Working paper 500

Refining advocacy assessment: reflections from practice

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Key messages

- This paper revisits how existing advocacy evaluation frameworks classify people and activities, and define and assess outcomes. We discuss how assessments could be more specific and propose bounding the scope of inquiry in one of four ways: strategy specific, outcome oriented, actor-centric or system-wide.
- In classifying activities, the same action or event may be situated at different phases of the change pathway – in some cases used as a tactic to influence a policy outcome, and in others an intended outcome itself.
- Because advocacy is more relational than other types of more technical development interventions, there will be fewer sources of directly observable data, and the direction of potential bias may be unknown.
- In terms of learning, advocacy initiatives are contextually dependent, therefore lessons may be less directly transferable to subsequent phases of an initiative or to other settings. Organisations have bounded repertoires and the transferability of skill sets is limited, so advocates adapt how and with whom they engage more than what they do.

Acknowledgements

We appreciate the valuable comments provided by peer reviewers Josephine Tsui and Jim Coe, editorial assistance from Hannah Caddick and design assistance from Ashleigh Kate Slingsby.

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1 Introduction

Efforts to evaluate advocacy and policy change, and thinking about how best to do so, are relatively recent compared to similar efforts in other fields. A decade after the formalisation of a number of frameworks to assess advocacy, we revisit recommendations from existing guidance, many of which we have followed ourselves and suggested to others. Based on our work over the last five years, we identify assumptions that have been less pronounced in practice than would have been expected. We characterise aspects than have been more problematic, discuss implications for measurement and offer suggestions on how they can be addressed, where possible.

Conceptual thinking and practical tools to assess advocacy have evolved over time. Our aim with this working paper is to contribute to this adaptation and refinement. Initial efforts to monitor and evaluate advocacy can be traced back to the mid-1990s (Mansfield, 2010), and a series of articles around the turn of the millennium laid the conceptual foundations for many current approaches – particularly related to advocacy by nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) (Roche, 1999; Chapman and Wameyo, 2001; Davies, 2001; Kelly, 2002)[1]. Since that time, there has been a proliferation of frameworks and tools. In 2007, for example, the Evaluation Exchange published a special issue on Advocacy and Policy Change, a Guide to Measuring Policy and Advocacy was developed by Organizational Research Services, and the American Evaluation Association established a Topical Interest Group on the subject. Coffman and colleagues have made a number of contributions over the years (1997, 1999, 2015). The 2000s thus marked a period of heightened attention – both to the unique characteristics and challenges of assessing advocacy, as well as the accompanying expectations that organisations attempt to overcome these challenges and evaluate their efforts.

In a recent review, Tsui et al. (2014) provide an overview of 15 frameworks to understand policy development and formation, tactics, and the nature of influence, as well as 20 methods and tools to assess strategy and direction, management and outputs, outcomes and impact, and causes. Most of these approaches were developed in high income, democratic countries with relatively open operating environments for civil society. Such approaches have been used by foundations and often by NGOs to demonstrate progress towards their advocacy goals. Some bilateral donors have long sought to influence policy as a central part of their international development strategies, either by directly engaging themselves, or by funding others; and more recently, have increasingly been asking questions about the effectiveness and value for money of such interventions (Jones, 2011; Clarke et al., 2009). Over time, frameworks to assess advocacy are increasingly being applied to a wider range of actors and political contexts than the settings in which they were created.

Much has been written about the challenges of assessing advocacy that we do not repeat here, including the difficulties in determining causality and accounting for bias and informal activities. Despite these limitations, this paper approaches the issue from the perspective that systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of evidence can help to inform decision-making, and that, as evaluators, we need to continue to refine both our approaches and expectations about what is feasible to do.

This working paper builds on, and aims to add nuance to, existing approaches as we move into the next generation of advocacy evaluation. It is written primarily for those who are directly involved in assessing advocacy and who are familiar with the topic – such as, internal monitoring and evaluation (M&E) advisors, external consultants and funders. The paper focuses on two areas: classifying the who and what of advocacy – that is, how people and activities are categorised; and, defining and assessing outcomes.

Under each area, summarised in Table 1, it considers:

1. Recommendations and assumptions from existing frameworks
2. Observations from practice
3. Implications for monitoring and evaluation.

