Monitoring and Evaluation for Advocacy and Influencing

Guidance Document
Acknowledgements

The Monitoring and Evaluation for Advocacy and Influencing document is designed to provide guidance on monitoring and evaluating the effects of CARE’s advocacy and influencing work. Rather than presenting a step by step guide, the following provides a series of options to choose from, depending on who you are trying to influence, how you aim to influence, how you want to capture the effects of this effort, and what resources you have to achieve this. Each section provides links for more extensive guidance either from CARE or other organizations that have developed the recommended methods and tools.

This document was created to lay out the tools and resources we have found to be most helpful, adapting them to fit the various stages of MEL for advocacy and influencing work. It draws heavily on the thinking from what CARE has learned about measuring advocacy and influencing over the last decade, but it also benefits greatly from excellent work that has been done elsewhere. These options are derived from a review of over 30 advocacy M&E resources across numerous NGOs, including various guides and tools from CARE and is a compilation of these resources.

This document was developed with a collaborative effort of CARE staff members across the organization and was written by CARE USA. Amanda Mathies (CUSA) and Tom Aston (CIUK) served as co-authors and worked closely with others throughout the process. We would like to thank Jay Goulden (CI), Silvia Grandi (CARE Canada), Rasha Natour (CUSA) and Korinne Chiu (CUSA) for their valuable contribution and the support from the Impact Measurement Team and Policy and Advocacy Department at CARE USA. Thank you to Ximena Echeverria and the CARE International MEL working group for supporting us to create this guidance. And finally, many thanks to the various CARE Country Offices who piloted the tools with us or shared tools that have been helpful in the past.

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Options for Monitoring and Evaluation for Advocacy and Influencing

For CARE, Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) systems and practices are critical to unpack the WHO, WHAT, HOW and WHY of social change:

- **WHO** are the specific populations (women, girls, men and boys) ultimately experiencing lasting change, and who are the actors facilitating that change?
- **WHAT** changes are those populations experiencing?
- **HOW** and **WHY** are those changes happening and what role does CARE and other actors play in facilitating those changes?

In order to unpack the WHO, WHAT, HOW and WHY of social change, CARE has developed a list of [MEL standards](#) as guidance when creating a MEL framework. In accordance to those standards, we have created additional guidance with tools and resources that pertain to CARE’s advocacy work. It is evident that advocacy and influencing work will play a large role as we aim to multiply our impact.

Therefore, the need for MEL in advocacy work is more important than ever.

This document aims to provide guidance for staff to monitor and evaluate the effects of CARE’s advocacy and influencing work. Rather than presenting a step by step guide, the following provides a series of options to choose from, depending on who you are trying to influence, how you aim to influence, how you want to capture the effects of this effort, and what resources you have to achieve this.

There are hundreds of different tools that different organizations have used to measure the effects of their advocacy and influencing work. Each tool is designed for a different purpose, and there are always trade-offs in the choices you make. So, we recommend considering the following when you make your choice:

1. What questions do you want to answer about your initiative, and why the answers matter?
2. What are the characteristics of the initiative?
3. What do you need the evidence for and who needs it?
4. What approaches and methods are available to best answer your questions?
5. What level of capacities and resources are available?

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*Since advocacy is often a long-term effort involving many actors, it requires an M&E approach that recognizes the unique, collaborative and complex nature of advocacy work. Advocacy occurs in a dynamic and fast-changing environment, which requires flexibility and at the same time makes monitoring and evaluation all the more essential.*

(Coffman, UNICEF)

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Keep in mind, there is no best method for MEL within advocacy and influencing work. Each method and tool has strengths and weaknesses. So, we recommend you apply a combination of methods and tools.

*But, also beware of tool overload.* You should only consider tools you believe help you address your information needs (What information? For whom? Why do you need it?), and whether it responds to the key questions you want to answer. You might want to understand who the key stakeholders are in a policymaking process and how you might influence them; you might want to understand whether your policy issue has risen in legislative agenda, or whether policy makers/opinion leaders believe it matters. You may want to understand your contribution to a particular policy win.

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1 See Stern *et al.* 2012 for a deeper explanation.
This document was created to lay out the tools and resources we have found to be most helpful, adapting them to fit the various stages of MEL for advocacy and influencing work. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list. It draws heavily on the thinking from what CARE has learned about measuring advocacy and influencing over the last decade, but it also benefits greatly from excellent work that has been done elsewhere.  

