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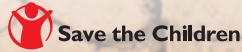
ADVOCACY CAPACITY ASSESSMENT TOOL

THE ADVOCACY CAPACITY ASSESSMENT TOOL (ACAT) IS DEVELOPED TO ASSESS CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS ON A RANGE OF KEY CAPACITIES FOR EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY. IT HAS A SPECIFIC FOCUS ON FRAGILE STATES.

THE ADVOCACY ASSESSMENT IS A TOOL THAT IS TO BE USED AS A GUIDELINE BY THE FACILITATOR.

September 2014

Member of the harvest storage facility, Makamba, Burundi

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Pokot lobby their Member of Parliament for the constituency of Amudat District, Uganda

Why was this Advocacy Capacity Assessment Tool developed?

In response to requests from country programmes and partners, the Dutch Consortium for Rehabilitation (DCR) committed to setting up a process enabling staff of DCR-member and partner organizations to better identify and analyze their individual and organizational capacity for advocacy and take actions to build on strengths and overcome bottlenecks.

The participatory process described in the tool is designed to produce
1) an **overview** of existing **advocacy capacity** within the organization and selected individual staff members and
2) a related **action plan** to **enhance advocacy capacity**.
This action plan forms the start of an 'advocacy capacity strengthening trajectory' that identifies and addresses gaps or weaknesses in capacity in areas that are a key focus for the organisation.

The tool has not been designed to provide a baseline and an endline assessment upon completion of the project aimed at measuring progress in terms of advocacy capacity – although potentially the tool could be used for such a purpose.

The ACAT tool was developed by the Dutch Consortium of Rehabilitation in close cooperation with INTRAC. All assessment levels were developed by INTRAC and further adapted by DCR and INTRAC for use by civil society organizations, notably in fragile states.

INTRAC is an International NGO training and research centre. INTRAC links development practice with analysis. We aim to work thematically – ensuring coordination between our research, training, consultancies and programmes. Our multi-disciplinary approach affords us a unique insight into all aspects of capacity building work.

Large numbers of African communities are exposed to acts of war. **The Dutch Consortium for Rehabilitation** (DCR) works together with the local population on the rehabilitation of a number of communities. The DCR is a collaborative venture of four civil society organizations (CARE, HNTPO, Save the Children and ZOA) active in different thematical areas . DCR's most important activities are: improving basic facilities, creating employment and strengthening communities. In this way, DCR aims to contribute to greater stability and sustainable economic growth in six (post-)conflict countries.

Capacity Development in Fragile States

The Advocacy Capacity Assessment Tool (ACAT) is developed to assess civil society organizations on a range of key organizational and individual capacities for effective advocacy. It has a specific focus on fragile states. Although some tools are available to assess such capacities in regular development contexts, few of these tools have an eye for the specific nature of fragile contexts.

What is advocacy?

Advocacy means defending the rights and position of the most vulnerable, by influencing decision makers at local, regional and/ or national levels. Advocacy is crucial in order to improve the situation of the most vulnerable in (post-)conflict situations. In many fragile contexts, local communities find themselves unable to solve their problems by themselves. They need to engage with local, regional or national authorities, who can change policies, procedures and laws for the better.

Challenges for advocacy in fragile states

Results in advocacy are predominantly achieved by convincing key policy makers or decision makers to take actions that will benefit the population or specific beneficiary groups. Achieving results through advocacy work can be challenging in any context, but, regardless of available skills, there are specific challenges in fragile states.

Fragile contexts often require specific risk management and adaptation of advocacy strategies to respond to changes in the political situation. Assessment level 4 offers an in-depth analysis of the 'enabling environment' for advocacy in fragile contexts.

Staff and partners operating in fragile environments already rely on significant capacity strengths. The ACAT process will help them identify and understand their relevance for advocacy. For example, analysis of context, stakeholders and power relations are indispensable for effective service delivery in a dynamic context which is prone to conflict. However, skills in these areas may not be sufficiently recognized or valued by the organization. Assessment level 3 ('external linkages') provides an in-depth assessment of organizational capacities to analyze the relevant stakeholders and stakeholder relations required for effective advocacy. In addition, level 5 analyses the individual capacities of staff members for advocacy in fragile contexts.

There are no blueprints for advocacy or advocacy capacity building – hence the importance of a participatory process to develop an advocacy capacity strengthening plan. The capacity needed to successfully implement the advocacy plan will be tailored to the context and the focus issue/s. Given the highly complex nature of the context, this also presents challenges in identifying appropriate capacity strengthening approaches.

For organizations, changes in the context can lead to significant shifts in organizational priorities, e.g. up-scaling of humanitarian effort, the need to withdraw from a particular locality or even country – which may affect the ability of organizations to achieve advocacy results as well as the priority placed on advocacy capacity-building.

It is important that the ACAT process and the development of the capacity strengthening plan empowers and encourages staff and organizations to implement their advocacy plan. Confidence and capacity in advocacy is developed through 'doing it' and therefore stopping or slowing down the 'doing' whilst technical skills are enhanced may end up being counter-productive.

Underlying all interventions in fragile states must be a thorough and continuous contextual analysis, as cases of fragility vary greatly and are dynamic. Advocacy objectives and strategies need to be flexible in order to correspond with this dynamic environment.

Process of the ACAT

The ACAT assessment, which is largely based on INTRAC Paper 25, contains 5 assessment levels that are outlined in the table below: Assessment levels per organization or jointly by consortia, networks, alliances.

