

Monitoring and Evaluation of Advocacy Campaigns : Opportunities and Challenges

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1. Background:

There is a significant shift in development paradigms where rights based development approaches are gaining prominence. A large number of development actors are now designing interventions in a campaign mode where mass mobilization for demonstration of collective strength, as well as active engagement with policy making institutions are in centrality. Such strategies and advocacy instruments used by campaigns are not so common with the typical service delivery oriented organizations.

Various instruments exist for measuring the impacts of service delivery oriented programmes in tangible and process terms however, the initiatives of campaigns and policy influencing are still in its nascent stage. Evolution of various instruments, areas of measuring impact, appropriate indicators and suitable methodologies have yet not taken place with the growing importance to advocacy initiatives where a large chunk of resources are deployed by the international NGOs. It would be pertinent to build appropriate means of measuring the outcomes and impacts.

The paper attempts to explore various challenges in measuring impacts of policy advocacy related efforts using some of the examples of India. The two cases which are discussed here relate to the experiences gained in the national level MDG campaign called "Wada Na Todo" i.e. keep your promise and a campaign on Pre-Election Voters Awareness Campaign (PEVAC) in Madhya Pradesh. Many other states have also run PEVAC during Panchayat elections as a civil society initiatives supported by PRIA, Delhi under the Joint Action Programme to influence local self governance.

2. Two cases of campaigns:

It would be worthwhile to review at the two cases briefly as to identify emerging challenges in monitoring and evaluation. These cases provide possible areas of measuring its impact from different stakeholder perspectives.

Case-I :

PEVAC in M.P :

During the third round of elections of Local Self Governance bodies i.e.; Panchayats held in December 2005 in Madhya Pradesh, India, Civil Society decided to intervene the elections with the following objectives :

- (a) To improve the quality of elections by creating awareness among citizens, supporting potential women and also candidates from disadvantaged sections.
- (b) To identify bottlenecks in election process and influence State Election Commission (SEC) for positive changes in favour of effective democratic elections of the PRIs in the state of Madhya Pradesh.

The campaign was designed to be ambitious as to reach a large number of voters in village Panchayats in M.P. with the support of about 350 Voluntary organizations. The campaign covered more than 11000 Panchayats, which is about 50% of the total number of Panchayats of the State. There were more than four districts, which had 100% coverage of Panchayats through PEVAC.

A wide range of learning materials, print and audio-visual was produced and widely disseminated. In order to scale up reach, interactive radio programmes were also launched inviting SEC to answer the queries raised by the common citizen.

The campaign could address some of the bottlenecks of the election process with the help of SEC in the following manner :

- A large number of government officials were reached with the positive message of the SEC for conducting fair elections.
- Quick response on misinterpretation of various clauses/ provisions of nomination form, property disclosure form or identity cards, which had become imperative first time.
- Efficient redressal of harassment cases of women, dalit and tribal candidates was attained with the co-operation of the senior police officials.

In selective districts/ Panchayats capacity building initiatives were carried out for the newly elected representatives to improve their performance as a follow-up programme of PEVAC to orient newly elected Panchayat representatives.

A study was conducted to answer the outcome of the PEVAC with the partner NGOs and voters reached during PEVAC. About 241 NGOs and about 723 voters were interviewed who responded on various performance questions in the following manner :

Issues of awareness generation by NGOs as perceived by the respondents:

Fig 1: Issues of awareness generation by NGOs as perceived by the respondents

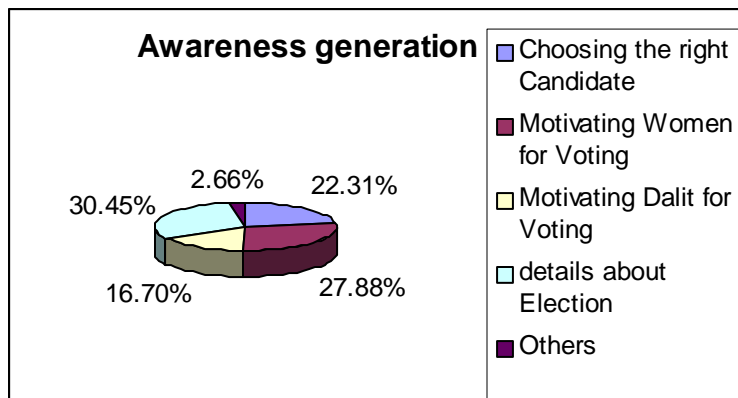
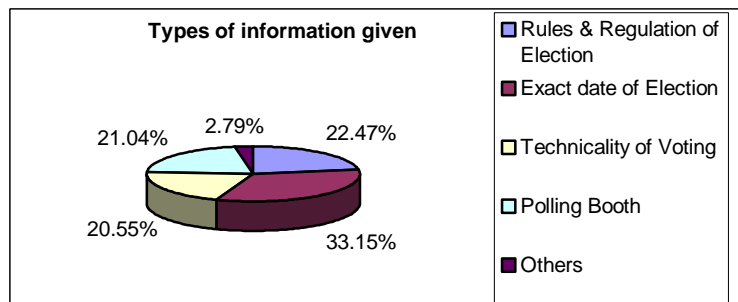