Many of the methods and tools presented will be familiar to you. Whichever methods or tools you choose, in line with CARE’s MEL standards, there are common ways in which you can credibly capture and explain our influence (see right).

This guidance is also intended to build on, and thus complement, other guidance documents designed to support advocacy MEL (Power Tool) and Complexity-aware MEL Guidance CARE’s Impact Growth Strategies (IGS).

Our hope is that the options provided will also help CARE staff to improve how we explain our influence in annual reporting through CARE’s Project and Program Information and Impact Reporting System (PIIRS).

For additional questions or support, feel free to contact the Impact Measurement team at CARE USA or visit the MEL for Advocacy page on the CARE International Foundation Team Site.

Methods and Tools Across the Initiative Cycle: Reflect, Adapt, and Learn

This document is designed to provide guidance and resources for measuring and evaluating CARE’s advocacy work throughout different stages. It is meant to be interactive with words that are bolded in orange linking to the relevant section within the document. It is divided into four sections with tools to support each component, as shown in the diagram below:

1. **Component 1: DEFINE what you want to change and how** (the WHO and WHAT)
2. **Component 2: DESCRIBE what happened** (the WHO and WHAT)
3. **Component 3: EXPLAIN what CAUSED the observed outcomes and why/how they happened** (the HOW and WHY)
4. **Component 4: REFLECT on what worked, what didn’t and why, and adapt** (the WHY, and SO WHAT)

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2 These options are derived from a review of the 30 advocacy M&E guides across 21 NGOs, including various guides and tools from CARE.

3 These resource from ODI and 3ie provide extensive details and guidance on measuring advocacy that may be useful.
Within each section, we provide an overview of possible tools you could use, suggest at what point in your project they might be most appropriate to use, provide a sense of what type of information they can give you, and initial guidance around how to use them. However, this paper is not intended to provide extensive guidance on precisely how to apply each method or tool, as such we provide links so you can explore how to use them in greater depth if you believe they fit the questions you want to answer and the characteristics of your initiative. Furthermore, the phases are not necessarily in chronological order. **Reflection and learning is a continuous process so, the reflect section should punctuate the other three phases.**

The table *(Tools to regularly reflect on and adapt)* on page 26 highlights some of the tools within this guidance that should be regularly reflected on or adapted during your advocacy initiative. Additionally, each method that requires reflection and adaptation are stared in the introduction tables. The frequency of adaptation/reflection will depend on your particular initiatives and what is occurring at the moment, but in general tools can be reviewed biannually or when a significant event occurs that affects your planning.
Component 1: DEFINE what you want to change and how

This first section provides options for tools to help you define what you want to change and how. This is important so you can: be able to monitor over time whether, by implementing the strategies and approaches identified (how), the initiative is contributing to the expected changes or not, what unexpected results have been achieved, what works and what doesn’t work in the approach, and any need for adjusting/changing the initiative. Below we present six well known options for planning advocacy strategies and defining who you want to influence and how you intend to do so. Click the title of the method to be taken to the appropriate section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>What is it?</th>
<th>Why use it?</th>
<th>When use it?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Problem Tree</td>
<td>A critical thinking exercise to help find solutions by mapping out cause and effect around an issue</td>
<td>To have a better understanding of the problem and its causes, and to build a shared sense of understanding, purpose and action</td>
<td>When developing your advocacy strategy; this method is seen as the first step</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Stakeholder Mapping and Analysis*</td>
<td>A critical thinking exercise to identify key stakeholders, including both partners and targets, in an advocacy initiative</td>
<td>To strategically think through who the initiative must influence for success and the context you are operating in</td>
<td>At the design phase, while developing your strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Advocacy Strategy Framework</td>
<td>A matrix to help you identify levels of engagement and key audiences in your overall advocacy efforts</td>
<td>Helps you to connect different actors to your tactics and strategies</td>
<td>When developing your strategy, could be used with stakeholder mapping and interest/influence grids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Theory of Change*</td>
<td>A critical thinking exercise to help map the changes an advocacy strategy/programme can contribute to and how</td>
<td>To help achieve stakeholder consensus on change pathways, summarize assumptions, , help guide indicator generation and monitoring and evaluation more broadly</td>
<td>When creating an influencing plan. Critical pathways should be reviewed regularly during the implementation of the initiative to monitor changes and test assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Log Frame*</td>
<td>A matrix used to help plan the intervention</td>
<td>To help achieve stakeholder consensus, organize the plan, summarize assumptions, and identify indicators of success</td>
<td>At the beginning, to plan and track the intervention and to monitor success over time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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* Methods flagged with a * note that these tools should be regularly reflected on or adapted, as described on page 23 of the guidance
1. **Problem Tree**

