

Introduction

This is the first update for the action research project on Innovative Methodologies for Assessing the Impact of Participatory Policy Work being undertaken jointly by the Impact Assessment Unit of ActionAid and country partner programmes and partners in Brazil, Ghana, Nepal and Uganda. The project is described in the accompanying introduction, which should be read first. This update is intended to provide a brief overview of the work undertaken during the first year. Further details are available from the research team or the publications listed on page 4.

Work done so far

Recruitment of Coordinator

The project officially started in November 2001² when the coordinator, Jennifer Chapman, joined ActionAid. This was almost a year later than originally intended due to the time taken in recruiting the coordinator position which was advertised both internally and externally in all the countries involved in the research.

Jennifer's first task was to visit the four countries involved in the study to meet with ActionAid staff and the partners in the work. The purpose of these visits was to build common understanding of the research, to build relationships and to initiate recruitment of research leaders for each country.

Recruitment of research team

Getting the right team together took much of the first 6 months of the project but the time and effort has paid off. We have an enthusiastic and committed team who together bring a variety of complementary skills and backgrounds. In Africa, where the partners for the research had already been agreed, the Ugandan Land Alliance (ULA) and the Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP) worked with ActionAid in the selection of the research leaders.

An Introduction to the Research Team

Jennifer Chapman joined ActionAid on 5th Nov 2001. She has a research background and for the last few years has specialised on advocacy and campaigning issues. In 2000 she co-authored with Amboka Wameyo a Scoping Study on the Monitoring and Evaluation of Advocacy which forms a base-line study for this research project. She is the coordinator of the research and is based in London.

Hira Vishwakarma joined the research team on 1st April 2002 as National Research Manager for ActionAid Nepal. Hira is a development professional of long experience who had been at ActionAid Nepal since 1989. Hira left the team in September 2002 to take up a Masters scholarship in Ireland but continues to take an interest in the work and is still very involved in the dalit issue in Nepal.

Laya Prasad Uprety took over as National Research Manager in Nepal on 16th Sep 2002 in the capacity of consultant. He is an anthropologist by discipline and holds the position of Senior Lecturer at the Central Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Tribhuvan University. Currently, he is on Ph.D study leave and has been contributing to the advocacy action research by managing his own academic research. He brings many years experience of consultancy, evaluation and research. He is leading a team of two – Indra Rai and Him Prasad Sedain who have both had long programme experience at ActionAid Nepal. Both team members are on secondment as Research Consultants from their previous positions of Senior Programme Officers.

Vincent Azumah joined the team as Programme Officer in Ghana on 15th May 2002. Vincent describes himself as a 'journalist, development worker, researcher and human rights advocate rolled into one'. He has been particularly involved in activism against the Trokosi practice¹. He joined ActionAid Ghana from International Needs Ghana where he started the advocacy and public affairs department.

Almir Pereira Junior took on the post of Project Officer in Brazil on 20th May 2002. Almir holds a doctors' degree in Sociology and has been working in the NGO field since 1986. He had a wide experience in qualitative and quantitative research, in advocacy of social issues (in particular children's and adolescent's rights, AIDS, racism, gender and sexuality) and in the planning/ monitoring/ evaluation of social projects.

Sarah Okwaare Otto joined ActionAid Uganda as Programme Officer on 1st June 2002. Sarah is a development worker with specialised experience in poverty assessment, gender and policy analysis. She led one of the Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) teams under the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project (UPPAP) on behalf of AAU. She has wide experience in participatory methodologies. She is also an activist on social issues around gender and has been actively involved in the Coalition for the Domestic Relations Bill (DRB) hosted by Uganda Women's Network.

Virtual advisory panel

A virtual advisory panel has been established to ensure that:

- The research learns from other advocacy work happening in ActionAid and elsewhere
- Findings are grounded and subjected to rigorous and informed debate
- The research is known about more widely in ActionAid and findings are shared.

The advisory panel members are: Charles Abani, Country Director, AA Nigeria; Edele Thebaud, Country Director AA Haiti; Valerie Miller, Just

Irungu Houghton, Director, AA USA; and Koy Thomson, Policy Director, ActionAid UK.

It was decided to draw most of the panel members from ActionAid to ensure that the research learns from the wide advocacy experience within other ActionAid country programmes, and to facilitate dissemination within ActionAid and partners.