The paper draws on work with advocacy initiatives in low-, middle- and high-income countries representing a range in their degree of restriction on civil and political rights (using the Freedom House index). These interventions were initiated and financed by NGOs, civil society associations, governments and bilateral and private funding agencies. They sought to create change in a range of areas, including changes in knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and institutions. All featured some element of policy change at local, national, regional or global levels, and primarily addressed issues that had some degree of a public good nature (education, health, justice, financial transparency, for example).

1 Articles oriented towards advocates and development practitioners emerged in parallel – and reference to varying degrees – similar work published in the academic literature, including Sabatier and Weible, 1999; Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Fox and Brown, 1998; Covey, 1995; Chapman and Fisher, 2000; Bebbington, Hickey and Mitlin, 2008, among others.

Table 1

Refining recommendations on how to assess advocacy based on observations from practice

Recommendations & assumptions of existing frameworks	Observations from practice	Implications for monitoring & evaluation
Classifying people and activities		
Advocates are staff or members at (I)NGOs or civil society associations, trying to influence decision-makers, the public and/or intermediaries (i.e. media)	• Decision-makers are often advocates themselves • Issues were pursued by a small group of core actors over time • The same individuals held positions in different institutions over time, often switching positions	• Clarify the role, intent and behaviour of decision-makers, including previous roles • Involvement of a small groups limits opportunities for triangulation and makes interviewee confidentiality more difficult
Menu of activities or tactics, including: generating and communicating evidence, educating, mobilising community members, contacting decision-makers, convening events, public demonstrations, lobbying, diplomacy, forming alliances, drafting legislation, litigation, strengthening individual and/or institutional capacity	• Core advocacy activities are variations of 'people talking' • Tactic categories are fluid – diplomacy and lobbying may take place at a convening event • Categories may be situated at different phases of the change pathway	• Interpersonal interactions are often undocumented, with few opportunities to triangulate among multiple sources, can involve informants who may be difficult to access and may either overestimate or underestimate the extent of influence • Characterise the nature of 'people talking', could assess tone, directionality, number and profile of actors involved, level of control • Describe intent and actual behaviour
Successful advocates change strategies over time as they learn and adapt their approaches	• Individuals and organisations have bounded repertoires; transferability of skill sets is limited • Organisations may not want to change their approach for normative reasons • Organisations pursue all activities in their repertoire rather than sequentially testing different tactics • Some activities are linked and often co-occur	• Activities or tactics vary less than may be assumed • Often not possible to disentangle the relative influence of different activities • How things are done and with who may vary more than what is being done
Defining and assessing outcomes		
• Many metrics are either too narrow and short term (i.e. number of citations in the media), or too broad or distant (i.e. change in legislation) • Measuring interim outcomes can signal progress towards a longer-term goal • Effective M&E systems need to include a combination of approaches to track both short-term outputs, longer term impacts, and allow some understanding of causality	• Goals were vision statements that cannot be 'achieved' at a certain point in time: ensuring access to justice, ending preventable deaths • Over periods of 4-10 years, there was substantial but incomplete progress towards these long-term goals, including the passage of many large scale policies, and seemingly innumerable smaller changes (i.e. in the behaviour of specific actors), the foundations of which were laid prior to the intervention period • Changes during the intervention period shaped the space in which advocates act • Activity and output monitoring can produce reams of information and be resource intensive; and may overestimate, underestimate or miss key changes	• Be clear about the way in which the scope of enquiry is bounded (see Box 1) • If an evaluation is intended to make judgements about the intervention, define specific criteria • Lessons from one period may be less directly transferable to another because the operating context will likely have changed • Timelines can be useful to identify what happened before, during and after the intervention • Not all indicators can be predefined; unanticipated changes need to be documented once they have taken place
Comparing advocacy initiatives within the same time period and political context can help identify what works more and less well with who, why and how	The salience of issue characteristics and actor networks associated with each makes it difficult to compare across issue campaigns	Examining variation across institutions and geographies in the same country within issue campaigns may yield more valid findings than attempting to look across different campaigns

2 Categorising people and activities

2.1 Who advocates and who do they aim to influence?

Existing frameworks used in the evaluation community are primarily oriented towards advocacy conducted by staff and members of (I)NGOs or civil society organisations (CSOs), like those engaged in externally funded citizen voice and empowerment initiatives.[2] Coffman and Beer (2015) identify three broad types of audiences or advocacy targets in this context: decision-makers, the public, and policy influencers or intermediaries, such as the media, community leaders or other CSOs. Distinguishing between different groups, however, can be less straightforward than such categorisations may suggest. These categories can underplay the role of each of these audiences as advocates themselves, particularly decision-makers; the bi-directionality of the relationship between advocates and the people they aim to influence; and the multiple positions that a single person can hold.

