

Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact Assessment of Advocacy and Campaigning

Trying to monitor and evaluate any project has certain challenges. Time taken doing M&E can divert you from doing the project itself, so a balance has to be struck on what level of effort is appropriate. The process may lack objectivity, being biased in favour of the project plan and its assumptions. There is also a danger that the project itself gets distorted – doing what gets measured rather than measuring what gets done.

When doing it for advocacy and campaigning there are additional problems:

- The advocacy & campaign environment is complex and with potentially long and unpredictable timescales
- Decision making processes are often hidden from us and affected by many unknown factors
- It is rare that we achieve all our advocacy and campaigning objectives and so any successes we do achieve are usually partial

This leads to some particular challenges:

- Advocacy and campaigning plans may not be clear as to how the desired change will be influenced
- It may be hard, expensive or time-consuming to gather reliable objective data on any changes and what caused them
- Advocacy and campaigning is often a collaborative process so it can be hard to attribute the impact of any one organisations contribution
- Participants may not be motivated to gather and document monitoring data, often because they see no benefit from it
- Individuals and teams may not allocate sufficient time for reflection and evaluation, either because they see no value in it or they fear the results

The three main terms – monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment – are often used quite loosely and need defining:

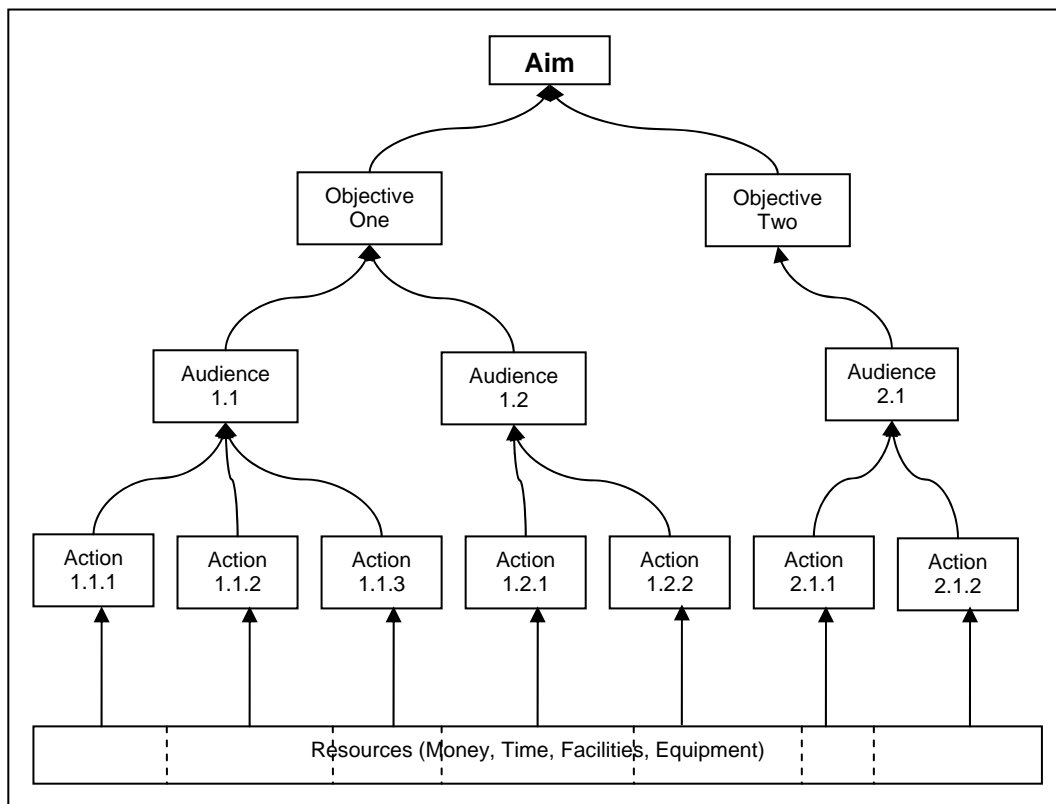
- **Monitoring** is a continual process of gathering data
 - What you are doing
 - What else is happening and what others are doing
 - How your targets are reacting
 - How the beneficiaries are being affected
- **Evaluation** is a periodic process of reviewing monitoring data and drawing conclusions from it
 - To inform and modify current plans
 - To learn from experience and improve future planning
 - To be accountable to beneficiaries, supporters, donors, managers, trustees and staff
 - To motivate participants in the advocacy campaign to continue their efforts

- **Impact Assessment** is a process of measuring how effective you have been in achieving your aims and objectives

It should be noted that some writers and practitioners define the terms differently, describing **monitoring** as the process of both data gathering and assessment that takes place while the advocacy campaign is running in order to help manage the advocacy and adapt plans, while **evaluation** and **impact assessment** are seen as the final review of the advocacy campaign after it has finished in order to be accountable and extract some learning from the experience.

There are many different models that can be used. All have some advantages and disadvantages – the approach you take should be determined by your needs and capacity. One holistic approach is called an Impact Chain or Staged Impact model. This monitors the different stages in the advocacy process and evaluates their effectiveness before bringing the elements together in an assessment of the whole project.