First, you need to define the problem you want to address. A simple problem tree might be a good place to start. Problem trees help identify solutions by mapping out the nature of cause and effect around an issue in a similar way to a mind map, but with more structure. You can find an example in CARE International’s Advocacy Handbook on p. 8 or in this worksheet from the Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

2. **Stakeholder Mapping and Analysis**

You need to carefully explain the context in which your intervention is being implemented – who are your key stakeholders, what are key norms and rules of the game, and what structural features affect your possibilities for change. There are various tools which are designed to help you do this. In particular, a well thought through stakeholder analysis is essential. There are lots of good ways to do this, and CARE’s Inclusive Governance team has various examples you can adapt to your needs. Here is just one stakeholder analysis tool example that builds on the advocacy handbook to guide you.

This tool blends basic stakeholder mapping and analysis with questions related to power and political economy such as the interests, incentives and resources of different actors. They both also focus on the relationships between actors and influence over key issues, using an influence and interest grid. The CARE International Advocacy Handbook also uses influence and interest grids (see below) and provides guidance on conducting a stakeholder analysis, starting on page 16. This may serve as a basis for deeper power or political economy analyses. CARE has conducted this kind of analysis in over a dozen countries. And you can find some examples here.

Windows of opportunity open and close, and which actors matter also changes. And this can happen very quickly. So, stakeholder analysis should be reviewed regularly. You may wish to do this twice a year, and so on.

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5 For advocacy interventions, this is often turned into an objectives tree. See the CARE International Advocacy Handbook for an example on p.13.

6 If you want to dig deeper, there are more sophisticated problem analysis tools such as problem driven iterative adaptation (PDIA), including Ishikawa diagrams (or fishbone diagrams). Social Network Analysis (SNA) can also be a helpful exercise. You might include network matrices; an easy first step to understand connections between key actors and the strength of relationships. The second stakeholder analysis tool includes one exercise which uses stakeholder analysis.
each time a key event happens which significantly affects your planning such as expected and unexpected transitions of power, such as elections or coups.

An alternative, yet complementary, approach to stakeholder analysis which can help you plan how to influence the behaviour of key stakeholders can be found in Outcome Mapping. Outcome Mapping takes an actor-focused approach. You are encouraged to analyze your stakeholder engagement strategy considering three spheres of control:

- Actors you have direct contact with and influence over;
- Actors you don’t have direct contact with but can influence through others, and;
- Actors you don’t have any contact with or any influence over

You can see these spheres as moving from control through influence, to concern, as you can see below:

![Three spheres of control and their relation to policy influence](image)

Those individuals, groups and organisations with which the initiative interacts directly and with which the initiative anticipates opportunities for influence are known as **boundary partners**, and these should be key to your influencing strategies. You can find further explanation of exactly how to do this using a **practitioner’s guide** from the Outcome Mapping Learning Community (OMLC).

3. **Advocacy Strategy Framework**

Another common way to build on a stakeholder analysis is to develop an **influence outcomes framework** such as the example below from Tanya Beer and Julia Coffman to identify levels of engagement and key audiences in line with your strategies. See below:

The benefit of this mapping is that it helps you to connect different actors to your tactics and strategies. It can help you build on influence and interest grids or strategy maps and understand the overall focus of your advocacy efforts.
There are various other ways in which you can develop plans to influence key actors, and there are numerous adaptations of the examples presented that may provide a better fit for your purposes. What matters is that you prioritize key actors based on who you anticipate will have leverage over the issue you wish to influence.⁷

4. Theory of Change

Understanding context and the key actors and relationships within that context are key to building a solid theory of change. A theory of change is a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a particular change is expected to happen in a particular context. It explains why we think certain actions (your intervention or program strategy) may help lead to a desired change.

CARE’s Long Term Program Guidelines (also found here) offers two options you may wish to use. If you are more of a listener than a reader, Patricia Rogers of Better Evaluation provides an excellent explanation of what theories of change are and what they are about here.

