

Which capacities do effective advocacy organizations require? Taking stock of advocacy research in non-Western contexts

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- DRAFT, not for quotation -

ABSTRACT

Despite a growing interest in advocacy for marginalized groups in non-western contexts, a systematic overview of the capacities that are essential to local civil society organizations for effective advocacy remains absent. By synthesizing the existing empirical research on advocacy capacities undertaken in a wide range of non-western countries, this paper outlines a framework identifying eight capacities key for effective advocacy. The paper clarifies the specific skill sets and organizational qualities associated with each capacity and how they contribute to advocacy effectiveness. Furthermore, it offers a reflection on using the identified capacities in real-world settings by advocates and donor agencies.

5 keywords: capacity, advocacy, policy influencing, civil society, NGOs

1. Introduction

Driven by the need to find effective solutions to the problems of poverty and injustice, researchers, policymakers and practitioners have shown greater interest in civil society's advocacy role. As traditional service delivery approaches have had limited structural impact, there is a growing need for a complementary political approach which challenges the underlying power structures that perpetuate marginalisation. Besides service delivery, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are therefore also expected to be involved in shaping public opinion, engaging with decision-makers and influencing key policies (D'Hollander et al., 2014; Magrath, 2014; Mitchell, 2015; Ulleberg, 2009).

While a lot of research has been done on advocacy, systematic insight in the capacities that CSOs require to be effective advocates is lacking (Almog-Bar & Schmid, 2014). First of all, insight in organizational capacities is lacking because a lot of research focuses on advocacy campaigns rather than on individual organizational requirements for effectively participating in such campaigns. Second, a systematic overview is absent because research on advocacy is conducted within a range of largely disconnected disciplines (Andrews & Edwards, 2004). This disconnect can also be seen in terms of context. While most research focuses on Western contexts there is little interaction with findings from non-Western contexts (Guo & Zhang, 2014).

To overcome these limitations, this paper creates a framework which (1) explains the link between organizational capacities and advocacy effectiveness, and (2) identifies the organizational requirements associated with these capacities. It aims to do so by reviewing and connecting empirical research from a wide range of disciplines, including social movement studies, gender studies, development studies, critical disability studies, sociology, social work, legal studies, political science, non-profit studies, public administration and public health. By incorporating evidence

from non-Western countries we aim to avoid a Western bias and look for capacities which have proven to be relevant across the globe. This review therefore draws on research undertaken in 31 different countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America (for an overview see Appendix 1). Although the analysis also looks at advocacy coalitions, it examines advocacy from the perspective of individual organizations. Due to this focus on individual organizations, we believe our framework can be used by advocacy CSOs for strengthening and reflecting on their advocacy efforts.

The remainder of this paper has four parts. The first part concerns a discussion of the relationship between advocacy, effectiveness and capacity. The second part outlines our capacities framework and clarifies why each of the eight identified capacities are essential to advocacy effectiveness. The third part reflects on the practical application of the framework. The paper ends with a summary of the main findings and the implications for future research.

2. Capacities for advocacy

Advocacy is inherently political and revolves around the accountability of decision-makers for their use of power (McGee & Gaventa, 2010). This accountability is especially important for marginalised groups whose interests are often not served by power holders. For marginalized groups, advocacy can be a means to overcome a sense of powerlessness and exert influence over the decisions that affect their lives. In this paper, we therefore normatively define advocacy as a 'wide range of activities conducted to influence decision makers at different levels with the overall aim of combatting the structural causes of poverty and injustice' (Barrett et al., 2016, p. 15). The empirical studies on which this paper is based revolve around a range of such struggles of marginalized groups including women, people with disabilities, forest communities, smallholder farmers, youth and children, HIV/AIDS infected, prisoners and LGBT groups.

Organizational capacity is assumed to be a major determinant of effectiveness. The general linkages between organizational capacity and effectiveness have been covered extensively in international development literature from perspectives such as systems thinking, complexity theory and organizational learning (for an overview see: IOB, 2011). Several non-academic publications zoom in on the specific linkages between capacity and civil society advocacy effectiveness (Blagescu & Young, 2006; Raynor et al., 2009; Stalker & Sandberg, 2011). A shared assumption is that organizational capacity is a precondition for performance, making capacity strengthening a core strategy in international development (Baser & Morgan, 2008). An important limitation of these publications is, however, that most do not make the analytical distinction between general organizational capacities (for example leadership, planning, fundraising) and those specifically associated with advocacy work. This paper makes that distinction by zooming in on individual organizational requirements for advocacy effectiveness.¹ Organizational advocacy capacity is therefore defined as the potential of CSOs to undertake advocacy with or for marginalized groups. Advocacy effectiveness is straightforwardly defined as achieving intended goals.²

