, p.1). Dolk and Plummer (2013a) find that ‘enhanced monitoring can be vital’ in supporting the NGOs in the transition (p.2).
- Having the grant selection done by an independent grant making committee of state and non-state representatives ‘created legitimacy and acceptance of decisions within government and civil society’ (Dolk and Plummer, 2013b, p.2). The report notes, however, that this also results in ‘trade-offs regarding the quality of the selection process and as a consequence, the ability for the overall implementing agency to achieve the intended results’ (p.2).
- A context sensitive, flexible approach is important. There were results when, in one accountability activity, the NGOs supported the district administration and then held the district administration to account. This sequencing worked because the NGOs needed to first build trust with the district administration before they could successfully carry out third party monitoring (as reported in Carter, 2013 and taken from Plummer and Dolk, 2013).
- Another learning note highlights the importance of: 1) increasing ‘understanding of the incentives and disincentives that determine the qualitative differences in men’s and women’s participation’, and 2) improving ‘how we measure gender impacts of different approaches to engagement, noting any activity that reinforces existing inequalities’ (Dolk, 2013, p.2).

Sources:

- Carter, B. (2013). *Interventions to increase levels of trust in society*. (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report 941). Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham. Retrieved from: <http://www.gsdr.org/docs/open/HDQ941.pdf>
- Dolk, A. (2013). *Gender balance and bias: An initial analysis of gender disaggregated data in social accountability activities*. Demand For Good Governance (DFGG) Learning Note 4. World Bank and The Asia Foundation. Retrieved from: <http://www.dfgg-nsac.org/en/resources/dfgg-learning-notes>
- Dolk, A. and Plummer, J. (2013a). *Holding government to account or helping government out?* Demand For Good Governance (DFGG) Learning Note 1. World Bank and The Asia Foundation. Retrieved from: <http://www.dfgg-nsac.org/en/resources/dfgg-learning-notes>
- Dolk, A. and Plummer, J. (2013b). *Establishing grant making committees: What works, what doesn't work, and why?* Demand For Good Governance (DFGG) Learning Note 2. World Bank and The Asia Foundation. Retrieved from: <http://www.dfgg-nsac.org/en/resources/dfgg-learning-notes>
- Plummer, J. and Dolk, A. (2013). *Beneficiary and third party monitoring of district services: enhancing the performance of one window service offices through monitoring and awareness building*. Demand For Good Governance (DFGG) Learning Note 3. World Bank and The Asia Foundation. Retrieved from: <http://www.dfgg-nsac.org/en/resources/dfgg-learning-notes>
- World Bank (2008). *Cambodia demand for good governance project appraisal document*. Washington D.C.: World Bank. Retrieved from: http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2008/11/17/000333038_20081117234338/Rendered/PDF/423660PAD0P1011LY10IDA1R20081029711.pdf

Case 2: HakiElimu, Tanzania

Background: HakiElimu – ‘right to education’ in Kiswahili – is a Tanzanian organization founded in 2001 that undertakes a wide range of activities (critical research, policy analysis and advocacy²) to address issues related to governance, accountability, and education (Carlitz & McGee, 2013, p.1). It aims to strengthen ‘citizen mobilization and responsive accountable government for the purpose of improving the quality of education’ (p.19). Five donors provide core funding to HakiElimu (Carlitz & McGee, 2013, p.14).

Results: A review finds the government instituted several reforms addressing some key issues highlighted by HakiElimu’s campaign during 2005-2007 (Roba & Budlender, 2010 p.3). The majority of stakeholders interviewed by Roba & Budlender (2010) think HakiElimu ‘created greater awareness and... helped generate public debate’ (p.3). In their assessment of the impact of HakiElimu’s activities since 2008, Carlitz and McGee (2013) caution it is difficult to assess this given that the programme’s areas of focus are subject to ‘countervailing movements’ and there is no counterfactual (p.16).

Impact on poverty reduction: Neither case study explicitly states the impact on poverty reduction. Roba & Budlender do, however, list education reforms campaigned for by HakiElimu that will have a direct impact on the access and quality of education, and therefore in the longer term on poverty (2010, p.3).

² <http://internationalbudget.org/groups/hakielimu/>

Lessons learned: Roba and Budlender (2010) conclude that 'HakiElimu's campaign demonstrates the value of a multipronged strategy that incorporates sound research to support advocacy, broad efforts to educate and mobilize the public, and a willingness to work with the government on solutions'. They note that while HakiElimu was challenged for criticising the government's education policies, this approach may have been necessary in order to create the pressure to act (p.4). They also identify important external factors, including: complementary advocacy activities and support by the national civil society education network, the Teacher's Union, the mass media, and the international donor community.