While there are many different ways to develop a theory of change, in general, once you have an understanding of the problem you want to address, you identify a long-term goal and work back from this to identify all the conditions (outcomes) that must be in place (and how these are causally related) for the goal to be achieved.

⁷ Alternatively, you may consider using additional steps from Outcome Mapping to define outcome challenges for these key actors, progress markers to track change (see component 2) and strategy maps which are aimed at boundary partners (key influence targets) individually and also at the environment in which they operate. This might involve building skills, promoting new thinking, providing information, and strengthening peer networks.
It is common to include the following:

- explain the **situation** and **problem** you want to address;
- what you **aim to change**;
- what different **pathways** and **steps** may lead to that change;
- what **actors** will be involved in achieving that change and how;
- **assumptions** around how you move from one step to the following in the change pathway;
- what **evidence** you have for how you think change will happen.

You may also have different theories of change with varying levels of detail. It is important to break down your theories of change because your assumptions of what will cause change and how that will likely happen will often vary a lot in different contexts. And remember, it’s important to **revise your theory of change regularly**. How often you should do this depends on the nature of your initiative, but every time you notice a significant change in context that might undermine your key assumptions, you should take another look. Take the time to sit down as a team. Focus on bits of your theory you think are most vulnerable because of the changes you see around you. And think about how you might need to change your tactics and strategies accordingly. See below for an example:

Equally, you may wish to divide out different parts of your program theory of change by pathway or strategy. For example, your influence may depend on how issues are framed, or on policy windows of change, or through creating incentives for elite actors to change their behaviour. These are not only different pathways; they are all different theories of how influence happens. Sarah Stachowiak of ORS Impact offers a particularly insightful explanation of **10 different pathways of change** for advocacy and policy change effort [here](#).

A common problem in M&E for advocacy and influencing is not in defining the final outcomes. These are often quite obvious. Instead, we find that the biggest challenges are typically in defining initial or interim outcomes. Julia Coffman from the Centre for Evaluation Innovation provides a helpful explanation [here](#) if you want to understand more.
Below you will find a non-exhaustive list of potential initial signs of changes that. In the Power Tool you can find a more extensive list you can consider when constructing your log frame (if you choose to use one) and to develop indicators to track these changes. See below for some of the key things you should be looking for:

**Initial Signs of Change**

| Capacity | Organizations gain necessary skills to implement an advocacy strategy:  
|          | ● Key messages communicated  
|          | ● Strategy planning capacity is in place  
|          | ● Networking abilities increased  
|          | ● Lobbying capacity enhanced  
|          | ● Research quality increased  
|          | ● Financial planning capacity improved  |
| Resources | ● New public or private entities contribute funds or other resources to the agenda  |
| Knowledge | ● Key actors (partners and policy-makers) have better knowledge regarding the policy issue of interest  |
| Awareness | ● Target audiences’ knowledge and awareness of the issue increased  
|          | ● Coalition partners’ awareness of the issue increased  |
| Attitudes | ● Target audiences’ attitudes improve towards the policy agenda  
|          | ● Coalition partners increasingly believe their action will lead to change (increased self-efficacy)  |

*Drawing on Beer and Coffman, 2015; Coffman, 2011; ORS Impact, 2007*

Advocacy theories of change or logic models are often vague about the middle ground between awareness and action. Increased awareness about a problem or a possible solution is rarely sufficient to trigger action. There is often a sense of increased public or political will or commitment which helps drive action. It might be that the issue is framed differently and thus perceived in a more positive light by the general public or policy-makers. It might be that the issue becomes more visible, with key actors more commonly discussing the issue in public. The issue might also become more salient (i.e. considered more important and urgent). It might rise up the legislative agenda. And indeed, public servants and policy-makers may begin to see the policy ask as a technically and financially feasible option. Below you can see some possible intermediate signs of change:

**Intermediate Signs of Change**

| Base | Increase in the number of individuals who support the issue (i.e. more people attend meetings, marches, etc.)  
|      | Increase in the variety of individuals and groups who support the issue  
|      | Increase in the proportion of people who say they are willing to take action  |
| Partnership | New partnerships or alliances are formed (incl. unlikely allies)  
|          | Increased number of partners support the agenda  
|          | More priority issues are shared by partners (e.g. aligning messages, proposing joint meetings)  |
| Champions | High profile actors (opinion leaders) speak in favour of the key issue for the first time, or more frequently than before  |
| Acceptability | Issues from the policy agenda are framed in a more positive light (e.g. due to compelling research)  
|          | Key actors increasingly believe their peers support the agenda  |
| Visibility | Increased visibility of campaign messages in public debates or in the media (including research citations)  
|          | Quantity or quality of media coverage increases and/or improves (e.g. volume of media citations or website hits)  |
| Credibility | Research produced around the issue is increasingly considered credible by experts or other key audiences  |
These intermediate changes then, we hope, turn into specific commitments and actions. It could be that particular agreements are reached in meetings. Specific recommendations in those meetings may be taken on board (if so, how many, or what %?). And consultations may become part of a more formal process.