Table 1: Assessment levels per organization or jointly

Level	Per organization/ Jointly	Note
1. Programme / project	Jointly	Assessment can be done jointly. Interpretation and discussion of results can be done per organization.
2. Organizational	Per organization	
3. External linkages	Jointly	
4. Enabling environment	Jointly	Can also be done at the start.
5. Individual	Per organization	Not to be assessed as first, better as the last.

Table 1 shows that levels 2 and 5 of the ACAT assessment are best implemented per organization. Experience shows that staff are much more open and honest in their assessment when protected from priers. This implies that you, as the facilitator of the assessment, should visit participating organizations individually. This requires time, but will definitely pay off.

However, there is also significant evidence that enhancing cooperation between organizations is key to effective advocacy . This implies that levels 1, 3 and 4 can well be carried out jointly, in particular when organizations are working on the same advocacy objectives. However, such a joint approach is not required.

For a comprehensive quality assessment, it is **critical that all levels are assessed**. Practice shows that it takes **one day to assess 3 levels**. So make sure not to plan to assess too many organizations in one week. Assessing 3 or 4 organizations in one week is workable, but more is not realistic. Allow sufficient time for discussion among participants/colleagues for each level, since this is the heart of the learning process. Experience has shown discussions of medium length are most fruitful.

Two options for the ACAT workshop are suggested:

A. Organizations convene in a central location for a collective workshop in which the ACAT is introduced, followed by half day / full day in-house assessment sessions on specific levels and the development of the capacity development trajectory.

B. All organizations are visited in their own locations. The whole assessment is carried out in a full day or more, including the development of the draft capacity development trajectory.

Training of Trainers (ToT)

The tool can be used in a training of trainers (ToT) set-up whereby two facilitators implement the ACAT workshops together: one external facilitator initially leading the sessions and one local staff member acting as co-facilitator. The workshop in this case has two purposes:

☐ to assess the participating organizations and

☐ to train the co-facilitator in carrying out these workshops independently.

In both scenario A and scenario B, only approximately four assessments can be carried out in one week. If a larger number of organizations needs to be trained, the remaining organizations can be assessed by the then trained co-facilitator.

Each assessment workshop starts with a thorough explanation of the entire capacity development process and ends with the delivery of a draft capacity strengthening plan or so-called action plan. The order in which the five capacity levels are assessed and whether this is done on an individual or joint basis is flexible, keeping in mind table 1.

Each **workshop must be tailored to the specific context** in which it will be carried out.

Butembo, DR Congo

This chapter outlines how the ACAT may be implemented.

The output will be:

☐ an overview of the advocacy capacities of each organization, and, linked to that,

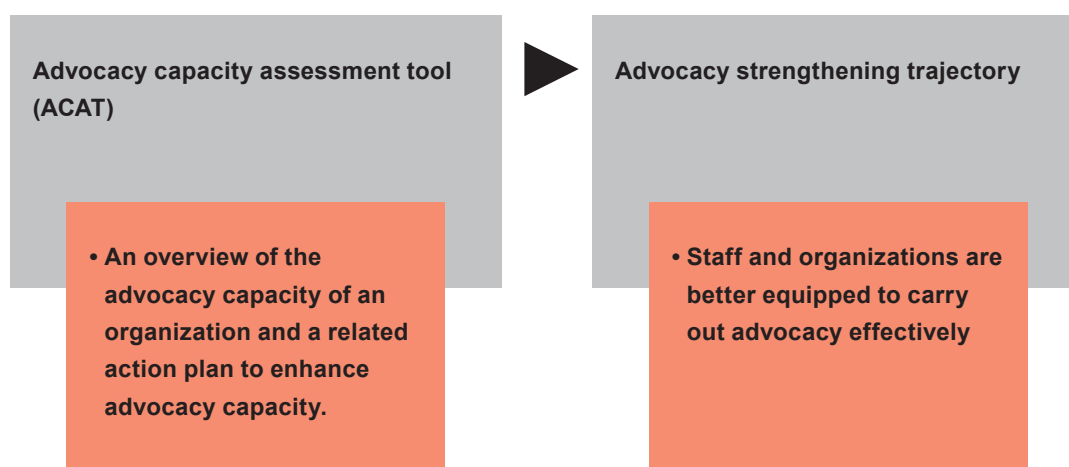☐ an action plan to enhance advocacy capacities.

As a facilitator, one important aspect to keep in mind is that organizations and staff often have more advocacy capacities then they may be aware of. Instead of simply making a list the capacities lacking, it may be worth looking at what is already there and make participants aware of these existing skills. There may however be obstacles within the organization (prioritization, finances, management, resistance to advocacy) and the environment that hinder effective advocacy. As a facilitator, it is crucial to keep this in mind and lead discussions in such a way that staff feel recognized in their existing capacities and boost their confidence in addition to finding solutions to tackle obstacles identified.

Be aware that the assessment exercise has value in itself. The learning trajectory is one of the outcomes, but not the only one. During the assessment, staff will become aware of existing capacities as well as bottlenecks they may face. This is valuable: therefore make sufficient time for dialogue on issues staff members come up with themselves when assessing their advocacy objectives.

Process per organization:

1. Getting to know each other + discuss expectations + agree on the purpose and output of the process.
2. It is important to be sure about sufficient common ground on definitions and approach before moving on to the various levels. Therefore, start with discussing what advocacy is about.
3. Show the 'theory of change of the advocacy capacity trajectory' below. Be sure to mention that it may not be as straightforward as it looks. Advocacy successes are not automatically secured by the assessment and capacity trajectory! External factors also play a role. Capacity as such refers to the potential for advocacy, which is not necessarily utilized (yet) to achieve results.