Carlitz & McGee (2013) identify key factors that have shaped HakiElimu's outcomes, which include:

- The 'organization's capacity to produce carefully researched evidence to back its advocacy claims' (p.26). Tanzania's education donors have used HakiElimu's rigorous research in their own advocacy efforts, with tangible impacts on the education budget (pp.26-27).
- Having 'five donors all contribute to a four-year strategy through a common basket, rather than funding particular activities' (p.14) has helped keep implementation on-track.
- The organisation's staff have 'impressive' expertise in the areas in which they work (p.27).
- Since 2008 the new director's strategy of working quietly 'behind the scenes' with government, is seen as 'a reinforcement' or 'safety net' for its other more visible and confrontational activities. It is, however, difficult to strike the right balance between being constructive and overly cautious (Carlitz & McGee, 2013, p.28).

Sources:

- Carlitz, R. & McGee, R. (2013). *Raising the stakes: the impact of HakiElimu's advocacy work on education policy and budget in Tanzania*. International Budget Partnership. Retrieved from: <http://internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/HakiElimu-Case-Study.pdf>
- Roba, A. & Budlender, D. (2010). *Quality of education reforms: the case of HakiElimu's campaign of 2005-2007*. International Budget Partnership. Retrieved from: <http://internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/LP-case-study-HakiElimu-summary.pdf>

Case 3: National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights, India

Background: Established in 1998 the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) was created to enhance the visibility of Dalit³ issues, and hold the government responsible for implementing laws designed to proactively promote the educational, social, and economic development of the Dalits (Ramachandran & Goel, 2011, pp.2-3). The campaign has attempted to influence the government through litigation, pressure through the media, co-opting like-minded parliamentarians, mobilizing a citizen rally and engaging directly with the government at a high level (Ramachandran & Goel, 2011). NCHDR is part of the International Budget Partnership's (IBP) Partnership Initiative – 'a collaborative effort that seeks to enhance the impact of civil society budget work' (IBP, n.d. - b, p.2). With the support of the Partnership Initiative, NCDHR is undertaking budget research, analysis, and advocacy in two districts in the states of Bihar and Rajasthan.

Results: Following concerted advocacy and controversy when it was discovered the government used a fund designated for the Dalits to pay for costs of the Commonwealth Games, the government admitted

³ The Dalit are a mixed population in India that are treated as 'untouchables' and are among the poorest and most marginalised communities in India.

the monies were wrongly diverted and instigated various reforms to use the fund properly. Nevertheless, while noting that it is difficult to attribute impacts to the campaign (Ramachandran & Goel, 2011, p.8), the International Budget Partnership (n.d. – a, p.4) find that ‘the campaign has certainly contributed to making an important component of government expenditures more transparent and accountable’. However, the government has not yet returned diverted funds, and results from ongoing budget advocacy work do not appear to be documented yet.

Impact on poverty reduction: The reforms aim to have a direct impact on the poverty of the Dalit community. The main review of the campaign is dated 2011 when reforms were announced and not yet implemented; poverty impacts will come later.

Lessons learned: Ramachandran & Goel (2011) identify a number of factors that helped the campaign including:

- NCDHR being able to capitalise on many years’ experience, combining ‘technical analysis and engagement with the government with the ability to mobilize citizens and other civil society organizations’ which enabled the NCDHR ‘to lead a multi-pronged campaign that put pressure on government from more than one side’ (Ramachandran & Goel, 2011, p.9).
- The importance of ‘sustained monitoring and advocacy pressure throughout the policy and budget cycle’ (p.11).
- How CSO campaigns’ impact ‘can be multiplied when they tap into the agendas of other powerful actors on the national and international stage’ (p.11).
- External factors such as India’s democratic institutions (e.g. independent judiciary); vibrant civil society; political climate created by scandal around Commonwealth Games (pp.9-10).

Sources:

- IBP. (no date - a). *India: Budget tracking to give Dalits a fair share of development*. International Budget Partnership (IBP). Retrieved from: <http://internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/LP-case-study-NCDHR-summary.pdf>
- IBP. (no date - b). *National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) – India*. International Budget Partnership (IBP). Retrieved from: <http://internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/Profile-of-NCDHR-India-2011.pdf>
- Ramachandran, V. & Goel, S. (2011). *Tracking funds for India’s most deprived: the story of the national campaign for Dalit human rights’ “Campaign 789”*. International Budget Partnership. Retrieved from: <http://internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/LP-case-study-NCDHR.pdf>

Case 4: USAID Citizens Advocate! Program, Georgia

Background: The USAID-financed three-year Citizens Advocate! Program (CAP) aimed ‘to promote civil society development in Georgia, improve the capacity of CSOs and create an enabling environment so that CSOs can promote citizen interests and effectively advocate their cause’ (Stuart & Kordzaya, 2004, p.i). It was launched in 2001 with a USD 2.2 million cooperative agreement with Save the Children Federation, US.