Fig 2: Issues of Information Dissemination by NGOs as perceived by the respondents



Campaign's impact was also measured in terms of type of problems encountered by the voters/ candidates and their quick redressal by the SEC.

Case-II

Wada Na Todo Abhiyaan - "Keep your Promise" Campaign

Wada Na Todo (WANT) Campaign emerged to the global commitments of 189 heads of the nations to fulfill 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a joint responsibility of the developed and developing nations in the UN with the beginning of the new millennium. India, being one of the signatory, has generated sufficient legitimacy to build up a campaign with the strength of Civil Society Organisations to make the State accountable for the realization of the goals. The Campaign was conceptualized in January 2005 at the time of the World Social Forum and later on converted into a formal campaign by mid 2005 to deepen the processes at the State level. The campaign was launched with the following objectives:

- (i) To build awareness among the citizens around the MDGs, National Development Goals (NDGs) and commitments of the current Government around Common Minimum Programme (CMP).
- (ii) To initiate micro and macro level monitoring on the commitments and level of performance of the Government in terms of the reach, quality and resource allocations.
- (iii) To build solidarity with the global process of the Civil Society for influencing global governance in favour of fulfillment of the MDGs.

The campaign developed various strategies to deepen the process at the State level as well as to demonstrate collective strength at the national level. It could connect with more than 400 CSOs in this Campaign across the country. In a People's Summit for Action Against Poverty held during 4-5 September 2005 as many as about 12000 citizens gathered to run a parallel summit to the one which was held in mid September 2005 in the United Nations for the mid term review of the MDGs. The strategy focused on highlighting concerns from the women, dalit, adivasi and other disadvantaged section's perspective to highlight the bottlenecks and non-performance of various programmes affecting fulfillment of various promises.

It was decided that a report card would be published on the current level of performance of the promises as an alternative citizen's report. Field level data through structured questionnaire and Focus Group Discussions was generated from 9 States reaching out to more than 1000 villages. The data analyzed realities particularly attainment of health, education and livelihood related goals.

3. Practices used in Monitoring and Evaluation for advocacy campaigns:

Monitoring and Evaluation practices in two of the above experiences can be visualized in the following manner:

(i) Developing clear action plan and follow-up:

The larger challenges in advocacy campaigns oriented towards large-scale mobilization and advocacy are generally around concretely identifying tasks and fixing responsibilities. A clearly defined plan of action in both the campaigns was quite helpful in monitoring the progress. In case of PEVAC, a state level core group was formed to review the progress on fortnightly basis. The plans are revised based on the feedback received, similarly, regional level committees were formed to review the progress of activities planned by the district level nodal NGOs. These nodal organizations regularly updated the State level secretariats with the progress of the campaign over phone as well as informed the problems encountered.

The campaign of WNT had also set up monitoring mechanisms by setting up a secretariat to provide executive/ operational functions for completing the plan as per schedule as well as keeping in touch regularly with the WNT members. The campaign had also set-up different committees viz Mass Mobilization Committee, Research and Advocacy Committee, Programme Management Committee etc. nominating volunteers from the core group. These committees not only provided leadership in their specific areas of concern, but also regularly monitored the progress and discussed it in core group for the revision of the plans as well as to report on the programs of various tasks to revise plans.

(ii) Creating a regular feedback mechanism:

In case of WNT, the D-group was created on website where all relevant information was shared and members could respond on the information

posted. The D-group also contained information on the forthcoming events and strategies. There were many mails received with relevant feedback to improve upon the plans and strategies. The website also provided an opportunity for a large number of individuals to reach out to the campaign with a request of joining or providing feedback on the contents of the campaign.