Diagram 1: From ACAT to enhanced advocacy capacity

Advocacy capacity assessment tool (ACAT)

▶ **Advocacy strengthening trajectory**

- **An overview of the advocacy capacity of an organization and a related action plan to enhance advocacy capacity.**

- **Staff and organizations are better equipped to carry out advocacy effectively**

4. Determine, together with the participants, based on the outcome of a pre-assessment filled in prior to the workshop by each participant, which levels are most important to assess for the organization, and choose which levels are going to be assessed the first day.

Table 2: Focus per level of intervention

Level of intervention		In an advocacy context, focus would be on:
1.	Project and programmes	Single-issue campaigns Broader advocacy programmes
2.	Organizational	Organizational structures, processes and resources Management and governance issues
3.	External linkages	Extent and quality of coordination between organizations Extent and quality of links between organizations and the groups and communities they support and represent
4.	Enabling environment	The political and policy context within which advocacy processes take place
5.	Individual	Individuals' relevant skills and abilities

(source: INTRAC Praxis paper 25: capacity building for advocacy)

5. Let participants select the levels most appropriate to their situation/advocacy objectives.

6. **Celebrate the capacity that is already there!** None of the organizations will start from scratch and many organizations and staff will have advocacy capacities that they are not yet aware of. Make sure that participants will start to realize the capacities they already have. Write down the 'lack of capacity' and/or the obstacles identified for each level assessed. Write down per level what is needed to overcome the 'lack of capacity' and/or overcome the obstacle.

7. Together with the staff, develop action points for the organization as a whole and for individual staff members, as a basis for the capacity assessment trajectory. It is likely that any capacity development intervention will seek to achieve a range of outcomes, involving a combination of the following:
   a. Key individuals have enhanced capacity to engage and represent
   b. The strength of organizational advocacy is enhanced
   c. Organizations know better how to strategically position advocacy within a wider organizational context and approach
   d. Local communities and marginalized groups are empowered to engage and advocate
   e. More effective collaboration takes place between organizations
   f. State bodies are better able and/or more willing to engage meaningfully with community organizations and their representatives.

Make the outputs, however, more specific than the general examples above!

It is crucial to ensure that participants understand that they do not need to pick their most feeble points to strengthen - they need to pick the areas that they feel will deliver the best results for their advocacy objectives.

Animal Health Workers, Nakapiripirit, Uganda

8. Write up the action plan for and with the organization: What actions are needed to reach the objectives and take away the 'lack of capacity' and possible blockages? This action plan is the start of the advocacy capacity trajectory. Annex 3 - 'Format Action Plan' - serves as an example.

Several **materials** are necessary to carry out the assignments with participants:
• Colored post-it notes (preferably large and small size)
• Markers
• Flip charts and/or empty wall space that allows to stick up post-it notes and tape
• Masking tape

Make sure that as facilitator you bring sufficient amounts of the above materials.

A photo camera is also useful to take pictures of the results of each exercise.

Enjoy some fruitful days!

Level 1: Programme capacity

Output: An overview of current strengths and weaknesses in advocacy within the programme of the organization.

Materials: Post-it notes, markers, tape

Tips for the facilitator: Work from a concrete existing advocacy objective, preferably one that is part of the current advocacy plan. This will ensure the exercise is relevant to the organization. Let the participants explain the selected advocacy objective/advocacy activity to you at the start of the exercise. If several organizations are working together on the chosen objective, let staff of those organizations work through this exercise together.

Steps:

1. Stick two post-it notes on the wall: weak (on one side) and strong (on the other side). Connect them with a strip of masking tape.

2. Explain to the participants the three main programme components [i.e. skills needed] from table 3 on the next page: 1) Good research and analysis, 2) PME, and 3) Community focus. All sub-components are required for good advocacy work. If possible use a different color post-it note for each category/ main component. **Make it very clear to participants what is being assessed here**. This is crucial for the participants in order to make this assessment relevant. Only use those characteristics from table 3 most relevant for your organization.

3. Let participants **jointly** score the selected sub-components on the line weak ←→ strong, using a post-it note for each sub-component. Repeat this for each component. Use the same color for all sub-components of the same category/main component. Make sure all participants join in the discussion on where to position each component.

Picture: the output of the exercise on Programme capacity

Example from Practice

Objective: Understanding the political process and context.

Action: Regularly consult relevant government sites/the Official Journal.

Facilitator: If needed, provide the organization with a list of relevant sites.

4. After the assessment (with all composing elements on post-its on the wall ranked from weak to strong): Write down together which components within the programme ought to be improved in order to make advocacy efforts more effective. Make sure to pay attention to components that are strong already. Share successes!

5. Let staff choose which programme advocacy components they feel need to be strengthened in order to better achieve their advocacy objectives. Together with the participants, write down concrete actions. Make Use of Annex 3: Action Plan.