The team is virtual – i.e. it acts at a distance by email and phone with face-to-face meetings if any panel members happen to be visiting London or a case-study country in the

¹ A cultural practice in South Eastern Ghana that allows for young girls to be sent into servitude in fetish shrines as atonement for the alleged crimes of relations

In-country scoping studies

Scoping studies have been carried out in each country to provide baseline studies of how NGOs currently assess the impact of their advocacy work. In each country a range of local and international NGOs have been contacted in order to:

- Investigate how NGOs currently reflect on, learn from, or monitor and evaluate their advocacy work
- To look for any new or innovative ideas
- To identify the main gaps and challenges.

Whereas it was hoped that these studies might uncover interesting methods, tools and frameworks that the team could test out, in reality the main finding is that most organisations are struggling with these issues and as a result are immensely interested in this research. The studies have been informally written up and are available on request (see p 4).

Team meetings

The core team have met twice: for a week in July in London 2002 and a few days in Rio in September 2002. For the London meeting we were fortunate to benefit from the participation of Valerie Miller (advisory panel member) and Ros David (Impact Assessment Unit). Charles Owusu (Impact Assessment Unit), Louis Morago (Policy Unit), and Madeline Church (action research on networks) also joined us for specific sessions.

The aims of the week in London were:

- Teambuilding
- To develop common understanding of what the research is about and how to do it
- To explore some possible conceptual frameworks
- To plan initial stages of in-country work

The team meeting in Rio was arranged to take advantage of the team members all being present in Rio

as participants at an ActionAid international workshop on Rights and Empowerment. During the few days we worked together as a team we:

- Updated each other on the status of the work in each country
- Discussed what a framework is and how they can be used
- Discussed different ideas around monitoring and evaluation
- Worked with an outside consultant, Rosana Heringer, to deepen our understanding of Action Research and to think through the upcoming partner consultations
- Discussed communication issues and advisory panels.

Selection of partners and building relationships

Key to the success of this kind of research is good relationships, trust and understanding between all the organisations involved. Once the research managers were recruited building this relationship became the main focus of their work.

The partners ULA in Uganda, and CEDEP and CENSUDI, in Ghana were involved in the writing of the original proposal for the research and in the selection of their countries' research leaders. In Ghana the Programme Officer, Vincent, is actually based at the CEDEP office in Accra rather than at the ActionAid office.

In Brazil and Nepal decisions about who the research partners would be were made only some time after the research leaders had joined the team. This gave them time to learn about the different ActionAid partners who are involved in advocacy and the kind of work they do. Key to the decision was the extent of the partner organisation's interest in the research and their belief that it would be of benefit to them in their on-going advocacy efforts.

In country consultations

After mutual understanding had been reached with the research partners each country has carried out a consultation exercise involving staff from ActionAid and the partners. While the consultations have followed a slightly different format in each country the general aims of each were similar:

- To develop common understanding and clarity around the work
- To understand the different stakeholders expectations.
- To develop a plan of work for the first phase of the research.

Coming out of these consultation exercises have been plans for the initial work in each country. Whereas the work plan and methods in each country vary according to local needs and conditions the aims of the first phase in each case can be broadly described as follows:

- To document³ in a way that can be shared the advocacy work that the partner has undertaken on the chosen issue and what they believe they have achieved by this.
- To document in a way that can be shared the current ways, formal and/or informal, that the partner reflects on, learns from and adapts their advocacy work.
- To use this information to start to reflect on different ways of thinking about the work, to develop key questions for investigation and to plan the next phase of the work.

³ Document is used here to denote any method of 'capturing' the information in a way that can

Brazil consultation

The consultation process in Brazil followed a 3 step process to allow greater participation of UNAS (Union of Heliópolis' Residents' Associations & Centres) membership:

Step 1:

A one-day meeting with representatives of AA Brazil and community leaders to:

- Present the research proposal
- Share AA Brazil's understanding on key issues such as advocacy, monitoring and research
- Discuss the modalities of UNAS and AA Brazil working together
- Discuss which aspect of UNAS's advocacy work will form the focus of the research

Between Step 1 and Step 2, UNAS conducted an internal process of debate and consultation to decide:



Consultation meeting with UNAS, the partner in Brazil

a) the focus; and, b) the members of a "work group" who will undertake the research with AA Brazil.