Effective advocacy not only depends on advocacy skills but also on constraining or enabling environmental factors. Examples of such factors are the degree of regime openness (Tarrow, 2011), prevailing societal norms, values and

beliefs (Barrett et al., 2016), existing policies and treaties (Topsoe-Jensen et al., 2012), presence or absence of allies within the government (Tarrow, 2011), capacity of the government to implement desired changes (Kolb, 2007), costliness of desired change (Busby, 2010), mobilisation potential (Devlin-Foltz et al., 2012), presence or absence of opposing forces (Meyer & Staggenborg, 1996), the potential to form alliances (Brown & Fox, 2001) and institutionalised opportunities for participation, representation and consultation (Gaventa, 2006). This means that even if an organization has the right capacities to engage in advocacy, the environment may be such that chances for success are limited from the onset.

Table 1 presents the outcomes of our analysis, distinguishing between qualities for effective advocacy, associated capacities and organizational requirements for these capacities.

Table 1. Qualities for effective advocacy, associated capacities and organizational requirements

Qualities for effective advocacy	Capacity to...	Organizational requirements
Credible claim	Ensure evidence base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In-house research skills - Staff who is able to commission and critique research - Relations with researchers & knowledge institutes
Credible organization	Inspire trust among stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Track record - Brand recognition - Strong & consistent performance - Reputable leadership - Integrity - Transparency
Legitimate claim	Represent constituency interests	Strategies & structures for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accountability to constituency - Communication to constituency - Participation of constituency - Mobilisation of constituency
Stakeholder engagement strategy	Analyse the political arena	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Up-to-date understanding of the political landscape - Ability to conduct stakeholder and institutional analyses - Ability to monitor political developments - Knowledge of relevant laws, policies and treaties
Communication strategy	Produce tailored messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability to translate complex problems in understandable messages - Knowledge of the values, norms, beliefs and interests of audiences - Ability to choose appropriate communication channels - Long-term relations with journalists - Ability to use social media
Collective approach	Build coalitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Willingness to work together - Ability to maintain external relations - Awareness of the added value of oneself and others
Collaborative approach	Build rapport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal relationships with power holders - Understanding of power holders' personal and institutional interests - Physical presence near power holders
Flexible strategy	Adapt to ongoing changes in the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability to detect relevant changes in environment - Outward orientation - Ability to reflect upon validity of assumptions underlying strategies

Produce evidence

CSOs' advocacy messages need to be based on evidence if they are to be persuasive. Whether a message has a well-documented factual basis determines an important part of its credibility (Chereni, 2017; Evans, 2005; Fox, 2001; O'Callaghan & Gilbride, 2008; Spicer et al., 2011). Moreover, evidence forms an important startingpoint of making an issue visible, raising awareness, mobilising opinion, outlining alternative

policy options and monitoring and evaluating policy (Chopra et al., 2014; Pollard & Court, 2005). Daniel et al. (2015) found that the media are more likely to provide coverage if advocacy is underpinned by evidence. Evidence is relevant when it is accessible to stakeholders and concerns the nature of the problem (nature, scope and urgency), its underlying causes and its undesirable consequences. Proposed solutions are more likely to be perceived as credible when they follow logically from the evidence provided. Being able to gather evidence is particularly important in countries where governmental agencies are under-resourced and lack up-to-date knowledge and expertise. Moreover, governmental agencies may be interested to engage with advocacy CSOs as an inexpensive source of knowledge. CSOs can use this to their advantage to gain access to power holders (Potthof & Elbers, 2016). This gives rise to our first proposition:

Proposition 1: To be convincing to target audiences, advocacy messages need to be perceived as credible. For this, advocates must be able to ensure their messages have a sound evidence base.