Table 3: Programme advocacy components

Main components:	Sub-components:
GOOD RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS	• **Good research was carried out on the issue: sufficient evidence** was found to advocate for this advocacy objective • **Sound evidence** was collected to detect the shortcomings of the current **policy and legislations** • Sound evidence was collected to detect the shortcomings of the **implementation** of the existing policies and legislations
PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION	• **Advocacy objective(s)** were designed that stakeholders want to see achieved in the future • There is reason to believe that the advocacy objective has a **reasonable chance to be achieved** • This advocacy objective has been **linked** directly **to the programme** • **A clear message has been formulated** to achieve the advocacy objective, together with the **constituency** • There is **sufficient knowledge of strategies** and **activities** to use for achieving the advocacy objective • There is a **clear Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation plan per advocacy objective**; it is clear how to keep track of where we are and how to adapt plans if needed • **Sufficient financial resources** have been set aside for achieving the advocacy objective • Follow-up actions have been lined up to **ensure that changed policies and/or improved implementation of policies will be sustained** after the project has been finished
COMMUNITY FOCUS	• It has been verified with the **communities** that this advocacy objective has **their highest importance** • A **strong link to the communities is maintained to actively involve** them and **use their knowledge** in the achievement of the advocacy objective • There is awareness throughout **of gender and disability-specific implications** of the current issues and the proposed alternative

Level 2: Organizational capacity

Output: An overview of current advocacy strengths, weaknesses and bottlenecks within the specific organization.

Materials: Post-it notes, markers, tape.

Tips for the facilitator: You need a good representation of staff in order to make the outcome of level two relevant to the organization. As in level 1, work from a concrete existing advocacy objective, preferably one that is part of the current advocacy plan. Again, this is to ensure the relevance of the exercise to the organization. This exercise should preferably be carried out amongst staff of the same organization.

Steps:

1. Stick two post-it notes on the wall: weak (on one side) and strong (on the other side). Connect them, using a strip of masking tape.

2. Explain to participants the organizational areas in table 4. Make very clear to participants what will be assessed here. This is crucial for staff in order to make this assessment relevant.

3. Let participants jointly score all components categorized in table 4 below using post-it notes. If necessary, components can be split. Some suggestions are added. Do this only for the organization under scrutiny. Make sure all staff present actively participate in the discussion on where to position each component.

Picture: the output of the assessment on the wall for an organization in Liberia

4. After the assessment (all components on post-it notes are on the wall, ranked from weak to strong): Write up together which organizational areas and/or aspects ought to be strengthened in order to make for more effective advocacy within the organization. Together, also identify which areas/ aspects are already strong. Share successes!

5. Let staff identify which, if any, organizational advocacy components they feel need to be strengthened in order to better achieve their advocacy goals. Together with the participants, list concrete objectives and actions. Make use of Annex 3: Action Plan.

It is important to recognize **additional challenges for capacity building and advocacy work that may arise from working in fragile contexts:**

• Lack of experience/skills of advocacy staff in contexts which have been affected by conflict and which have weak institutional structures.

- Extreme fear on the part of authorities, local and still more so national, of third parties mingling in political affairs, resulting in repression. This fear increases when elections are coming up.
- CSOs choosing to take a neutral stance rather than being active and non-partisan.
- Illiteracy among communities hampers their effective participation and engagement in advocacy work.
- Apathy of civil society: due to long-term war/destabilized situations, people no longer believe that they can make a difference.
- Time lag between identification of a problem, submission for redress and response is too long.

Example from Practice

Objective: Use the staff currently available in the organization in such a way that their individual strengths for advocacy work are used optimally.

Action: Take into account behavior, knowledge, practical skills (especially skills in building up rapport, reciprocity and trust) when assigning advocacy tasks to staff members. Take advocacy into account (in job descriptions; job interviews etc.) when new staff is recruited.

However, from experience, **internal bottlenecks** are often the strongest hampering factors for advocacy. Examples are:

- A preoccupation with organizational survival.
- Problems to secure funding for advocacy work.
- A likely skills deficit, including low levels of understanding about the different strands and dimensions of advocacy.
- Governance constraints – board members in particular may lack knowledge and understanding of and confidence and skills in, advocacy.
- For some organizations internal motivation to adopt advocacy strategies may also be lacking. If, for example, a donor applies pressure to an implementing organization not eager to take on advocacy to start focusing on advocacy strategies, the capacity building intervention is perhaps less likely to succeed.

Table 4: Organizational advocacy components

A **management team** that is dedicated to advocacy
Strategic leadership on advocacy [e.g. integration of advocacy in planning, monitoring and evaluation]
The **internal governance structure** of the organization supports advocacy work
Effective communication within the organization about advocacy
Sound financial management to support advocacy
Sufficient human resources are dedicated to advocacy
Sufficient **facilities and technology available** to support advocacy work, including a database for storing and analyzing collected advocacy data
Sufficient **inter-organizational linkages** [e.g. participation in networks, partnerships]

Level 3: External linkages

Output: An overview of the relations with different actors within the organisation that matter to advocacy and the strengths of those relationships.

Materials: Post-it notes, markers, tape.