Results: The 2004 mid-term review⁴ finds that the programme stayed on track ‘despite the very turbulent environment’ (Stuart & Kordzaya, 2004, p.15) Beneficiaries generally appreciated the high quality of the ‘participatory’ and ‘client-oriented’ training (p.15). Moreover, some grant-receiving CSOs were successfully attempting to expand their coalitions, ‘citing benefits such as being able to launch activities in different regions at the same time and spreading information more widely’ (p.16). In 2004, the mid-term review found that the programme was ‘starting to yield some impact in terms of institutional development’ though many NGOs that received grants were ‘not yet viable’ and would ‘require additional assistance to become sustainable’ (p.15).

Impact on poverty reduction: This is not mentioned in the mid-term review.

Lessons learned: The mid-term review (Stuart & Kordzaya, 2004) comes up with a number of recommendations. Here are some of the more strategic points identified:

- The management arrangement of having an American-lead organization enforced by Georgian partners seemed to work well, and increased the Georgian partners’ experience and sustainability (p.4).
- Establishing effective, transparent systems for awarding grants served as ‘an important demonstration of good governance to the NGO community’ (p.16).
- Complementary efforts were needed ‘to build the government’s acceptance of CSO input and ability to respond to advocacy efforts’ (p.16).
- There were specific activities to address the cross-cutting issues of gender and youth, but there needed to be more mainstreaming throughout other programme activities (p.16).

Sources:

- Stuart, J. & Kordzaya, E. (2004). *Mid-term evaluation Citizens Advocate! Program. Final report.* Office of Democratic Governance , USAID/Caucasus/Georgia. Retrieved from: http://georgia.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/midterm_eval_citizens_advocate_program_0.pdf

Case 5: AHEAD project – Bangladesh, the Philippines and Uganda

Background: The World Health Organisation provided support on CSO advocacy on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) through the Advancing Healthy Advocacy for Reproductive Health (AHEAD) project. Implemented by the German Foundation for World Population and its partners from 2009-2011, the project provided small grants and training to CSOs ‘to strengthen their capacity to advocate, influence and participate in government budget allocation processes for SRH’ (Dickinson et al, 2012, p.6).

Results: The Dickinson et al (2012) report, synthesising country assessment undertaken in 2011, finds the AHEAD project contributed to ‘greater transparency and accountability’ (p.17), with ‘increasingly open discussions with governments, parliaments, civil society and technical agencies on SRH policies and budgets, as well as mobilising growing public debate over SRH financing’ (p.18). While highlighting the challenges of attributing changes to a single intervention, the synthesis report notes that in Uganda and the Philippines, ‘funding for SRH has increased [...], and there is evidence of stronger policy support for SRH, particularly at national levels’ (p.18).

Impact on poverty reduction: The synthesis report does not talk about poverty reduction.

⁴ It was not possible to find a final evaluation.

Lessons learned: Dickinson et al (2012) draw out general lessons on how to support CSOs more effectively (p.29)⁵:

- Conduct a thorough political economy analysis at the project design stage ‘to help set expectations for advocacy goals and objectives’.
- Address the common ‘disconnect’ between national- and local-level CSO advocacy: ‘this will help bring marginalised voices into budgetary processes, raise issues that have local relevance and priority and support local leadership’.
- Ensure ‘greater transparency of CSO funding and operations and improve coordination and harmonisation of budgetary activities and interests’.
- In countries with ‘deep-seated difficulties in bringing about reform’, support CSOs ‘to become better informed and more assertive in calling government to account’, including through building coalitions and working with government change agents.
- Engage with government in the design process ‘to promote awareness-raising, knowledge-building in relevant government departments and improved access to information’.
- Avoid using ‘linear’ design approaches and identify outcomes once there is a better understanding of budget processes to ‘allow for more innovative, targeted and efficient implementation’.