To ensure that their advocacy work has a firm evidence base, CSOs either need to have in-house research capacity or engage in relations with reputable knowledge institutes or individual researchers (Evans, 2005). Some CSOs are staffed with experienced, professionally-qualified experts and are capable of producing high quality research material themselves. Having such in-house research capacity is resource intensive but has the added value that it further contributes to the CSO's credibility (Topsoe-Jensen et al., 2012). For groups lacking strong in-house research capacity, cooperating with reputable research institutes, universities and think tanks may be a good alternative. Working with contract-researchers requires CSOs to have skills to commission research and critique draftreports (Topsoe-Jensen et al., 2012). Sometimes advocates can benefit from close ties with sympathetic researchers who give them speedy access to facts and analysis free of charge.

Inspire trust amongst power holders

To get recognition and be taken seriously by stakeholders, CSOs need to be perceived as credible (Barrett et al., 2016; Chereni, 2017). This is ultimately about trust and the belief that a CSO is honest and competent on the issues it raises. This is particularly important for influencing power holders, media relations and building alliances (Cugelman & Otero, 2010). CSOs that are trusted are better able to speak about issues with a sense of authority. Trust here is based on credentials which have to be built over time and which have to be recognized by target audiences. The latter underlines how important perceptions and reputation building are for credibility, making stakeholders' awareness of the advocating organization a key precondition for trustworthiness (Potthof & Elbers, 2016). This gives rise to our second proposition:

Proposition 2: To be assessed favourably by stakeholders, the advocating CSO needs to be perceived as credible. For this, it must be able to inspire trust among target audiences.

Several credentials are identified in the literature for inspiring trust. Having a track record in a particular field contributes to being perceived as credible, as it signifies having in-depth knowledge and expertise (Barrett et al., 2016). For instance, a track record in service delivery can provide leverage in advocacy as it conveys the notion that the organization knows first-hand about the situation 'on the ground' (Kamstra & Knippenberg, 2014; Potthof & Elbers, 2016). Furthermore, an organization's brand recognition is important for inspiring trust. CSOs build up their 'brand' by strong performance and by delivering consistent quality over many years (Cugelman & Otero, 2010). Power holders and (possible) allies are more likely to work with an organization if it is known for being very good at what it does. Several studies found that an organization's reputation also very much depends on the (perceived) quality of its leadership (Morariu & Brennan, 2009; Raynor et al., 2009). Besides the leader's management skills and social networks, in particular his/her charisma and integrity have been found to be important. Regarding the latter, integrity is associated with being seen to have a principled stance, following one's beliefs and adopting an open and honest public position (Spicer et al., 2011). Faith-based organizations may have an advantage here (Potthof & Elbers, 2016). Finally, transparency is identified in the literature as an important source of credibility. Especially when a CSO takes the 'moral high ground', for example, when fighting corruption cases or in holding government accountable for its actions, it needs to have its own house in order (Topsoe-Jensen et al., 2012).

Represent constituency

To be seen as having the right to advocate for marginalized people, advocacy work needs to be seen as genuinely reflecting these people's interests (IOB, 2015). Based on research in Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, Spicer et al (2011) found that advocates derive an important part of their legitimacy from being seen to represent the views, needs and interests of constituents. This is not self-evident as CSOs often fail to clarify in whose name they speak and act, or by what mechanisms they are authorized to act and are held to account (Houtzager & Lavalley, 2010). Advocates with mechanisms in place to ensure adequate constituency representation and mobilisation are more likely to attract the interest of power holders than those lacking such a base (Antlöv et al., 2010; Barnes et al., 2016; Barrett et al., 2016; Bratton, 1990). This gives rise to our third proposition:

Proposition 3: To have the mandate to advocate, CSOs need to be perceived as legitimate spokespeople of constituency interests. For this, they require adequate procedures for representation, participation and mobilisation.

Claims about representation are only credible when the views, needs and interests of the marginalized groups in question are accurately and fairly taken into account throughout the different stages of the advocacy process. Strong linkages between the advocating CSO and its constituency are an important precondition for this (Barrett et al., 2016). At the very least, advocates need to communicate regularly with those they seek to empower whilst being accountable to them for their advocacy messages and actions. Several authors emphasize the importance of marginalized people's participation through the different stages of the advocacy

process (Aberese Ako et al., 2013; Rand & Watson, 2007; Topsoe-Jensen et al., 2012). Besides enhancing legitimacy, such involvement contributes to a sense of ownership of the advocacy strategy by the marginalized group in question. Moreover, grassroots involvement is instrumental in facilitating the mobilization component of a campaign (Usdin et al., 2000). Besides contributing to certain advocacy goals, such mobilisation can help in building the critical consciousness, self-confidence and rights awareness of people who would not previously have considered making demands on or challenging the authority of powerful local actors (Frobisher et al., 2016; Rand & Watson, 2007).

