

Review of Organization Development Diagnosis for Advocacy That Influences Organizational Success:

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Abstract: A myriad of competencies emerge as being necessary to carry out effective advocacy. John Gaventa's framework shows that for organizations to be effective on all dimensions of power they need a full range of skills and capacities (see framework on next page). We have compiled an initial set of criteria but you will undoubtedly identify more. As you do add them to the list. These criteria can help identify areas of strength and weakness in organizations for purposes of planning capacity building programs as well as identifying colleague organizations.

When groups are considering advocacy, it is helpful for them to assess what advocacy actually has to offer their organizations, what some of the benefits and risks might be and what organizational barriers might influence their success.

Keywords: Advocacy, Diagnosis, Organizational Competence, Credibility, Sustainability, Capacity.

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I. Introduction

The advocacy Sourcebook (Miller & Covey, 1997) identifies four characteristics which are required of organizations who want their advocacy work to be effective and lead to meaningful, sustainable change:

- Organizational legitimacy
- Credibility
- Accountability, and
- Power.

II. Literature Review

Organizational Legitimacy

Why is organizational Legitimacy required?

- It is required or needed in order to gain the ear of both the public and power holders
- It also refers to who an organization represents and the relationship between them.
- It also links to concerns of accountability, credibility and power, and
- How we be sure as to what the community wants.

For instance: The Southern NGOs question their Northern counterparts or parent organizations' right to speak for the South or local groups and communities to see a more well-financed NGOs speaking on their behalf without the community being consulted or involved in setting a common agenda.

There are several legitimacy questions that are required to be asked as we review some question about legitimacy such as:

1. On whose behalf does our organization speaks?
2. On what authority or basis does our organization speak?
3. Who grants us the authority or right to speak?
4. How is that authority granted?
5. Through a Board made up of community people, NGO leaders and prominent citizens?
6. Through the election of officers by members of the group?
7. Through democratic decision-making processes?
8. Through consultations with community groups?
9. How can we increase our legitimacy?

Credibility

What are some of the attributes of the organization that calls for credibility?

- This refers to how much what an organization says can be believed or trusted, e.g. whether its information is seen as reliable, its programs and services sound, or its staff viewed as having integrity.
- Defined as, “the ability to have one’s statements accepted as factual or one’s professed motives accepted as die true ones”
- Also refers to organization’s link to its constituency, the size of that constituency, how accountable it is to it (constituents include people who have a direct stake in finding a solution to a problem that can be addressed by an advocacy effort; may also include people who may not be directly affected by a problem, but who care deeply about having it solved)
- Achieved by being responsive and accountable to one’s constituents; associating with highly respected individuals or organizations who have achieved solid reputations in their fields of work; financial transparency; developing contacts with government officials, agencies, political parties, international donors and other NGO or grassroots networks; producing quality research and publications to support its advocacy efforts; being recognized for one’s practical expertise in a given field by die media, public and professional peers.

Questions about credibility can include but not limited to:

1. What are die sources of credibility in our organization?
2. What is die reliability and accuracy of the information our group provides to die public?
3. How are our organization’s leaders perceived by key power holders and opinion leaders vis- a-vis their trustworthiness, knowledge and expertise?
4. How credible is our group as seen by its constituency, by those in power and by other influential players?
5. How can we improve our credibility?

III. Accountability

Accountability is defined as “holding individuals and organizations responsible for performance” which rests on premise that citizens have the right to hold officials and institutions. It rests on the premises that citizens have a right to hold officials and institutions responsible for their actions. They have an obligation as citizens to carry out this role and there are two types of accountability:

- 1) Public accountability, focused on powerful institutions that affect the public such as governments, banks or corporations, and
- 2) Internal accountability — i.e. accountability within advocacy campaigns and organizations, focused on tire groups carrying out an advocacy effort and its constituents.

Questions about public accountability:

- On what basis are politicians, government officials and corporations held accountable in our country?
- By what performance standards or criteria?
- Through what processes or mechanisms (i.e. elections, the media, etc.)?
- What are the traditional ways that those in power are held responsible?
- What has been tire role of citizens and grassroots groups in promoting public accountability?
- What have been the successes of NGOs and communities in monitoring and enforcing desired policy changes?
- What have civic groups done to encourage transparency in public institutions and corporations?
- How can we improve public accountability and transparency?