Work with a number of advocacy initiatives highlighted two ways in which decision-makers were actively involved in advocacy themselves as opposed to being only the object of advocacy. In some cases, we observed a two-phase process in which technocrats or NGOs tried to influence a more senior decision-maker or politician, who in turn tried to influence their peers to gain wider political support for an issue. In other instances, a decision-maker who already championed an issue led internal change processes, advocated with their peers, opened space and invited civil society involvement. CSOs then advocated to secure broader support and apply additional pressure from outside, which internal champions are not in a position to do. It is therefore important to clarify the role, intent and behaviour of decision-makers, the nature of their relationship with advocates, and the changing nature of their roles over time. In some cases, it may be more appropriate to treat some advocacy targets as intermediary influencers with their own agenda rather than the key decision-makers.

This work also found multiple examples of a core group of actors who had dedicated a large part of their professional lives to a particular issue about which they were passionate. The same individuals held positions in different organisations, sectors and sometimes countries, moving from a multilateral organisation to a government agency or NGO, from a civil society organisation to a donor agency or a management agency overseeing donor funds, and from the government to an external funding agency.[3] In this way, the same person may, at one point in their career, attempt to influence decision-makers from an external position, subsequently be a primary decision-maker, and several years later oversee funds to CSOs to advocate with new decision-makers. Such individuals can often offer rich insights because of the multiple perspectives through which they have engaged with an issue over a long period of time.

At the same time, the presence of a core group of actors limits opportunities for triangulation among multiple sources, and makes anonymising interviewees more difficult if there is a small set of people who could have provided detailed information. The rotation of actors makes the distinction across sectors or organisational types less marked and requires evaluators to decide which affiliation(s) is most appropriate – that is, an informant's initial role, current position or when the advocacy was at its peak. It is also important to note in the evaluation report when this rotation is present.

2.2 What do advocates do to affect change?

Existing frameworks also offer what are often long menus of activities or tactics that advocates can use to classify the ways in which they aim to affect change. These activities may include: generating and communicating evidence; educating different audiences; mobilising community members; contacting decision-makers; convening events;

2 Increasingly, academic institutions are being required to demonstrate the influence of their research. Social, economic and cultural impacts is one of three dimensions by which institutions are evaluated in the UK's Research Excellence Framework. Research application, including influence on national guidelines, is one of four indicators of the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) assessment. Pasanen and Shaxson's 2016 guidance note offers a M&E framework specifically for research projects that aim to influence policy.

3 This rotation is in some ways analogous to the iron triangle concept in US political science, which characterises the relationship between private interest groups, government bureaucrats, and the Congressional committees regulating them..

public demonstrations; lobbying; diplomacy; forming alliances; drafting legislation; litigation; and strengthening individual and/or institutional capacity. Some of these activities – for example, drafting legislation, litigation and conducting research - have a substantial technical element for which specific expertise or training is required.

Many, however, are heavily relational and essentially involve people talking to one another. Their classification may therefore depend on the number and profile of the people involved. Diplomacy involves representatives of the state, whereas the term lobbying typically refers to external professionals (rather than citizens) trying to persuade policy-makers to adopt a particular position. Convening an event to bring key stakeholders together to discuss an issue can provide the venue for interactions among different groups of people, including diplomacy and lobbying, to take place alongside formal events. Some tactic labels may be less acceptable to use: for example, the term 'lobbying' may be perceived as more aggressive and political than the term 'dialogue', and in some countries raises concerns about specific activities that are prohibited by law for organisations with charitable or non-profit tax status.

The actual behaviour of influencers may differ from what was originally intended, or what is described in formal documentation. Classifying actions may require a tiered mapping approach: first identifying an initial set of key activities and then subsequently exploring in greater depth the intent and theory behind the action or event, and the actual behaviours. For example, an organisation may convene a group of influential stakeholders to discuss a particular issue in order to facilitate networking among them; or the event may aim to provide a setting to persuade some actors to change their position by presenting new information on the topic. Regardless of the intent, at the conference itself, actors may engage in informal interactions among themselves to broaden support for the issue.