Analyse the political arena

While strategizing, advocates need to know who needs to be influenced and what influences them (Daniel et al., 2015). It must be clear which actors have the authority and resources to change the policy and/or practices related to the identified problem (Makombe, 2015). Furthermore, potential allies with the capacity to meaningfully support the advocacy goal as well as possible opponents who can undermine the efforts need to be identified (Harris et al., 2017). Important here is the recognition that the government is not a unitary actor, meaning that within the government usually both allies and opponents can be found. Besides the stakeholders within the political arena, also the arena itself is of importance. Relevant power holders may be located at different levels (local, regional, national), depending on the issue and the political system (for example centralized or decentralized) (Gaventa, 2006; Mohammed & Elbers, 2016). For advocates it is key to know where 'openings' exist (Pittman & Naciri, 2010). Depending on the context, some levels may offer more opportunities for change than others (Fox, 2001). Knowledge of existing legislation and signed treaties may also be helpful in identifying opportunities for advocacy and understand the motivations of government actors (Spicer et al., 2011). Furthermore, knowing how decisions are reached (for instance having detailed information on the procedures that are being followed in relevant decision-making) at different levels may provide additional starting-points for a well-informed advocacy strategy (Evans, 2005). Finally, some governments have institutionalized their consultations with civil society on particular issues (Gaventa, 2006). Such 'invited spaces' can offer opportunities for advocates (Evans, 2005), but may also be used by state agencies to legitimize policies and co-opt civil society groups. This gives rise to our fourth proposition:

Proposition 4: To have a clear perspective on how to engage relevant stakeholders, advocates require a stakeholder engagement strategy. Having such a strategy requires an in-depth understanding of the political arena.

To strategize, advocates require an in-depth understanding of the political arena. To achieve this, being able to conduct stakeholder and institutional analyses is key (Evans, 2005). Such analyses are more likely to be reliable when they draw upon as many sources of information as possible (triangulation). Relevant information can come from a variety of sources including 'friendly' government officials and allies, existing academic research, official documents (laws, regulations, organizational strategies), donor assessments, public opinion surveys and media reporting. While

some elements of the political arena are relatively stable, developing effective strategies requires careful political analysis of ever-changing opportunities and constraints. Political alliances rise and fall, elites may become unified or divided and new allies and enemies may emerge. This makes having ‘antennae’ in place for detecting relevant political entry-points for advocacy crucial. Equally important is knowledge of relevant laws, policies and signed treaties. Besides offering a legal starting-point for advocacy, laws, policies and treaties can provide opportunities to dialogue with power holders that otherwise would not have been available (Mohammed & Elbers, 2016).

Produce tailored messages

Effective advocacy requires communication which succeeds in touching hearts (beliefs, values) and minds (interests). Power holders need to be persuaded to change policies and practices. Allies and constituents need to be mobilized in support of the advocacy goal. Content-wise, effective narratives typically resonate with the norms, values and experiences of targeted power holders (Devlin-Foltz et al., 2012; Stalker & Sandberg, 2011) as well as their self-interests (Mohammed & Elbers, 2016; Topsoe-Jensen et al., 2012). Choosing the right perspective and framing is key (Kane, 2008; Spicer et al., 2011). For example, both Brumley (2010) and Combellick-Bidney (2017) found that advocacy on reproductive rights was more effective when framed as a human right as opposed to linking it to a feminist narrative. Furthermore, finding the right communication channel is also important. Massmedia is often cost-effective in reaching a large audience whilst gaining the attention of power holders (Daniel et al., 2015; Pittman & Naciri, 2010). Finally, it may make sense to time communication with key events (for example elections or international summits) to maximize attention for the issue (Chua, 2014). The above gives rise to our fifth proposition:

Proposition 5: To persuade power holders and mobilize allies and constituents, advocates require a communication strategy. This requires advocates to be able to tailor messages to the interests, values and beliefs of target audiences.