The PEVAC also considered it important to create a feedback mechanisms emerging from the grassroots to identify bottlenecks faced by the citizens either in filing nominations or during the time of voting either as a candidate or as a voter. The campaign secretariat worked on 24 hours basis to receive complaints, which were later taken up with the State Election Commission or with the district administration to address the difficulties faced by them.

(iii) **Using structured formats/ Questionnaires:**

It was also decided that a closed ended and semi-open ended questionnaire would be administered at the voters level as well as at the CSO level to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the campaign. The data collected was analyzed to identify possible impacts of the campaign as well as the areas of weakness.

The case of WNT, a study was conducted to assess the ground realities on the performance of MDGs at the grassroot level. A large number of members of WNT were contacted for the collection of data with their available capacities. The process provided two fold monitoring on the effectiveness of the campaign:

- (a) who are the active members of the campaign and willing to promptly getting information from the villages?
- (b) understanding the gaps in promises and realities to take up issues of concerns at the local level as well as for the national level advocacy.
- (c) looking at various parameter of campaign (PEVAC) as effective instrumens.

4. Key challenges in Monitoring and Evaluation of Advocacy Campaigns:

There are several challenges in Monitoring and Evaluation of Campaign and Advocacy, which need to be studied at depth to design more appropriate systems of monitoring and evaluation:

(i) **Unstructured log-frames and flexible action plans :**

Many a times, advocacy, initiatives and campaigns do not have specified time-frame and concrete plan of actions which result in poor monitoring of the advocacy outcomes and impacts. On the other hand, donors of the partners engaged in policy influencing and advocacy want proposals in tight log-frames. Developing very straight-jacketed plans becomes a nightmare for the campaign planners.

(ii) **Unclear indicators of outcome and impact:**

Defining indicators of success as outcomes and impacts become extremely difficult in campaigns and macro policy influencing projects. Therefore, data collection also becomes extremely difficult by the campaign staff or partners. It is also difficult to fix time frame for the outcomes due to greater uncertainties associated with advocacy efforts.

(iii) **Collective accountability and multiple actors:**

Most of the campaigns have multiple partnerships and a large-scale membership to make it a success. Most of the members wear multiple hats and it becomes extremely difficult for them to systematically report on the responsibilities undertaken by them. As a result it becomes quite difficult to fix either responsibility of monitoring with any specific individual or organization. This primarily results in weak monitoring of campaigns, as the staff appointed in the secretariat also does not have legitimate authority to ask the members for providing information on the success/ failures of the campaigns on structured formats.

(iv) **Ambitions targets and broad policy influencing agenda:**

Many of the policy advocacy efforts have highly ambitious targets of bringing about structural changes, which are macro level transformational in nature. In reality over a short and medium time frame, it becomes

extremely difficult to measure the success or extend the achievement of goals. Therefore, Monitoring and Evaluation gets reduced to reporting activities and outputs rather than outcomes and impacts. It also becomes extremely difficult to measure the cost effectiveness of such initiatives in relation to attainment of their larger goals or attainment of impact indicators.

5. Ways forward:

With the growing number of campaigns and rights based advocacy efforts, it is pertinent to identify new ways of monitoring and evaluation different than used in typical service oriented projects. It would be quite important to systematically document various best practices in Monitoring and Evaluation in campaigns to standardize Monitoring and Evaluation tools from the campaigns point of views.

Most of the campaign-oriented organizations are highly committed grassroot activists who do not underscore the value of monitoring and evaluation either due to lack of exposure or their reservations with the management tools. It would be pertinent to design appropriate capacity building initiatives to gradually sensitize as well as build skills to effectively monitor and evaluate success of the advocacy efforts.

Some of the core concerns, which remain void for greater exploration to deepen monitoring and evaluation in advocacy campaigns, may be highlighted as:

- (i) What would be planning instruments other than log-frames, which can facilitate more flexible yet measurable plans?
- (ii) How to define quantitative indicators, which are not absurd numbers reflecting only size of the campaign?
- (iii) How to define qualitative and process indicators, which may reveal more than interesting stories and narrations of events?
- (iv) What would be appropriate systems of monitoring and evaluation for regular feedback and systematic measurement of outcomes and impacts?