

# Policy Advocacy Course

## Objective of session:

1. To lay the foundation for better understanding of the reality of advocacy
2. To enable participants locate policy advocacy work in the broader political, economic and social environments

## Debunking Myths

*Class question: Can you think of any issues, theories and arguments that you believe are myths by virtue of being so different from what you understand advocacy to be in practice? Write down on a card at least a single myth and put it up in the gallery (the class discuss and summarise these).*

# Advocacy is not politics?

There are many people who would love not to be associated with the murky world of politics.

Among these are to be found some policy advocates who wield their professional disposition as if they are not involved in a political process.

Advocacy is very much a political process that complements or challenges the formal political process.

Advocacy involves contributing to the public policy agenda and outcomes and this makes it political.

# **Advocacy is an all-powerful tool for influencing policy?**

There are many success stories in policy advocacy. And there are failures as well.

The policy position adopted by a government or other implementing agent will depend on many factors not least the relative influence of advocates and policy makers in the eyes of the public. How vigilant or complacent the public is will have a major impact on the success of advocacy.

# The majority are always right?

A policy position may be wrong, even when it has great support. After all, the Nazis enjoyed a majority before perpetrating the Holocaust.

In a democracy the wrong majority may still carry the day. In order to bring about positive social change on fundamental issues, including minority ethnic interests, it is imperative that policy advocates see beyond the emotive majority interests.

# The Policy Context

The governance regime, the economic conditions and the social structure of society provide both the reasons, and the framework for advocacy.

On the one hand, governance and socio-economic factors result in particular policies and circumstances, which individuals and groups may seek to change for the better.

On the other hand, policy advocates will operate within specific legal, political and socio-economic contexts, which influence the tools and outcomes of their work.

# Legal and governance factors

*The political situation provides the reason for and basis of policy advocacy.*

*Where the legal framework allows participation, advocacy will be mainstreamed into the policy process and act to largely **complement** the formulation and implementation of policy.*

*Where the legal system and political reality constrain participation in decision making, individuals and groups may manage to influence policy largely by **challenging** the work of policy makers.*

*Often, the success of advocates in both instances will hinge on ability to build support for policy positions to the extent that the political leadership believes it is in the interest of their survival to adopt a policy recommendation.*

# Economic factors

Economic conditions provide a litany of problems around which policy advocacy happens e.g. income poverty and unemployment, inequality, lack of access to resources, markets and services and lack of access to resources and markets, etc.

The economic situation of people may also have an impact on how society responds to policy debates. For instance, poor people can be enlightened and vigilant, but in some cases poverty provides an opportunity for a vulnerable section of society to be duped and influenced by vested interests, such as politicians.

Poverty then, unfortunately, becomes both a reason for advocacy and an opportunity for influence.



# Social factors

Social factors such as cultural practices touching on sexuality, gender relations, and religion and many others create plenty of policy debates and are a fertile ground for advocacy.

Social factors may also have an impact on the success of advocacy because they affect how the public and policy makers perceive policy issues. For example, society tends to change gradually on fundamental cultural issues such as sexuality and gender and a policy position pushing for sudden and significant, albeit positive, change in these areas may meet massive resistance.

## Other factors

*Class question: Can you think of some other broad Areas around which policies are made and that also affect how policy advocacy works?*

# Development trends and paradigms (model/pattern of thinking)



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# Development trends and paradigms

Given the differences in culture, economic and political systems, it would have been a wonder if people ever agreed on any one model or method of achieving human development.

For instance, the latest World Bank thinking captured in its *World Development Report 2006* gives prominence to the role of equity in the development process. Firstly, the Bank sees equity as implying equal opportunities. Secondly, equity is seen as avoidance of extreme deprivation.

# Development trends and paradigms

The Bank now considers equity as an important element in human development, a shift from the thinking that informed the SAPs that pushed for market led growth (liberalization of interest rates, exchange rates and other prices) and a reduction in the role of the state (privatisation of state enterprises) to ensure efficiency and development. In that era, vulnerable social groups were ignored and equity was off the agenda.

Development paradigms sometimes change as fast as the English weather (forgive the pun)

# Dominant development paradigms

**1950s:** Focus on post-war reconstruction.

**Situation in developing nations:** Colonial states at a peak and indigenous communities see independence as a sure bet for achieving progress

**1960s:** Inward-looking development and trade strategies

**Situation in developing nations:** Import substitution strategies are in vogue; Nationalisation of enterprises in Africa; Agricultural intensification (the 'green revolution') popular.

# Dominant development paradigms

**1970s:** Redistribution with growth .

**Situation in developing nations:** Emphasis is on social welfare and justice. Steady aid flows continue from previous decades as cold war persists. By end of the decade, strong states, weak markets and absence of organised civil society begin to be seen as a problem

**1980s:** Neo-liberalism: SAPs (market economics and rolling back the state)

**Situation in developing nations:** State inefficiency becomes stark and huge debts from profligate borrowing weigh down many nations. Organised civil society emerges to fill the gap left by a declining state and market failures.

# Dominant development paradigms

**1990s:** Globalisation (freer trade and mobility of resources)

**Situation in developing nations:** Labour-intensive growth, safety nets; proliferation of CSOs. Declines in aid as cold war ends and conditions for assistance stiffen

**New millennium:** Poverty reduction strategies, agitation for debt relief and quest for fair trade

**Situation in developing nations:** Progress is made but many MDGs targets are missed. The state role is enhanced as a regulator and civil society continues to play a significant role in the face of market failures and inequality



## *The special case of Africa*



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# The special case of Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in the world that has grown poorer in the last 25 years and its share of world trade has halved in a generation (DFID, 2005: *Africa - A Daunting Challenge But Progress is Achievable*).