Moreover, these interactions often take place behind closed doors. Informal interactions are not, and cannot, always be documented. They may be between only two people, and can involve very senior representatives. But such relations, whether between a citizen and her elected representative or a bureaucrat providing public services, among two senior policy-makers, or between a professional advocate and a decision-maker, are at the heart of advocacy. The nature of these interactions poses an enormous challenge for evaluators: a core element of advocacy – people talking – is often undocumented, with few opportunities to triangulate among multiple sources, and can involve informants that are difficult to access. Both parties may have incentives to portray the interaction in a particular way, or to underestimate or overestimate the extent of influence, so the direction of bias is unknown.

Many sample metrics for assessing advocacy focus on observable activities, such as the number of people sending an email, attending a public demonstration or the number of media citations, which can orient the focus towards the quantity rather than the quality of individual interactions. For contexts in which space for civil society advocacy and independent media is more restricted, less visible interactions represent an even larger proportion of the options available for advocates. Because advocacy is more relational and political than other types of more technical development interventions, there will be fewer sources of directly observable data. When assessing advocacy, this constraint should be mitigated to the extent possible by incorporating as many sources as possible and estimating the extent and direction of potential bias. However, this is inherent to advocacy and there are limits to which it can be overcome, something that must be acknowledged in reporting.

Adding to the complications of classifying tactics, the same event may be situated at different phases of the change pathway – in some cases, used as a tactic to influence a policy outcome, and in other instances as an intended outcome itself. For example, an initiative may aim to develop the capacity of civil society groups to interpret and communicate evidence and advocate with policymakers about issues that are affecting their community. Alternatively, an advocacy campaign may develop the capacity of civil society groups as a tactic to increase political will and improve policy analysis or implementation. Therefore, there is fluidity among categories of activities and the classification of the same action as a tactic or an outcome.

2.3 To what extent, and how, are tactics adapted over time?

A common rationale given for assessing advocacy is to provide information to help advocates adapt to shifting circumstances, using a 'try and evolve' management style to learn about a particular context and the effectiveness of different tactics. Indeed, successful advocacy is thought to be dependent on the ability of actors to adjust their approach as necessary.

In practice, individuals and organisations tend to specialise in some areas and not others. They have bounded repertoires and the transferability of skills sets is limited. As such, an organisation that specialises in communication or public engagement, for example, cannot quickly shift approaches and take judicial action through the courts, unless there are flexible funds to hire new staff or contract out these activities.

Organisations tend to pursue all activities in their repertoire rather than sequentially testing different tactics through a trial-and-error approach. Some activities are linked and often co-occur, such as producing research and disseminating these findings to policy-makers and the media. Therefore, it is often not possible to disentangle the relative influence of different activities, other than through actors' perceptions of which element(s) were key.

Even with information that shows that a particular tactic or framing is less effective, organisations may not want to change to an approach that is not well-aligned with their beliefs and values. As Coffman (2015) notes, the choice of tactics is determined by organisations' values, experience and assumptions about how change takes place. A rights-based organisation that believes civil society should play an active role in policy processes may be reluctant to shift to a market-based or elite lobbying approach, even if findings suggest that it may be more efficient or effective in changing policy, because the organisation values civil society engagement as an important outcome itself, not solely as a means by which to stimulate change.

Thus, based on the initiatives with which we worked, tactics are adapted less than is sometimes assumed, and strategy often even less so.[4] Rather than adapting what they did, experienced advocates more often made subtler shifts in who they engaged with and how, including the way in which an argument was framed.

4 Greater tactical diversity may be present across a broad issue arena or portfolio of initiatives being pursued by many organisations with different specialisations.

3 Defining and assessing outcomes

3.1 With limited time and resources, where should M&E efforts be focused?

Reviews and advocacy frameworks acknowledge that metrics are either too narrow and short-term – such as the number of citations in the media – or too broad and distant – such as change in legislation. They suggest that measuring interim outcomes can signal progress towards longer-term goals (Tsui et al. 2014; Coffman, 2015; Reisman et al., 2007). Tsui et al. (2014) argue that effective M&E systems require balancing short-term outputs and longer-term impacts, including approaches that gather information to help assess causality. How to achieve this balance, given limited time and resources, and the undocumented nature of core advocacy activities, remains a challenge.

Many of the advocacy initiatives with which we have worked pursued extremely ambitious goals, which were essentially vision statements. Ensuring access to justice and eliminating preventable deaths cannot be 'achieved' at a certain point in time, and requires continuous inputs. Looking across periods of four to ten years or more, evaluations have identified substantial but incomplete progress towards long-term goals such as these, including the passage of many large-scale policies. The foundations for these changes were often established prior to the intervention period. Innumerable smaller shifts – such as the attitudes and behaviours of different actors – took place throughout.