Questions about internal accountability:

- Who makes what lands of decisions in the coalition or organization?
- How transparent and open is that decision-making process?
- To whom is leadership accountable once those decisions are made?
- For what are they accountable?
- What are the mechanisms by which they are or can be held accountable, e.g. by periodic elections, annual performance reviews, etc.?
- How are members and constituents involved in the campaign and kept informed?
- How can we improve on internal accountability?

power

Elsewhere it is said that the sources of power is money, however, for NGOs it is the number of people they can motivate to join their cause, mobilize into action and sustain over time.

Organizations gain power when they have a large active membership or a large number of communities to serve, when it has alliances with strong coalitions, prominent influential allies and connections with international organizations

It also emerges from credibility and legitimacy, ability to communicate successfully, work together effectively power is rooted in relationships that are reciprocal, dynamic, transformative and empathetic.

Questions about power:

1. What specific sources of power does our group rely upon?
2. Which ones work best?
3. What new sources of power can we tap and use?
4. What kinds of power does our organization employ, and under what circumstances?
5. How are decisions made within the group? What happens when there is conflict?
6. What kinds of power do we use in our relations with our members or "clients with NGOs, with communities and grassroots groups?
7. How does our group counter tire exercise of unilateral power (which often characterizes the relationship between government officials and citizens in repressive closed political systems, but also occurs in democracies?

Organizational Diagnosis for Advocacy

According to The Advocacy Sourcebook (1997), states "When groups are considering advocacy, it is helpful for them to assess what advocacy actually has to offer their organizations, what some of the benefits and risks might be and what organizational barriers might influence their success".

It provides the following questions to use for a quick diagnosis:

1. What resources and strengths can your organization offer advocacy work? What added resources are needed?
2. What skills do you think your organization has currently to do effective advocacy work?
3. What additional skills and competencies are needed?
4. What are the benefits to your organization of doing advocacy work?
5. What are the risks to your organization of doing advocacy work?
6. How will advocacy work affect your organization's other main activities and mission?
7. Under what conditions would your organization engage in advocacy work?
8. Will your organization have to alter its mission and some of its programs to engage in more advocacy work?
9. How will doing advocacy work effect your membership or relationship to your constituency or communities where you work? How will it strengthen these populations and relationships? How will it weaken them?
10. Which other actors (NGOs, unions, universities, professional organizations, individuals, etc.) are you most likely allied to be based on current relationships and advocacy issues?
11. With which other actors do you need to build relationships to succeed in your advocacy work?
12. Given the political context in which you operate, how will your advocacy work affect your organization's legal and financial standing?

Credibility And Legitimacy Checklist

This checklist below provides groupings that will help to analyze some of the-sources of their organizational credibility and legitimacy. It contains a list of criteria presented from the perspective of opinion leaders that may not coincide with your own views. For example, one source of credibility for many influential policy players is the size of an organization —'the bigger it 'is, they believe, the more important and credible it is — while for people in the NGO community sometimes smaller is better. Since this checklist is designed to assess external credibility I have tried to include criteria from an outsider's perspective.

Some categories may not be relevant to all groups. Read the list and select the categories that apply to your particular organization. As you review the list, you also may want to add criteria. Coalitions can undertake this exercise to determine the collective strengths of their member organizations.

Rate your organization from one (low or poor) to three (high or excellent) under the following categories:

CATEGORY	RATING
Size of membership	i.e From one - (Low/or poor) to three – (high or Excellent) etc.
Status of membership (e.g. professional status)	‘DO’
Provider of quality services	‘DO’
Links with client group or community Size/status of client group Mechanisms of internal accountability	‘DO’
Links with funding agencies	‘DO’
Links with supporter or affiliated bodies	‘DO’
Status of board members, patrons	‘DO’
Perception of staff integrity and competence	‘DO’
Perception of leaders’ or officers’ integrity and competence	‘DO’
Links/contacts with government:	
Executive	‘DO’
Legislature/Parliament	‘DO’
Agencies/Ministries	‘DO’
Judiciary	‘DO’
Police/Military	‘DO’
Local officials/Municipal Councils Contacts with political parties	‘DO’
Quality of information: research/publications/briefings Recognized theoretical or practical expertise in given field	‘DO’
Age of organization	‘DO’
Size of organization	‘DO’
Wealth of organization	‘DO’
Efficiency of organization	‘DO’
Financial transparency of organization	‘DO’
Legally incorporated organization Perceived independence of organization	‘DO’
Level of positive media exposure Level of public recognition of organization	‘DO’