Tips for the facilitator: As in level one and two, work from a concrete existing advocacy objective, preferably one that is part of the current advocacy plan. Doing so will make the exercise easier to complete and increase its applicability for the organization.
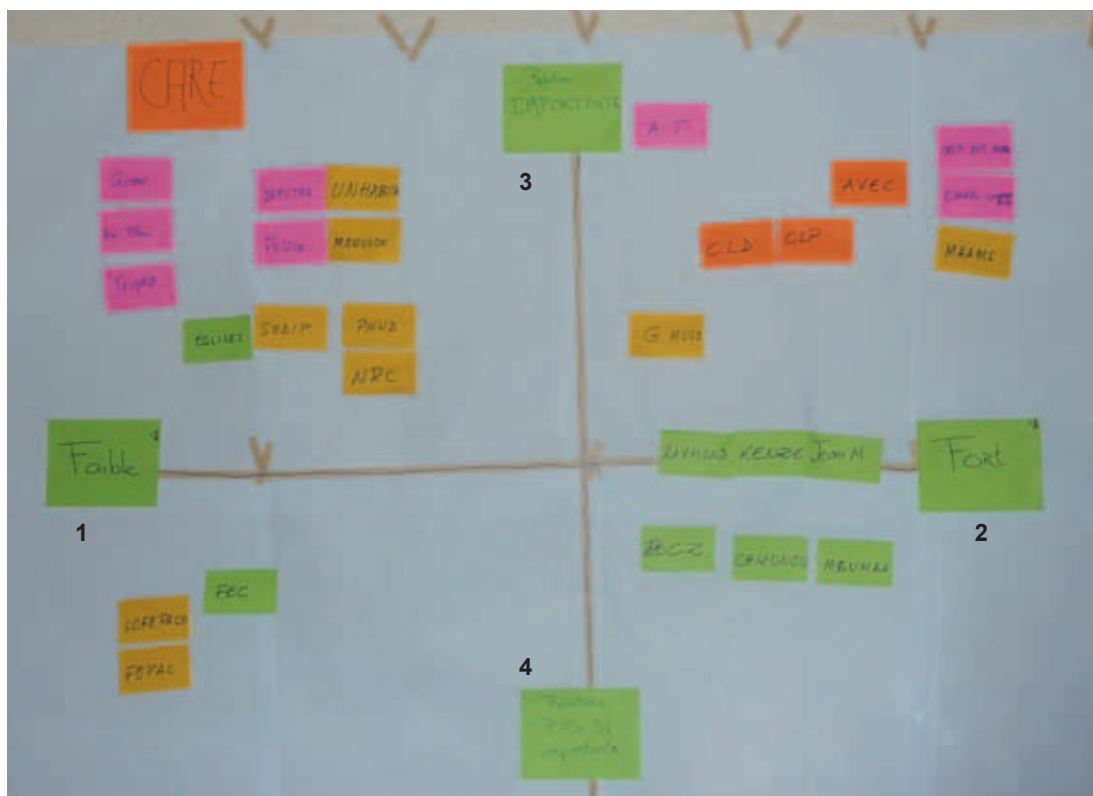
Picture: the output of external linkages for a specific organization and objective in DR Congo

Steps:

1. Make a grid on the wall using tape, as shown in table 5.

   Mark the respective x-axes with:

   1) weak (relationship) and 2) strong (relationship);

   2) and the y-axes with:

   3 important actor(for reaching the selected objective),

   4) less important actor (for reaching the elected objective). See picture for an example.

Table 5:
Importance of actors and the strengths of the relationship

IMPORTANT ACTOR

Weak relationship with important actors	**Strong relationship with important actors**
Weak relationship with less important actors	**Strong relationship with less important actors**

WEAK RELATION-SHIP (left) **STRONG RELATIONSHIP** (right)

LESS IMPORTANT ACTOR
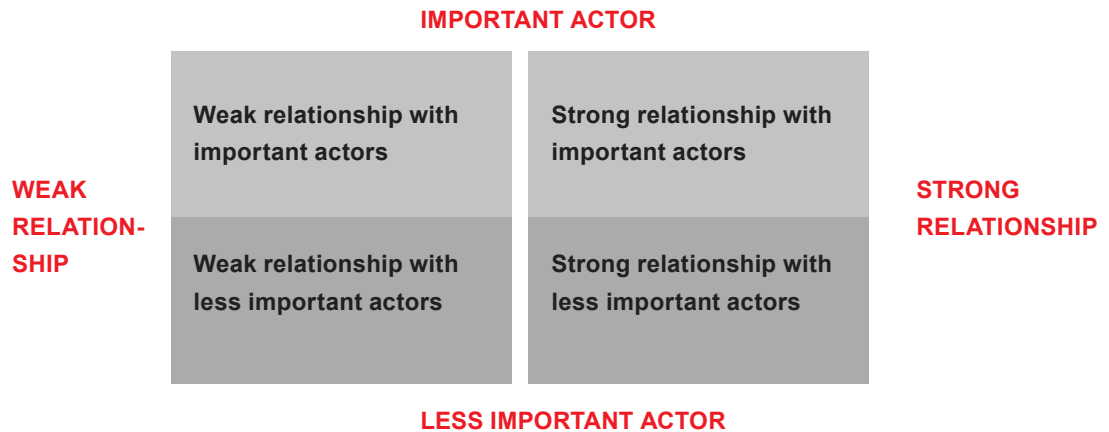
2. Have participants write down on post-it notes all relevant individual actors (in government, NGOs, CBOs, civil society, communities, politicians, political parties, business people, churches etc.) with whom the organization works on the selected advocacy objective. Colors can be used to categorize e.g. government relations (pink); civil society (orange); communities (green); others (yellow). Using colors makes the picture more informative.

3. Place all actors in the diagram. E.g. for an actor that is crucial for reaching the advocacy objective, but with whom the relationship of the organization is quite weak, place a post-it in the upper-left quadrant for a 'weak and important relationship'. Make sure all participants are involved in the discussion where to position the actors.

4. Discuss with participants the overview thus created. Which relationships should the organization invest more in in order to reach the advocacy objective? Which relationships are already strong? The output of this discussion should be a written overview of organizations in which to invest more in order to reach the objective. An extra step (level 3b) can be to take the important but still weak relations in the upper-left corner and prioritize them in a list of relations to be improved.

Example from practice

Objective: Improve relationships with the provincial government and work closer with like-minded NGOs.

Actions: Visit governmental authorities and inform them about your work; set-up a network with NGOs and other relevant actors around the topic you work on.