Legislative changes took place in iterative cycles. Policies were drafted, negotiated, sometimes passed, funded, implemented and subsequently revised based on experiences in practice. Advocates may be involved in any of these phases. Furthermore, interactions among actors, and between actors and their context, shaped the space in which advocates work: in some cases, these interactions expanded opportunities for civil society engagement in subsequent policy processes; in others, it changed the dynamic among different sets of actors. Rarely was the operating environment at the end of the intervention period or campaign identical to that at the beginning.

Given the seemingly boundless nature of initiatives aiming to change the state of the world, and the limited time and resources to systematically assess change, monitoring and evaluation needs to be selective. In terms of monitoring, documentation of activities and outputs can produce vast quantities of information; for example, four-page quarterly updates for an initiative taking place in 25 sites over two years produces 800 pages of information, often of variable quality, and which may have limited comparability due to contextual differences.

Focusing on more proximate indicators, such as media mentions, rather than more downstream changes in policy, budget or practice may not provide an accurate measure of influence. For example, in one instance, searching media outlets for the name of a particular campaign would have underestimated the role of an institution that predominantly worked behind the scenes but which was widely perceived to be among a core set of actors who contributed to substantial changes. Other times, thousands of media citations may be insufficient to shift attitudes, behaviours or policy.

The unpredictability of some actions means that not all indicators can be pre-defined. These unanticipated changes will need to be documented once they have taken place or investigated as part of a later evaluation. Constructing a timeline that starts years before the initiative was launched can be a useful tool to identify what happened prior to, during and after the intervention period, though this can be time-consuming to create.

More broadly, as it is not possible to systematically assess all possible change pathways and outcomes, it may be helpful to explicitly define the primary orientation of an advocacy evaluation, and by doing this, focus on the most important aspects. Box 1 provides an overview of four different ways of bounding the scope of inquiry: strategy specific; result and outcome oriented; actor-centric; or system-wide. Applying such a framework could help evaluators and those commissioning evaluations of advocacy avoid the common problem of attempting to cover more than is realistically possible in a single evaluation.

Box 1. Options for bounding the scope of inquiry

Evaluating advocacy requires making choices – not all questions can be answered in one study. The four options listed below describe different ways of bounding an assessment. In practice, a combination of these elements may be used, but these options aim to help distinguish the primary orientation or lens through which an evaluation is conducted.

An evaluation could be:

- *Strategy specific*. The assessment is focussed on understanding a particular advocacy strategy and what effects it has had. This may involve estimating the contribution of the strategy to a set of observed changes, or identifying unexpected outcomes of the strategy. Questions include: What activities and resources are used to implement a particular strategy? What are the effects of the strategy? In which contexts did the strategy work more and less well? What aspects of the strategy have been most and least effective?
- *Result and outcome oriented*. The assessment is focussed on understanding an observed change, usually a policy or practice change by a particular individual, group or institution. This will involve retrospectively examining multiple potential causes. Questions include: What interim changes preceded the observed outcome? What has changed over time in the context? What and who influenced or contributed to the observed change? What have been the most significant contributing factors?
- *Actor-centric*. The assessment is focussed on a particular actor, or type of actor, and their role in contributing to change; for example, the role of civil society organisations in a particular sector in a particular country. Questions include: What is the role of a particular actor, organisation or coalition in a specific policy or change process? What is their relationship to other actors? How have these relationships and roles changed over time, if at all?
- *System-wide*. The assessment takes the broadest lens and looks at multiple strategies, multiple outcomes and the interactions between multiple actors to gain an understanding across the system. Questions include: Across a portfolio or a particular field, what different strategies have been tried to achieve what types of outcomes, and with what effects? How have multiple pathways interacted? What are the networks which exist and how do these work to bring about change?

3.2 In cases of partial change towards a long-term vision, how can advocacy efforts be judged?

In some instances, advocacy evaluations are commissioned to help organisations decide if they should continue their investment in advocacy, or a particular strategy or issue area; or, if these efforts and funds should be allocated in other ways to achieve their objectives.