Being able to tailor messages requires a strategic approach to communication in which issues are framed strategically (Brumley, 2010) and tailored to the specificities of different target audiences (Evans, 2005; Pittman & Naciri, 2010). Advocates need to be able to construct messages that are consistent and easy to understand and remember. Evoking an emotional response and motivating the public, constituents, potential allies and power holders to take action requires having knowledge of the right vocabulary and anticipating the norms, values and interests of target audiences (Busby, 2010). Existing policies and signed international treaties may provide a suitable entry point for advocacy messages (Mohammed & Elbers, 2016). Choosing the right communication channel (for example national press, online media, radio, TV ‘talk shows’, theatre, pamphlets, music, videos and songs) is key to ensure the intended audience is reached (Chopra et al., 2014). While advocates often turn to the media, the latter are generally difficult to control. There is always the risk that the media will distort, change, delay, misplace, obstruct or politicise the message. Building long-term relations with journalists can be a good way to limit such

distortions whilst providing opportunities to receive media coverage (Ilkharacan, 2010; Usdin et al., 2000). Knowing how to use social media effectively has become an important part of advocacy communication. In more politically restrictive countries where the opportunities for reaching out through the established media may be constrained, social media may in fact be the only viable channel of communication (Topsoe-Jensen et al., 2012).

Build coalitions

Advocacy coalitions are perceived to have a greater chance of achieving successes than individual organizations (Barnes et al., 2016; Barrett et al., 2016; Chereni, 2017; Chopra et al., 2014; Hann et al., 2015; Kane, 2008; Lobina, Terhorst, & Popov, 2011; Pittman & Naciri, 2010; Stalker & Sandberg, 2011). This implies that effective advocacy groups should have the ability to cooperate with one another. A collective approach adds value in several ways. First, by working together, different skill sets are brought together. Different phases of implementation and different strategies require a wide range of competencies which single organizations are unlikely to wholly possess (Chapman & Fisher, 2000; Rand & Watson, 2007; Terrazas et al., 2010; Yanacopulos, 2005). Second, by working together, advocates can share crucial information (Acosta, 2012; Mmatli, 2009; Yanacopulos, 2005). Such information can consist, for example, of political analyses, experience on the topic, evidence regarding the scope of the issue or details of relevant laws or treaties. Third, joint campaigns are generally more visible than those of individual organizations (Daniel et al., 2015; Spicer et al., 2011; Topsoe-Jensen et al., 2012). The more attention a campaign receives, the more people are reached with its message and the less easy it can be ignored by power holders (Evans, 2005). Fourth, by having organizations join forces, coalitions are able to organize interventions at multiple levels (local, regional, national, international) which would not be possible otherwise (Ramisetty & Muriu, 2013). Often successful advocacy requires simultaneous changes at different levels because decisions made at the top levels affect those made at lower levels, while actions at lower levels often shape and inform policies at higher levels (Chapman & Fisher, 2000; Fox, 2001). Fifth, when advocating for sensitive issues, working in coalitions can help to reduce risk (O'Callaghan & Gilbride, 2008; Rand & Watson, 2007). Particularly when dealing with oppressive governments, coalitions may provide opportunities to explore and exploit political spaces that organizations could not do if acting alone. This gives rise to the sixth proposition:

Proposition 6: To leverage impact, advocates need to operate in alliances. Working in alliances requires the ability to build coalitions.

Successful coalitions are associated with building and ensuring mutual interests and commitments (Stalker & Sandberg, 2011; Terrazas et al., 2010), trust between members (Brown & Fox, 2001), joint objectives (Barrett et al., 2016), coordination and agreed upon roles and responsibilities (Barrett et al., 2016; Brown & Fox, 2001; Devlin-Foltz et al., 2012), information sharing (Acosta, 2012; Mmatli, 2009) and agreements on overall public and political positioning at the outset (Martin, Culey, & Evans, 2006). To be able to build coalitions, advocates need to be willing to work together and invest in an often complex and time-consuming relationship. In

addition, advocates need the actual skills to build and maintain external relations. Such skills in particular revolve around coordinating joint activities, representing the organization externally and collecting and sharing information. Finally, advocating groups require an understanding of the areas in which their own organization and other (potential) coalition members can add value to the coalition.

Build rapport with power holders

IOB (2015) found that effective advocacy strategies often involve informal personal relationships with power holders and their staff members (Barnes et al., 2016; Hann et al., 2015; Miles et al., 2012; Spicer et al., 2011). Such personal relations are crucial as they enable advocates to access power holders and build rapport (Bratton, 1990). Miles et al. (2012) describe how a disabled persons' organization in Bangladesh uses its personal relations with the prime minister to influence policy development. Personal relationships are easier to make and develop when there is a closer connection and understanding between the parties involved. In other words, where there is greater rapport. Makombe (2015) found that the chances of successful advocacy are smaller when power holders doubt the intentions of advocates persuasive. Having relationships with power holders is crucial for building trust and usually means greater reception of ideas for policy changes (IOB, 2015). Once a CSO has built rapport with a power holder, opportunities may present themselves for raising awareness, exerting influence, gaining access to crucial information and mobilizing power holders' support when needed. The above gives rise to the following proposition:

Proposition 7: To enhance the receptiveness of power holders, advocacy groups need to have personal relations with them. This requires advocates to be able to build rapport with power holders.