5. Let participants identify the actors with whom they feel they need to strengthen the relationship in order to better achieve their advocacy objectives. Together with the participants, write up concrete objectives and actions for strengthening the relationship with those actors.

Make use of Annex 3: Action Plan.

Level 4: The enabling environment

Output: An overview of the possibility to influence in a fragile context, related to the capacity of the organization to influence.

Materials: Post-it notes, markers, tape.

Tips for the facilitator: This exercise is best carried out with several organizations working together, as it focuses on the common enabling environment.

Picture: the output of a shared exercise between 5 different organizations in Liberia, where each organization sought to position the specific objective they were working towards in the diagram.

Steps:

1. Have table 6 (see below) ready on a flipchart. Explain the respective axes to the participants. Experience shows that people can have difficulty to understand this system of ranking. You can refer to exercise 4, in which the same system was used. Work again from one or more specific objectives, preferably the same one(s) used in the former exercises. Each organisation can rank itself for each of its advocacy objectives [one post-it per objective].

2. Once participants understand the grid, have them stick post-its with the name of their organization for each of their advocacy objectives in the quadrant. [Each post-it shows: name organisation + objective 1; name organisation + objective 2 etc.]

3. Disucss with participants: To what extent is the political environment in their country and province/state/area of work... open to their selected advocacy objective?

4. Discuss the **feasability** of the chosen advocacy objectives in relation to the external environment and the capacity of the organization.

5. Have participants identify what actions (if any) need to be taken in order to better achieve their advocacy objectives. Make use of annex 3: Action Plan.
   An outcome may also be that the feasibility of a specific advocacy objective is too low to continue working on it, due to 'low opportunity' for influencing the external environment.

Analyzing the environment

In fragile states, accountability mechanisms between duty bearers (those in power) and rights holders (citizens) are weak. Often the government lacks the capacity or willingness to make or implement policies that can improve the lives of their citizens. Diagram 3 provides an overview of the possible **political climates governing a lobby/advocacy objective** in fragile states, cross-referenced with the organization's capacity for advocacy.

Characteristics of such contexts include high levels of corruption, low government legitimacy, high levels of insecurity, risk of relapse into conflict, high levels of unresolved grievance, low capacities, weak rule of law, economic stagnation, limited social capital, fragmented civil society, limited civil space, suppressed media, and minimal freedom of expression.

Whilst as part of a development discourse advocacy is viewed as being 'technical' in nature, in these contexts advocacy can feel acutely 'political'. Openly discussing power dynamics or trying to change the status quo in countries in transition may be challenging.

Table 6: Enabling environment

HIGH OPPORTUNITY TO INFLUENCE

	Climate may be favorable but the organization needs more advocacy capacity	Influential and powerful	
LOW CAPACITY TO INFLUENCE	Powerless, with no openings, need to reconsider approach	Well organized but banging on a closed door	**HIGH CAPACITY TO INFLUENCE**

LOW OPPORTUNITY TO INFLUENCE

Table 6 can be read as follows:
• where there is low capacity and low opportunity, blockages are both internal and external, so both need to be addressed;
• where there is high capacity while opportunity is low, key blockages to address are external;
• where there is low capacity while opportunity is high, key blockages to address are internal.

Level 5: Individual capacity

Output: An overview per participant on current strong and weak competences related to advocacy.

Materials: Post-it notes (small), markers, flip charts, tape.

Tips for the facilitator: Make sure there is an open atmosphere in carrying out this assignment, people need to feel 'safe' to be sufficiently self-critical.

> **Competences:** The description of the knowledge, ability, skills and attitude required to perform effectively in a given job, role or situation. These are the qualities that individual people possess; a characteristic, attitude, skill, aspect of one's self image, or body of knowledge and behaviours which he or she uses.

Steps:

1. Stick two post-its high up on the wall: weak (to the left) and strong (to the right). Write down (on large post-its) the 6 different main competences that are outlined in table 7 below. Stick them up from top to bottom, before the line. The lines together form a chart.

For a group of **four participants or less**:

2a. Participants each write down all sub-competences (on small post-its) and rate themselves by sticking them on the line, positioning them from weak to strong. Each person can use his/her own color.
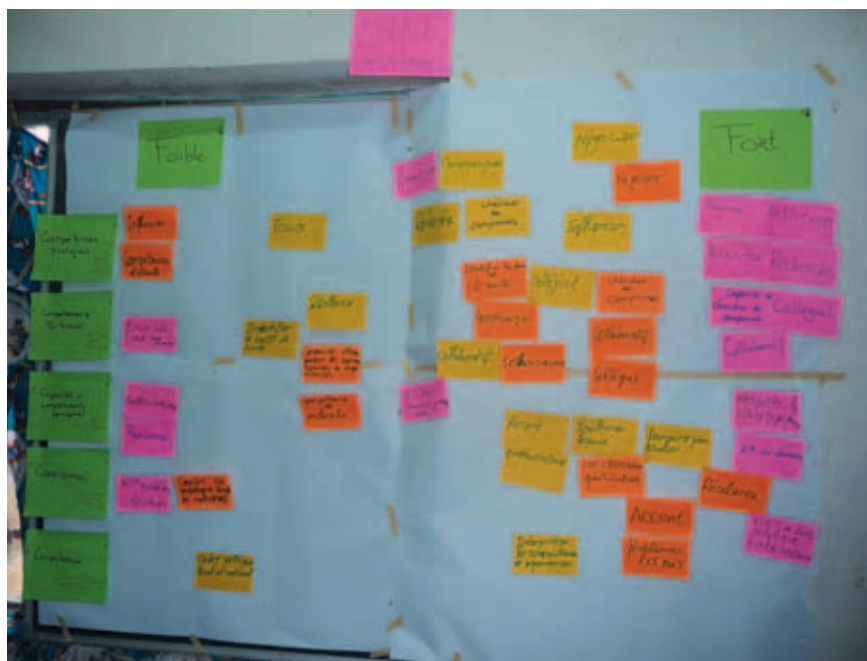
Picture: the output of 'individual capacity' for a specific organization in DR Congo
Each color is a different person.