However, the nature of many advocacy initiatives means that evaluations are not often well equipped to answer this question. In the advocacy initiatives with which we worked, although long-term end goals rarely changed, the goalposts – that is, the threshold considered to be a 'win' – may shift during the course of a campaign, as interim objectives are met or a particular course of action becomes infeasible. If an evaluation is intended to make judgements about the intervention and subsequent distribution of effort and resources, specific goalposts and assessment criteria will need to be defined to make these judgements.

Asking 'to what extent and in what ways did the campaign reach its goals?' can provide useful information about how approaches worked within the operating context and among different audiences. However, except in extreme cases of unprecedented, dramatic change or persistent status quo, responses to this question are unlikely to provide sufficient guidance to determine whether to stop, scale up or shift approaches for the many cases that exhibit partial change towards a long-term vision that is not achievable at any given point in time.

In these circumstances, the purpose of evaluation may be how to improve current strategy, rather than to make decisions regarding resource distribution across issue areas or between advocacy or other types of interventions. That is, questions of 'what tactics with which targets have worked less well and how should we adapt our strategy accordingly' may be more appropriate than 'based on advocacy in three issue areas, how much and where should we invest future resources?'. Although many evaluations purport to both demonstrate progress and learn, improve and adapt, in practice the former may often overshadow the latter, particularly when they are being conducted with external funding.

Moreover, because advocacy initiatives are contextually dependent, the lessons they generate will be less generalisable when compared to other types of interventions that are more easily replicable in different settings. As noted, the beginning point of a second intervention cycle is shaped by the end point of the subsequent phase so, even within the same campaign, lessons may not be directly transferable from one phase to another. The target audiences, skill sets and approach necessary for getting an issue onto the policy agenda and pushing for legislative change are different from those needed for monitoring the implementation of a policy across dozens of districts.

3.3 What types of comparisons help to identify factors associated with the nature and extent of change?

As noted, a major challenge in advocacy evaluation is identifying factors that have influenced change processes when much of the information may be limited, biased and largely reliant on perceptions. A more robust evaluation can create structured comparisons where some factors and outcomes are absent or present, weak or strong. These comparisons can help to better understand what worked more or less well, for whom, how and why. They can take different forms, comparing the outcomes of an intervention to alternative explanations for change, to a counterfactual or comparable situation in which an initiative did not take place, or to other interventions with similar people in similar contexts.

Due to inherent differences among different issues (i.e. health, justice, fiscal transparency) and the actor networks associated with each, exploiting variation within an advocacy initiative may be more fruitful than comparing different issue campaigns. Even when different issues shared similar characteristics (core public goods typically provided by the government) and initiatives took place during the same time period and political context with similar types of actors, there were limits to the extent to which comparisons could be made and direct lessons drawn across issues areas.

Making comparisons necessarily requires highlighting more prominent aspects of a campaign and, in doing this, our work found that actors wanted to demonstrate the breadth of activities in which they were involved, rather than those more prominent and unique aspects. Therefore, rather than making comparisons across issue areas or campaigns, examination of variations within an advocacy initiative, across subnational geographic areas or between different government agencies, was more useful in surfacing factors that were associated with greater and lesser degrees of institutional change.

4 Conclusion

This working paper revisits how existing advocacy evaluation frameworks classify people and activities, and define and assess outcomes. It highlights situations where frameworks may over-simplify more complicated aspects that would benefit from different treatment or with greater degrees of nuance. It points to the implications for measurement, including: clarifying the role of decision-makers as advocates themselves, bidirectional relationships, and the multiple positions a single person may hold over time; specifying the nature of relational activities; and acknowledging the extent to which tactical repertoires are bounded.

As with all evaluations, assessing advocacy efforts requires making choices and limiting the scope of inquiry to a feasible set of questions and variables. The paper proposes four ways in which the scope of inquiry could be bounded: making it strategy specific, focusing on particular results or outcomes, limiting it to a particular actor or type of actor, or taking a system-wide perspective. And, it is important to recognise that because advocacy initiatives are contextually dependent, the lessons may be less directly transferable to subsequent phases of the initiative and to other settings.

As more advocacy is undertaken, documented and evaluated, there will be further opportunities to apply and refine existing assessment approaches. This may take the form of increasing specificity and tailoring frameworks for different political contexts and configurations of actors. We encourage others to contribute their experiences to accelerate learning and further develop the burgeoning field of advocacy evaluation. Given the renewed focus on adaptive management, thinking and working politically, doing development differently, and applying insights from complexity theory to international development, practitioners and evaluators trying to assess advocacy have well-grounded experience and expertise to offer colleagues in other development sectors.

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