Step 2:

A one-day meeting with the "work-group" to:

- Decide on the focus for the research;
- Develop a workplan for the next 6 months

- Define the structure and resources needed to conduct the research;
- Propose dates and agendas for a further 2 meetings with the community leaders during the following 6 months.

Step 3:

A half-day meeting with the directors of UNAS to present and discuss the results of Step 2.

Nepal

Community Self-Reliance Centre, (CSRC) are currently working on forming a network of like organizations to take forward the work on tenancy in Nepal. Him Prasad Sedain, a member of the advocacy action research team, is working with them to think through the added value of such a network. They are hoping to trial two tools to look at this: participatory story-building and contributions assessment which have been drawn from action research on networks in the UK⁴.

ActionAid Nepal have made a base-line video of the action research. At the consultation meeting various people from ActionAid, CSRC, Dalit NGO Federation (DNF), and Saraswoti Community Development Forum (SCDF) were interviewed about their perceptions of the research and what they hope to gain from it. These interviews will be interlaced with footage from the field.

Ghana

In Ghana a consultant, Esther Ofei-Aboagye, has agreed to work with the three organisations at an early stage to facilitate them in thinking about their own advocacy to explore the following questions:

- What does advocacy mean for our organisation in a Ghanaian context?
- What activities do we undertake and why? What activities do others undertake and why? What advocacy activities are not or rarely undertaken and why?
- What are we trying to achieve by our advocacy work? How do we define the different dimensions of success?
- What are we trying to achieve by monitoring and evaluating advocacy?

Esther is a senior lecturer at the University of Lagon and a freelance consultant specialising in advocacy, gender and policy issues.

It has been decided that the 3 organisations will work separately on these questions and then share the results. This is for a number of reasons the major ones being the cost and logistics involved in bringing the partners together, and working in this way means that more staff in each organisation can be involved.

⁴ Church, Madeline et al. (2002) *Participation, relationships and dynamic change: New thinking*

Ugandan expectations of the work

During the in-country consultation in Uganda teams from ActionAid Uganda and the Ugandan Land Alliance worked separately to think through why they wanted to be involved in the research. Their conclusions are shown in the table below.

The consultation team in Uganda



AAU	ULA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Learning - offers an opportunity to interact with partners and strengthen our partners in developing programs. ◆ Work improvement; helps to re-position ourselves and re-strategise our poverty eradication programs. ◆ To Account for the rights based approach. ◆ To have greater linkages and learning across the globe. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Because the system in place at ULA is not adequate to measure impact of the work done so far. ◆ Because there has been a lot of change and progress in the campaign on land made by the alliance in the past years. How do we evaluate the progress made? ◆ How do we develop monitoring tools for advocacy work? ◆ To develop indicators that will increase the appreciation of advocacy work over service delivery. ◆ To provide a platform for debate in the alliance to show members the importance of a network and members contribution.

Further Information

This update is intended as a very brief synopsis of the work that has been carried out so far. If you want more details the following reports and papers are available from Louise Sunderland or please contact any member of the research team (see contacts below):

- *Monitoring and Evaluating Advocacy: A Scoping Study*, Jennifer Chapman & Amboka Wameyo, January 2001 (general overview)
- *Scoping Study on current practices in learning from advocacy work: Uganda's Perspective*, Sarah Okwaare Otto, July 2002
- *Some Brief Notes about the Monitoring of Advocacy in Brazil*, Almir Pereira Junior, July 2002
- *Scoping Study on the Monitoring and Evaluation of Advocacy in Ghana*, Vincent Azumah, July 2002
- *Advocacy Scoping Study in Nepal: Information on other Organizations who are working in Advocacy*, Hira Vishwakarma, July 2002
- 'Monitoring and Evaluating Advocacy' in *PLA Notes No 43*, Jennifer Chapman, Feb 2002.
- Paper on the Dalit Issue in Nepal in *Development 45.4*, Hira Vishwakarma, 2002
- One page summary of research in each country. Authors: Brazil, Almir Pereira Jnr; Ghana, Vincent Azumah; Nepal Laya Prasad Uprety; Uganda, Sarah Okwaare Otto (please specify which is required).
- Reports of in-country consultations. Authors: Brazil, Almir Pereira Jnr; Ghana, Vincent Azumah and Eli; Nepal, Laya Prasad Uprety, Indra Rai and Him Prasad Sedai; Uganda, Janet Oketcho (please specify which is required).
- Reports of London and Brazil team meetings.

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