For a group of **more than four participants**:

2b. Have the list of competences given below available on paper for each staff member in a scorecard format that allows them to score each competence on a scale from -- , - , +, ++ (using four score options is preferable to using a scale of five, as people will tend to go for the moderate +/- middle option). Have participants fill in their scorecard individually.

3. Review the competences together with the participants and discuss the needs for support to strengthen capacities and/or their personal learning goals. Have them write these down.

4. Likely some staff members are strong in a certain competence, while others are strong in others. Have participants exchange on this, to provide them with an understanding that it is important to make use of each other's strengths/look for complementarity in the team. This also enables them to learn from one another.

5. As facilitator, document everything, so that on the last day, you will have a complete overview of all needs and objectives.

Picture: staff in DR Congo assessing the anabling encironment.

Example from practice

Objective: Improving practical skills of a number of staff members.

Action: Arrange a course on lobby & advocacy skills including negotiation, influencing and communication.

Table 7: Individual capacity

Categories to asses

Main Competences	sub-competences
Practical skills	Negotiating
	Communicating
	Influencing
	Listening skills
	Research skills
Partnership skills	Identifying basis of unity
	Collegiate
	Collaborative
	Ability to compromise
Technical skills	Power analysis
	Context analysis
Personal abilities and behaviors	Enthusiasm
	Resilience
	Focus
Knowledge	Of a particular field, of local and national policy contexts, of local issues
Understanding	Ability to interpret knowledge and experience
	Determining when to criticize and when to cooperate for example

(source: INTRAC Praxis paper 25: capacity building for advocacy)

ANNEX 1 PLANNING

Both the assessment itself as well as preparing for it will take time. Good planning before and after the assessment is crucial. Table 8 gives an overview of the steps for the facilitator to take in making sure a good assessment and advocacy trajectory is set up.

Table 8: Planning overview of the advocacy assessment

Step 1 (- 4 weeks)	Step 2 (- 3 weeks)	Step 3 (-2 weeks)	Step 4 (-1 week)	Step 5 (Workshop week)	Step 6 (+2 week)	Step 7 (+3 weeks)
Send out invitations	Finalize participant list	Submission of annex 1	Finalize program and logistics	Carry out assessment workshop (s)	Workshop report	Trajectory-monitoring plan
Develop initial draft program	Send out self assessment	Submission advocacy activity plans		Draft trajectories	Final trajectories	Start monitoring and follow up

STEP 1: Start registration and prepare a draft program

The minimum requirements for participation are that the organization is involved in advocacy, has identified a specific issue to advocate for and is willing to commit resources to ensuing the advocacy capacity development trajectory.

STEP 2: Finalize participant list

CSOs should ensure that key and relevant people are involved in the process. A sufficient percentage of staff of an organization should participate in the assessment in order to ensure that the change process will be supported. The outcomes and trajectory should be endorsed at all levels in the organization.

STEP 3: Submission of self-assessments and advocacy plans

Gather relevant information from the participating organizations and individuals, using Annex 2 . Experience has shown that it is important for each organization involved to have a clearly defined advocacy issue at the time the exercise takes place. A clear definition of the issue will ensure that the organization's assessment is done with greater objectivity. The organization should already be clear on: What is the current situation it wants changed? What is the ideal situation the organization is trying to achieve? The following question can then be answered during the assessment: **What capacity does the organization have to achieve this?**[2]

STEP 4: Finalize program and logistics

Develop a tailor-made program based on the specific country context. Ensure that all preparations are made with regards to pre-workshop participant information and workshop venue.

STEP 5: Carry out workshop and develop trajectories

Execute the workshops as per the program and ensure the delivery of the action plans for the capacity learning trajectory. See Annex 3 for a possible format for such an action plan.
A fundamental premise for the assessment is that each organization sets its own priorities for action and for capacity building.[3]

STEP 6: Write reports

Make a workshop report in which the results of all exercises are included. Support the finalization and submission of the action plans for the capacity development trajectories.

STEP 7: Develop a monitoring plan

Develop a plan to monitor the implementation of the capacity development trajectories.

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3   Pact paper, Strengthening and measuring advocacy capacity of CSOs, p. 9

Montserrado, Liberia

ANNEX 2 PRE-QUESTIONS

A. Pre-questions per organisation

The below questions could be answered by each participating organization in the ACAT workshop to allow the facilitator to prepare him/herself and acquaint him/herself with the organization(s) to be assessed.

1	What themes does your organization work on? (Education, health care, food security, community governance etc.)	
2	On what levels does your organization engage in advocacy: International, national, state, provincial/regional, community level, other?	
3	Has your organization recruited staff for advocacy? How many and working on which themes?	
4	Has your organization received any advocacy capacity building over the past 5 years? If so, what advocacy capacities have been obtained?	
5	Whom of your staff is available for the assessment day?	
6	Will the same staff be participating in the advocacy strengthening trajectory following the assessment?	
7	What expectations or wishes does your organization have with regards to the capacity assessment and the strengthening trajectory in general? E.g. on what themes or sectors would your organization like to develop advocacy capacity?	