The literature mentions several qualities associated with building rapport with power holders. First, successful advocacy is often associated with advocates succeeding in building personal relations with power holders. Having common ground, shared experiences, membership of the same ethnic or religious group or the same geographical area can all contribute to building a connection. Potthof and Elbers (2016) found that a shared religious background (Baptist Christianity) and geographical location (Cameroon's Northwest Region) helped to convince government officials of the importance of inclusive education for children with disabilities. Second, being aware of the personal and institutional interests of power holders is crucial for building rapport (Busby, 2010). CSOs that are able to improve the credibility of the power holder or to generate positive press for him/her are more likely to get things done. Third, because building rapport costs time and requires sustained efforts, having a physical presence close to where power holders are based is beneficial. Potthof and Elbers (2016) show the limitations of lobbying power holders from a distance due to the difficulties of building a relationship. This implies, for example, that being located in a capital city is crucial to connect with national level decision-makers and politicians.

Adapt to on-going changes in the environment

Effective advocacy is associated with having a flexible strategy. This implies that organizations should have the capacity to adapt to on-going changes in the environment (IOB, 2015; Pittman & Naciri, 2010; Raynor et al., 2009; Terrazas et al., 2010). The outcomes of advocacy are shaped by many actors and factors. This means that advocacy is notoriously difficult to plan in a linear fashion (Chapman & Fisher, 2000). New opponents may rise, decision-makers may delay their decisions, allies may change their minds, the media may start to publish critical pieces and the original goal may no longer be relevant. Advocacy therefore requires organizations which, regardless of the advocacy strategy they pursue, have the structures and mind-sets in place to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances (IOB, 2015; Raynor et al., 2009). On the one hand, this implies being able to follow up day-to-day political developments and produce immediate reactions when necessary (Ilkkaracan, 2010). On the other hand, organizational readiness to deal with unexpected events is particularly important to seize the opportunities that occur when the various constraints that normally prevent policy changes give way to a window for reform (Morariu & Brennan, 2009). Devlin-Foltz et al. (2012) for instance describe how an advocacy campaign for better road safety in Uganda was built on a single tragic incident in 2007 when a blind individual was struck and seriously hurt by a motorcycle. The above gives rise to our eighth proposition:

Proposition 8: To cope with changes in the environment, advocates must have a flexible strategy. For this, advocates must be able to select appropriate tactics in light of on-going contextual changes.

A flexible advocacy strategy first of all requires advocacy organizations to have 'antennae' for detecting relevant changes in the context that affect the advocacy strategy that is pursued. This implies that advocates need to be outwardly orientated with the ability to gather and analyse information about what is happening (Raynor et al., 2009). This very much resembles the kind of skills needed for analysing the political arena. Advocates need to be able to constantly reflect on their assumptions about the behaviour of power holders and about the underlying mechanisms at work, and to consider whether their assumptions about the context are still valid (IOB, 2015). It then becomes possible to select appropriate tactics in response to the changing context (Barrett et al., 2016; Coates & David, 2002). For example, when informal forms of policy dialogue do not deliver the right results, advocates may switch to more public campaigns and pressure (IOB, 2015).

4. The need for tailor-made capacity strengthening

The capacities framework presented in this paper has the potential to produce real-world benefits for those engaged in advocacy work. Because the framework presented here clarifies which capacities and organizational qualities are key for effective advocacy, it allows for keeping track of capacity changes, identifying strengths and weaknesses, assessing progress and facilitating debate and reflection on why and how success has or has not been achieved. Where does the organization currently stand regarding its advocacy capacity? What are its strengths and weaknesses in light of the context and the type of advocacy work it is undertaking? What should the priorities be in strengthening the existing capacities? The

framework is also of interest to funders who want to improve their grant making to advocacy organizations, but feel limited in their ability to understand how to best assess potential grantees or support capacity strengthening initiatives. Finally, we believe the framework and analysis presented here offers useful insights to advocacy evaluators.

