

Advocacy Evaluation Methodology Principles



New Tactics
in Human Rights

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Activists working in **low resource contexts** have a great need for **advocacy evaluation** frameworks and tools. While the field of advocacy evaluation is emerging, resources for this type of evaluation remain limited and even more so in low resource contexts. Additionally, more familiar and well-established program evaluation approaches frequently fail to address the needs and challenges specific to evaluating **advocacy initiatives**. Research shows that most advocacy initiatives do not conduct evaluations of their work. Advocacy Evaluation also often faces different challenges than other types of evaluation.

This document provides an overarching framework for an Advocacy Evaluation Methodology. We developed this framework to guide and inform the evaluation of advocacy initiatives with special considerations for activists working in particularly challenging contexts.

In the following pages, we share guiding principles for conducting advocacy evaluation. We developed these principles, in part, based on more than two decades of training activists from around the world through the **New Tactics in Human Rights (New Tactics) program**. These principles are also grounded in a comprehensive review of the literature on advocacy evaluation, as well as group and individual interviews with activists, evaluators, and funders who advocate, evaluate, or support advocacy in low resource contexts. The following principles reflect both research on advocacy evaluation and on-the-ground experiences of activists.

Low Resource Contexts

Contexts in which key resources for evaluation are lacking or severely limited. Some examples of these resources include economic resources, safety, political stability, technology, and human capital.

Advocacy Evaluation

A systematic process to assess the progress of, to learn from, and to improve advocacy initiatives.

Advocacy Initiatives

Advocacy refers to “a means for individuals, constituencies, or organizations to shape public agendas, change public policies, and influence other processes that impact their lives.”*

We use the terms “initiative” and “campaign” to refer to coordinated work being done to advance an area of advocacy.

*<https://www.newtactics.org/jordanian-civic-activists-toolkit-ii-glossary-terms>

Innovation Network, Inc. (2008). Speaking for Themselves: Advocates' perspectives on evaluation. Commissioned by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and The Atlantic Philanthropies, 1-20.

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Human rights focused

Universal human rights are at the foundation of our Advocacy Evaluation Methodology. We encourage Activists to use human rights principles to guide their work and as measures of their success. This approach emphasizes that the integrity of an initiative's process (including evaluation) is as important as other concrete outcomes.



Useful

Advocacy evaluation should directly inform and support advocacy initiatives. While evaluation often serves the purpose of assessing value and impact for external stakeholders, advocacy evaluation should prioritize evaluation that informs, supports, and advances the work of activists for universal human rights.



Participatory

Advocacy evaluation should engage a wide range of stakeholders (e.g., activists, beneficiaries, policy-makers, community members, etc.) in evaluation design, implementation, utilization, and dissemination. Advocacy work is collective in nature and the evaluation process should reflect this. The participation of stakeholders in the evaluation process also makes the evaluation findings more likely to be used by those stakeholders.



Do no harm

Activists and the people they support are often at risk of harm because of their view points, their identities, and/or their activist status. This is especially true in low resource contexts. Accordingly, advocacy evaluation must be especially attentive to the unique risks associated with advocacy work. In this context, it is important to plan evaluation activities with great care and attention to security. See our Advocacy Evaluation and the Principle of "Do No Harm" resource for more details.

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Accessible

Advocacy evaluation should be accessible. Accessibility means that the methods and tools included in this methodology should be usable by a wide variety of people with different skillsets. Accessible evaluation approaches support useful evaluations and greater participation. See the [Guidance for a More Manageable Human Rights-Based Advocacy Evaluation](#) document for more information on accessibility.



Flexible

Advocacy evaluations need to be responsive to unpredictable environmental, political, social, and security contexts. Advocacy evaluations also need to maintain accountability, rigor, and integrity in their processes. The balance between these needs calls for creativity and adaptation. This Advocacy Evaluation Methodology supports flexibility in three distinct ways:

1

We emphasize principles in evaluation. The methodology treats adherence to principles as critical outcomes (see our [Principles-Focused Evaluation](#) resource). This means that how an advocacy initiative is conducted is as important as what results are achieved. This supports activists to be flexible in the specific means and ends of their advocacy work, while adhering to core principles throughout the process.

2

We suggest shorter evaluation timeframes with structured opportunities to revisit and rework advocacy approaches and the associated evaluation plan. These shorter timeframes allow campaigns to update their evaluation approaches in response to changes in the environment and to continually use learnings from the evaluation to improve their campaign tactics.

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3

We utilize an outcome mapping framework to support activists in developing more flexible measures of success. This approach suggests three levels of “success markers” for each outcome. This allows advocacy evaluation to expand beyond one measure of success or failure and to encourage an ongoing reflection process on how tactics connect to outcomes. It also allows activists to have realistic goals and dream big about what is possible as a result of their advocacy.



Contextual

People who conduct advocacy evaluations must understand the political and social contexts in which the advocacy work occurs. Ideally, an evaluator is local and internal to the initiative. This allows activist-evaluators to develop realistic evaluations and to modify evaluation approaches in real-time and in direct response to changes in the environment.

We developed the **Advocacy Evaluation Toolkit** for use by Human Right Defenders and activists without technical expertise in evaluation. The toolkit is most effective when integrated into a well-planned advocacy initiative. These tools have been tested and integrated into the New Tactics Strategic Effectiveness Method for developing well-planned advocacy initiatives. For support in developing your advocacy initiative, please see our training materials on the Strategic Effectiveness Method [here](#).