Sources:

- Dickinson, C., Collins T., Loewenson, R. & Ghosh, S. (2012). *Assessing civil society budget advocacy for sexual and reproductive health in Bangladesh, the Philippines and Uganda: A synthesis report*. London: HLSP. Retrieved from: http://www.hlsp.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=_xEiyW_OT0%3d&tabid=2490

Case 6: Public Policy Information, Monitoring and Advocacy (PPIMA) project in Rwanda

Background: The Sida and DFID funded Public Policy Information, Monitoring and Advocacy (PPIMA) project aimed to strengthen Rwandan CSOs and citizens’ interest and engagement in public policy affairs. The project started in 2009 and is coordinated by Norwegian Peoples Aid. It is implemented by 14 Rwandan CSOs, with six partners working at the national level with government and other stakeholders, and eight at the local level in target districts. Activities include technical and institutional support to the CSO partners to develop key capacities and capabilities in public policy analysis and dialogue as well as other research and advocacy initiatives (see Dastgeer et al, 2012, p.9 for full details).

Results: An evaluation of the project results from 2009 to 2012 (Dastgeer et al, 2012) finds that: ‘even within a short time frame, it has shown extremely promising results’ with CSOs better equipped for advocacy and community engagement, and communities beginning to feel ‘a sense of empowerment and improvement in their lives’ (p.11). At the same time, the project is very young, unsustainable without external support, and the performance of partners has been mixed (pp.10-11).

Impact on poverty reduction: As the project is still young, it may be too early to assess its impact on poverty reduction. The 2012 evaluation does not attempt to do this, but some of the results that it

⁵ The study also identifies recommendations more specifically concerned with how to improve budget advocacy which are not included in this Helpdesk Report.

reports have an impact on poverty. For example, one activity that is reported to be particularly successful in terms of community empowerment and engagement with local authorities is the Community Score Card. According to Dastgeer et al (2012) the government's response to the community score card process has included 'improved access to agricultural inputs, better health service provision, improved availability of drinking water and the landless getting land' (p.10).

Lessons learned: The recommendations of the evaluation focus on implementation improvements for the project's next phase. Among others, they recommend strengthening management systems (with a results framework and a risk and mitigation strategy), and monitoring and evaluation systems (including training 'before' and 'after' changes, and documentation of case studies/stories of change) (Dastgeer et al, 2012, pp. 11-12). They find that concentrating on a small number of districts (four) and sectors (six in each district) has increased cost efficiency and coordination, and they caution against expanding the project scope in the next phase (pp. 11-12).

Sources:

- Dastgeer A., Bourque, A. & Kimenyi, A. (2012). *Evaluation of the Sida and DFID funded public Policy Information, Monitoring And Advocacy (PPIMA) project in Rwanda. Final report.* Indevelop AB in cooperation with GRM. Retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/204833/Evaluation-SIDA-DFID-Public-Policy-Information-Monitoring-Advocacy-Rwanda.pdf

Case 7: Danish NGOs' contribution to improved democratic development and popular participation in Ghana and Ethiopia

Background: A 2009 evaluation by Klaussen et al assesses how the Danish NGOs' approaches (including capacity building and partnerships) have contributed to improved democratic development and popular participation in Ghana and Ethiopia. The Danish NGOs have very different mandates and approaches, so the evaluation covers multiple activities, using the NGOs' own definitions of democratic development and popular participation.

Results: The evaluation finds that Danish NGOs, through their partners, do contribute to popular participation and democratic development, through 'enhancing capacities, channels of intervention and changes of policy practice, behaviour and power relations' (Klaussen et al, 2009, p.8). The report finds that the Danish NGOs support to partners' capacity building has 'enabled the CSOs to develop especially as social actors at local level [...] and establish themselves as legitimate representatives of the poor' (p.9). Moreover, marginalised and powerless groups have 'started to act as change agents in their communities' (p.10). There has been an emphasis on increasing women's role as political actors (p.10).

Impact on poverty reduction: The evaluation notes that there is a contribution to poverty reduction and broader development outcomes 'in the form of poverty orientation of programmes, but measurable contributions to direct poverty reduction and contribution to broader development outcomes are difficult to trace' (p.8). The evaluation goes on to highlight that the projects' leverage 'is likely to be small due to limited scales of operation' (p.10).

Lessons learned: The evaluation has a number of recommendations which focus on improving political economy analyses, documenting capacity-building outcomes and linking these to results, documenting

any active (even if indirect) contribution to poverty reduction, and monitoring risks and assumptions. Other recommendations include: 1) using service provider relationships with governments to advocate for more space for civil society, and 2) allowing smaller organisations to keep to their local level activities rather than being pressured to work at the national level.

Sources:

- Klausen, A.-L., Buch Kristensen, M. & Appelquist, M.-L. (2009). *Thematic evaluation of support by Danish NGOs to civil society in Ghana and Ethiopia*. Copenhagen: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. Retrieved from: <http://www.oecd.org/countries/ghana/44152627.pdf>

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