B. Pre-questions per individual

The below questions are to be filled in per individual participant. Your own opinion is asked for. Your scoring will be used for discussion during the advocacy workshop. Please do use the below scoring from 1 to 5. Feel free to add a clarification to your scoring if you wish to do so.

1 = Very weak capacity/no capacity and a lot of room for improvement
2 = Modest capacity/lack experience/there is room for improvement
3 = Reasonable capacity
4 = Effective capacity/some successful experience/there is not much
    room for improvement, but there are very specific needs
5 = Capacity is very strong/there is almost no room for improvement.

Your Name: …………………

Your organization: ……………………

Nr	Questions	Score 1 - 5	Clarification (if needed)
	Program level My organization…		
1	Has designed **advocacy objective(s)** that it wants to see achieved in the future		
2	Has reason to believe that the advocacy objective has a **reasonable chance to be achieved**		
3	Has **ensured the relevance** of advocacy objective to the programme		
4	Has verified with the **members of the communities** that this advocacy objective has **a high priority**		
5	Has carried out **good research on the issue** and has found **sufficient evidence data** to advocate for this advocacy objective		
6	Has **designed a clear message** to achieve the advocacy objective, together with the **constituency**		
7	Has **sufficient strategies** and **activities** at its disposal for achieving the advocacy objective		
8	Has collected **sound evidence** to detect the shortcomings of the current **policy**		
9	Has collected sound evidence to detect the shortcomings in the implementation of the **existing policies and legislations**		
10	Has a **clear Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation plan per advocacy objective**; it knows how to keep track of where we are and change plans as needed		
11	Has set aside **sufficient financial resources** for achieving the advocacy objective		
12	Follows through with action to **ensure that changed policies and/or improved implementation of policies will be sustained** after the project has finished		
	Organizational level My organization…		
13	Has a **management team** that is dedicated to advocacy		
14	Has **strategic leadership** on advocacy		

Dutch Wax

15	Maintains an **internal governance structure** that supports advocacy work		
16	Maintains **effective communication** within the organization about advocacy		
17	Has dedicated **sound financial management** to support advocacy		
18	Has dedicated **sufficient human resources** to advocacy through which it has the means to realize the change objectives		
19	Has sufficient **facilities and technology available** to support advocacy work, including a database for storing and analyzing collected advocacy data		
	External linkages **My organization…**		
20	Is maintaining a **strong link to the communities** to **actively involve** them and **use their knowledge** in the achievement of the advocacy objective		
21	*Has identified* which actors **to engage with** in order to achieve the stated advocacy objective		
22	Builds networks and coalitions with **partners and peer organizations** who are also keen on achieving the advocacy objective		
23	**Has identified** which actors **to influence** in order to achieve the stated advocacy objective		
24	Builds **sufficient relationship** with the **actors to influence** in order to achieve the stated advocacy objective		
	Enabling environment **My organization…**		
25	Has a clear understanding of (local) **political processes and the political context** it wants to influence		
26	Is **conflict sensitive**; it understands the socio-political, economic context in which we work and acts on this understanding		
27	Is **conscious of risks**; it knows what the potential risks are of engaging in advocacy and how to minimize those risks		
	Individually **I …**		
28	Have a **good understanding of whom we represent** with our advocacy and **how we do that**		

29	Have the **knowledge and research / analysis skills** to develop a sound advocacy strategy and evidence base on our issue		
30	Have **experience with a range of advocacy activities** and tactics needed to realize the advocacy objectives		
31	Have **strong personal abilities** to effectively communicate and advocate on our issue in our specific context		

ANNEX 3 FORMAT ACTION PLAN

Suggested template to capture the outcomes of the ACAT workshop.

You may consider making the action plans on basis of the following criteria:
- Those actions which the organization can take up by itself
- those actions which the organization can do with other organizations and
- those actions for which the organization may need to bring in additional, external support.

This can be expressed visually as a pyramid. Ideally, the organization will place the greater effort on taking charge of its own development, alone or in collaboration with others, only bringing in external help when it is clear on its value-added.

Diagram 2: Action plan triangle

We
can do it
with help

We can do it with others

We can do it ourselves

Source: Producing a Capacity Development Plan, APCB Course, session 7, INTRAC

>> It is crucial to ensure that staff understand that they don't have to pick their weakest areas to strengthen - they need to pick the areas that they feel will deliver the best results for their advocacy plan.

Kasindi, DR Congo

Format Action Plan

Country	**Organization**
Date	**Facilitator / Co-facilitator**

Key discussion points

Level 1	
Level 2	
Level 3	
Level 4	
Level 5	

Identified priorities for achieving better advocacy results

Level 1	
Level 2	
Level 3	
Level 4	
Level 5	

Action plan

Level	Objectives	Actions	Support needed from whom	Responsible	Timeframe

ANNEX 4 ADDITIONAL READING

Background paper on which the ACAT is based: Praxis Paper 25, *Building Capacity for Advocacy*, INTRAC 2011

Background information on conflict sensitivity and conflict sensitive programming:
http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/publications/conflict-sensitive-approaches-development-humanitarian-assistance-and-peacebuilding-res

http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/content/how-guide

PACT Advocacy Index Guidelines, Strengthening and Measuring Advocacy Capacity of Civil Society Organizations, PACT World, 2005

Praxis Paper 21, Working with Civil Society in Fragile States, INTRAC 2010

Transporting the harvest, Makamba, Burundi