(Source: Adapted from Mark Lattimer, Action Aid Advocacy Workshop, India, 1995)

IV. Organizational Competencies Ratings

Rate your organization on a scale of 1 (low-poor) to 3 (high-excellent) in the following areas, of skills, competencies and knowledge.

1. Understanding of overall political system, including political rights and the responsibilities of citizens and power holders.
2. ___Understanding of policy making system and power relations in society. Understanding of advocacy development process and practice, role of public opinion.
3. Understanding of economic and social rights, including relevant policies, laws and international covenants.
4. Overall analytical capacity'.
5. Knowledge and use of multiple advocacy strategies.
6. Skills in strategy development and planning.
7. Leadership competencies/qualities necessary for well-run organizations and coalitions undertaking advocacy.
8. Competencies directly related to implementing advocacy strategies (media, lobbying, participatory research, etc.).
9. Competencies in mobilizing resources and power: organizing
10. coalitions, mobilizing members

V. Organizational Competencies For Advocacy

We have compiled an initial set of criteria but you will undoubtedly identify more. As you do add them to the list. These criteria can help identify areas of strength and weakness in organizations for purposes of planning capacity building programs as well as identifying colleague organizations, (i.e. research institutions) who can fill in where you do not have expertise. Rate your organization from 1 (low-poor) to 3 (high-excellent) in the following areas of skills, competencies and knowledge:

- 1. The overall political system including political rights, and the responsibilities of citizens and powerholders as follows:**

- Understanding of policy-making system and power relations
- Understanding of advocacy development process and practice, role of public opinion
- Understanding of economic and social rights, including relevant policies, laws and international covenants
- Overall analytical capabilities
- Knowledge and use of multiple advocacy strategies

1. Skills in strategy development and planning such as:

- Visioning
- Problem identification, selection and analysis Problem definition and issue framing
- Goal setting
- Analysis of advocacy players, macro environment and political moment
- Target identification
- Tactic/activity selection and design
- Strategy implementation
- Monitoring changes
- Evaluation of advocacy effort, application of lessons learned

2. Leadership competencies/qualities necessary for well-run organizations and coalitions undertaking advocacy:

- Ability to recognize and maximize the actual and potential strengths of individuals
- Capacity to conduct efficient energizing meetings
- Conflict resolution and consensus-building
- Coordination, organization, administration and financial management
- Democratic and group process skills, team building
- Application of principles of accountability and democratic decision-making
- Popular education to expand members' political awareness, confidence and participation skills
- Skills in motivating, attracting and sustaining members and in expanding constituencies
- Fundraising
- Creativity, sense of humor, ability to affirm and publicly recognize people's contributions

2. Competencies directly related to implementing policy advocacy strategies:

- Media knowledge and experience
- Lobbying, public speaking, persuasiveness, negotiation and debating skills
- Participatory research, producing and disseminating grassroots knowledge
- Investigating and accessing concealed information, conducting and producing policy-relevant research
- Knowledge of legal system and litigation

3. Mobilizing resources and power:

- Organizing coalitions,
- Mobilizing members and other affected populations,
- Garnering credible expertise from recognized experts,
- Conducting get out the vote campaigns, canvassing, etc.

One last piece of advice on advocacy:

According to Sun Tzu, in his book - **The Art of War** - state that "Like water, take the line of least resistance. Water shapes its course according to the nature of the ground over which it flows; the soldier works out his victory in relation to the foe he is facing. Just as water retains no constant shape, so in warfare there are no constant conditions. The five elements — water, fire, wood, metal and earth — are not always equally predominant. The four seasons make way for each other in turn. There are short days and long days. The moon has its period of waning and waxing.

He who can modify his tactics in relation to his opponent and thereby succeeds in winning may be called a *heaven-born captain*."

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