How the framework will be used ultimately determines whether it will facilitate genuine reflection. Capacity strengthening activities tend to be most meaningful when the ownership is with the organization in question as opposed to being enforced by a funding agency (Baser & Morgan, 2008). Whether the process is locally owned or not will directly affect the willingness and the ability of the organization to be reflexive and to explore both their strengths and weaknesses. A willingness to be self-critical should not be taken for granted when capacity strengthening activities are carried out in the context of a donor-recipient relationship, especially when staff may have the impression that future funding depends on favourable self-assessment outcomes.

The framework may actually do more harm than good when being used in a managerial way. Perhaps the biggest risk is that it may end up being used as a blueprint for advocacy capacity development. This risk is real given the fact that many donor agencies and INGOs have embraced managerial thinking since the 2000s, leading to the top-down adoption of the same business-like practices and 'ticking the box' exercises by NGOs across the globe (Elbers et al., 2014; Kamstra & Schulpen, 2015; Roberts et al., 2005). The result is increasing isomorphism in terms of how NGOs are structured, the kind of activities they do, how they are managed and how they report. In our view, such isomorphism is undesirable as it tends to undermine the diversity, autonomy, value-base and local rootedness of CSOs.

Besides contributing to isomorphism, using the framework as a blueprint for advocacy capacity development would ignore the fact that effective advocacy does not always require the same organizational capacities. Which capacities are relevant depends on contextual factors (for example open or closed state), the nature of the advocacy interventions (for example raising public awareness requires different skills than changing laws) and whether advocacy is implemented alone or in coalitions. Regarding the latter, one of the rationales of working in coalitions is that different organizations add value by bringing different qualities. This implies that organizations which operate in coalitions do not necessarily need to be strong across all eight capacities identified in this paper.

5. Conclusions

There is a growing interest in the role of civil society organizations in non-Western settings as advocates for marginalized groups. While organizational capacity is assumed to be a major determinant of advocacy effectiveness, the capacities most relevant for advocacy effectiveness have not been systematically identified. This paper sets out to (1) explain the link between organizational capacities and advocacy effectiveness; and (2) identify the organizational requirements associated with these capacities. It relies on a synthesis of relevant empirical literatures of advocacy for marginalized groups in non-Western contexts.

The paper identifies eight capacities associated with effective advocacy. The capacities identified are the ability to: (1) produce evidence, (2) inspire trust among

stakeholders, (3) represent constituency interests, (4) analyse the political arena, (5) produce tailored messages, (6) build coalitions, (7) build rapport with power holders and (8) adapt to on-going changes in the environment. Per capacity, the paper identifies possible ways in which respective capacity contributes to advocacy effectiveness and outlines organizational qualities. By identifying key capacities and their linkages with advocacy effectiveness, this paper also paves the way for future research on advocacy capacity. Future studies can further test and clarify the individual capacities' contribution to effectiveness, their interrelations and the conditions under which different capacities are most important.

Finally, the framework presented in this paper has the potential to produce real-world benefits for those engaged in advocacy work. It makes the abstract notion of advocacy capacity concrete and can be used as a tool to reflect upon organizational strengths and weaknesses. We also point out that the framework is explicitly not intended as a template for what 'professional' advocacy organizations should look like. Whether it will facilitate meaningful capacity strengthening will therefore ultimately depend on the manner in which it is applied.

Appendix 1. Countries covered in the literature review

Africa	(Eur)Asia	Latin America
Zimbabwe	India	Mexico
South Africa	Nepal	Brazil
Ghana	Vietnam	Colombia
Nigeria	Bangladesh	Nicaragua
Tanzania	Georgia	Bolivia
Morocco	Kyrgyzstan	Peru
Sierra Leone	Ukraine	Uruguay
Uganda	Turkey	Chille
Cameroon	Indonesia	El Salvador
Mozambique		
Ethiopia		
Democratic Republic of Congo		

Endnotes

1. Barret et al (2016) do make this distinction, but their focus is more on monitoring and evaluating advocacy effectiveness and not on organizational requirements.
2. Discussions on conceptual and methodological challenges of advocacy effectiveness fall outside the scope of this paper (for this see e.g.: Amenta et al., 2010; Andrews & Edwards, 2004; Barrett et al., 2016; Kolb, 2007; Stachowiak et al., 2007).

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