HIV/Aids, malaria and a host of other diseases continue to ravage many people on the continent. Poor infrastructure, problems of service delivery, a corrupt elite and low access to international markets hamper development.

# The special case of Africa

## But there is hope:

- Conflicts have declined;
- A large part of Africa has democratised and citizen participation, transparent and accountable government have been enhanced;
- Though poor, sub-Saharan Africa is registering fast growth in aggregate terms GDP growth in the region averaged 4.1 % in 2003, 5.4 % in 2004 and is projected to reach 5.9 in 2006 % (IMF, 2005: *World Economic Report*);
- There are prospects of improved aid flows and debt reduction following the G8 Summit in Gleneagles.

# The special case of Africa

The challenge for Africa:

- Good governance;
- Sustaining and expanding economic growth;
- Ensuring equitable distribution resources;
- Infrastructure development.

The obligations of the international community:

- Improving access for the continent to international markets;
- Keeping the promise of debt relief and increased aid.  
Hopefully, the promises of Gleneagles will not suffer the same fate as Monterrey and previous G8 promises.

# Development statistics and indicators

*Class exercise: Class exercise: In groups, consider the development statistics contained in the MDG and HDR reports of Tanzania, Zambia and Kenya. Summarise key indicators of poverty, exclusion, inequality and other development problems? Explain why you chose a particular indicator and not another. Do you believe these indicators tell us enough about the situation of the real people or would we need additional information to appreciate the problem more concisely? What additional information would we need and how would we get it? Critique the progress towards MDGs.*

# Governance, constitutionalism and advocacy

*'Perhaps the most important determinant for reducing poverty is leadership'*,  
Dr. Paul Wolfowitz, World Bank President at the 2006 World Bank/IMF  
Annual Meetings. Quite a mouthful, coming from the Bank's President. But Dr  
Wolfowitz is right. Leadership is vital for the achievement of prosperity and  
social progress.

Governance is a broad concept that revolves around how entities  
(organisations or states) run their affairs. The leadership exercises a fiduciary  
(stewardship) role on behalf of the membership by managing the day-to-day  
affairs of the entity.

# Governance, constitutionalism and advocacy

Good governance with regard to states is rooted in the constitutional concept of rule of law. The central theme of rule of law holds that every person, irrespective of status in society, is subject to the law and that government acts within the law (Barnett, 2004): *Constitutional and administrative Law*).

Rule of law can therefore be used as a yardstick for measuring the extent to which government acts within the law and individual rights are protected i.e rule of law is a measure of good governance.

Rule of law has limited application outside Western democratic liberalism:

- From a Marxist point of view, rule of law is a guise for hiding injustices and maintaining the status quo;
- In totalitarian states, government will be above the law and an independent judiciary to adjudicate the law may be absent.

# Governance, constitutionalism and advocacy

A more relevant connotation of the concept for policy advocates is the notion that rule of law implies that the rights of man (and woman) are sovereign. This notion can be traced all the way back to John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*. In this work, Locke stated that sovereign state power was limited and that people had the right to resort to revolution if power was abused.

Thomas Paine, in *Common Sense* and *Rights of Man*, decried arbitrary power (power exercised outside established law). Each individual entered into a compact with each other to produce a government and this was the only way in which a government could arise and exist. Any government formed without the acquiescence of the people was illegitimate.



# Governance, constitutionalism and advocacy

Rule of law also implies freedom from hunger, homelessness and misery. This approach was adopted by the International Commission of Jurists in the New Delhi Declaration of 1959, which asserted that the achievement of social, economic, cultural and educational standards under which an individual could enjoy a fuller life was within the ambit of rule of law. The same notion is to be found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental freedoms and a host of National constitutions.

*Class discussion: (Selected indicators from Freedom House). Are these good indicators of rule of law and good governance? Class discussion.*

# **Roles of state, civil society and markets; overlaps and failures of each**

The state:

- exercises power on behalf of the people, formulates and implements public policy;
- Regulates the markets (private sector) and civil society;
- Exercises legitimate or illegitimate violence;
- Is involved in markets either for purely political reasons or as an attempt to ensure equity and social justice (e.g. in welfare, socialist and communist states)

State failures in ensuring efficient allocation and use of resources have led to the appeal of free market economics, which leaves government as a mere facilitator and regulator.

- State enterprises in many countries are on the decline;
- Government control of markets (resources, production, supply and prices) has shrunk.

# **Roles of state, civil society and markets; overlaps and failures of each**

Free market proponents argue that markets are best at allocating and using resources more efficiently.

Market failures:

- Where incentives for profit are inadequate the private sector may fail to provide a good or service e.g. projects with high risks, uncertain profitability or those that require huge capital outlays (airports, roads, railways, ports, schools, hospitals, etc);
- Negative externalities (a spill over from an economic activity). E.g. a factory in a village and benefit the investor, employees and suppliers. But effluence deposited in the local water system may imply the cost to society is much greater than the cost to the investor, employees and suppliers, who do not pay for the pollution.

In such cases, it usually takes government or civil society intervention to provide these.

# **Roles of state, civil society and markets; overlaps and failures of each**

Civil society exists to cater for those interests of people not properly taken care of by the state or the markets.

- when state power is not properly exercised, civil society has to be at the forefront of ensuring the state stays within the limits of its power;
- When market failures occur, civil society can play a direct role as a provider and facilitator of delivery of goods and services and an indirect role of lobbying government to provide what society needs and the market cannot provide.

However, civil society too can fail because of:

- state machinations;
- inherent weaknesses revolving around accountability and transparency;
- co-option into the state system.