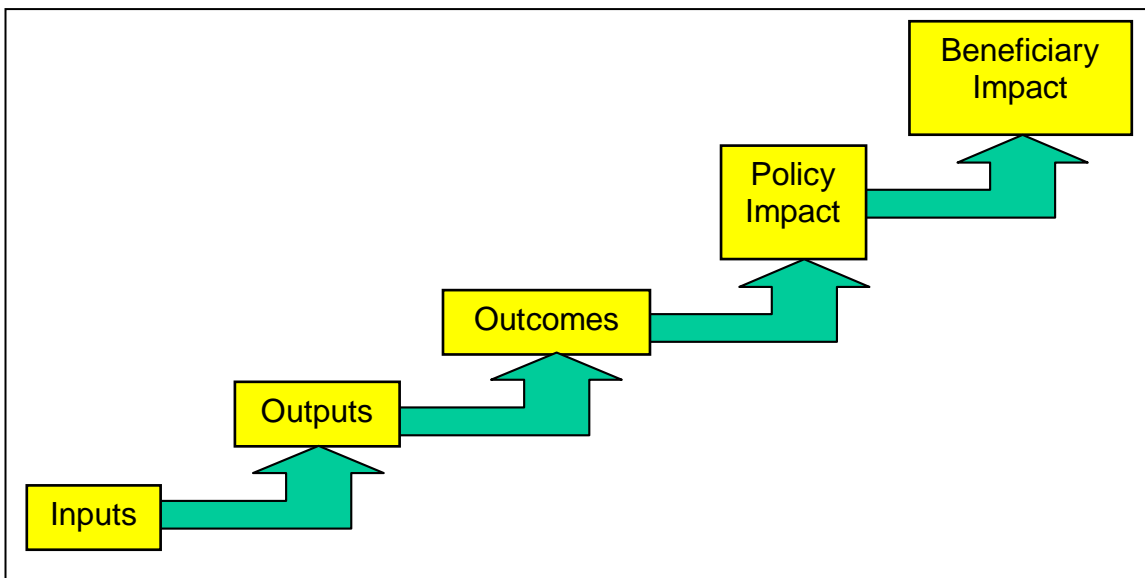
It requires that the advocacy campaign is based on a clear strategy setting out the planned influencing process, in particular the channels of influence (the target audiences who will influence the decision maker) that relate to each objective and the activities that will be undertaken to engage with each of those target audiences – see the strategy map below.



The elements of the strategy can then be monitored and the links between them evaluated. In doing this we often use a set of different terms that are in common use in monitoring and evaluation circles:

- **Inputs** – resources that you apply to the advocacy campaign in order to generate the outputs.
- **Outputs** – external actions that you take or resources that you produce in order to prompt the outcomes with your target audiences.
- **Outcomes** – the reactions of your target audiences (channels of influence) to your outputs and other stimula that may influence the decision maker and lead to the desired policy and practice changes.
- **Policy Impact** – relates to your **Objectives** – the changes in policy or practice that you want your targets to enact.
- **Beneficiary Impact** – relates to your **Aims or Goals** – the changes that you want the beneficiaries to enjoy.

Between “inputs” and “outputs” you could also include the category of “activities” – the things you do in order to produce the outputs, but as this adds little value to your understanding of the process it is probably not necessary.



You need to be able to monitor each of these categories. At the planning stage you should identify suitable indicators (or proxy indicators where necessary) and a process by which you will monitor those indicators.

Indicators, which can be quantitative or qualitative, could include Aims & Objectives, Baselines, Benchmarks, Milestones, Proxy Indicators and Progress Indicators. Progress indicators might involve devising a ladder of progress to see how close you are getting to achieving your objectives. For example, when trying to establish a policy and practice change of a government, you might set out progress indicators as:

1. Created debate on issue/put issue on policy agenda
2. Influencing debate

3. Influential “champions” emerge
4. Widespread agreement among influential stakeholders
5. Gained policy commitments from decision makers
6. Policy formulated/proposed
7. Policy agreed/adopted
8. Policy implemented/practice change evident

Evaluation methods can include:

- Individual reflection
- Coordination team meetings
- Stakeholder workshops
- External review and assessment

In designing your Monitoring & Evaluation process, there are a few simple guidelines that you can follow:

1. Its all about the plan:
 - Does it set out SMART aims and objectives?
 - Does it set out the intended influencing process?
 - Does it include clear indicators and means of measuring them?
 - Does it set out how and when you will evaluate or review the monitoring information?
 - Does it set out how and when you will report?
2. Remember that you only need enough information to draw a reasonable conclusion. You are not seeking an absolute level of academic proof.
3. Keep it manageable and realistic – focus on what is most important or useful for you to know
4. Documentation is essential - keep records (eg, activity file, monthly management reports, etc)
5. Use SMART objectives and other indicators – not just for your desired P&P change but also for intermediate outcomes and outputs
6. Involve partners & beneficiaries in both the monitoring and the evaluation process
7. Build in time and opportunities for individual and team reflection