You can also look at the quality of engagements themselves. Who initiated the meeting? What type of meeting was it? Where was it? How much respect and trust was there at the meeting? Were key documents shared? Were coalition partners given space to express themselves? Were they listened to when they spoke? Did different groups use the same language or different language? (See Davies, 2001).

You should also create space to regularly reflect on what is being achieved, or not being achieved. As with stakeholder analysis, you may wish to do this twice a year, and each time a key event happens which significantly affects your planning. In this case, you may want to carry out an After Action Review (AAR) or an intense period debrief (see Component 4: REFLECT on what worked, what didn’t and why, and adapt for more details).

5. Log Frame

All of the above may help you to build a log frame with key indicators. See here for an easy log frame template for advocacy and influencing, which you can use and adapt. This can help you structure your expected result chain (goal, objectives, outcomes, outputs), core indicators, milestones and breakthroughs. Unlike many projects with onerous donor reporting requirements, you'll want to keep your log frame light. Or, if you already have enough clarity regarding your influencing strategies (through your theory of change or strategy maps), you may not either want or need one. However, log frames can be a useful tool to help organize your strategy. And it provides a way to keep track of the key indicators of change.

For advocacy and influencing work, there are many different strategy options, as you can see from the mapping advocacy strategy grid above. The temptation is to do as much as possible and thus track as many changes as you can. But this may be a serious waste of time. Remember when choosing indicators that you should only collect data on what is most important to your strategy. Anything you don’t believe you will use, you shouldn’t gather in the first place.

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Component 2: DESCRIBE what happened

This section is designed to provide you options to help describe and track the changes you are seeing. This stage is broadly about monitoring outputs and describing immediate and intermediate outcomes. There are numerous ways to do this, depending on what your strategies are. Below we present six options you can consider to help track activities, understand movement on a policy issue, understand the views of opinion leaders, policy makers, and policy champions, and track behavioural changes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>What is it?</th>
<th>Why use it?</th>
<th>When use it?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Advocacy Activity Tracker*</td>
<td>Recording system to track activities that pertain to your win</td>
<td>To track that various activities and inputs that may play a role if there is a win</td>
<td>After any activity that should be recorded, weekly or monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Policy Issue Ratings*</td>
<td>A scale to rate interim outcomes in an initiative</td>
<td>Helpful to gauge if there is movement on a policy issue</td>
<td>Use during baseline and evaluation to gauge success (or biannually)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Bellwether Interviews</td>
<td>An interview method to determine a key stakeholder’s position on the policy agenda before and after the initiative to capture any change in perspective</td>
<td>Helpful to capture how your issue is positioned in the policy agenda, how influential leaders think about your issue, and any changes over time</td>
<td>Use during baseline and following significant activity to gauge success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Policymaker Ratings*</td>
<td>A tool for gauging political will or support for a particular advocacy issue or proposal among a defined group of policymakers</td>
<td>To rate which policymakers we may be interested in engaging, and if you want to assess changes in stance on issues</td>
<td>Use at baseline and then to monitor policymakers stances on policy issues over time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Champion Scorecard</td>
<td>Tracks changes in policymaker’s support over time</td>
<td>Useful to gauge if your efforts to engage policymakers has resulted in a change in their position on the specific issue</td>
<td>Use after stakeholder analysis and on a regular basis to track progress, or lack thereof, in the support of key stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Progress Marker Journals*</td>
<td>A logging method to monitor outcomes and impact and gauge success</td>
<td>Helpful to identify the incremental steps for each actor that lead to success</td>
<td>Use to design the intervention and later to assess results (both at evaluation points and as on-going monitoring tool)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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6. Advocacy Activity Tracker

Advocacy consists of a series of activities and tactics that are implemented in order to achieve a policy or influencing change of some sort. Thus, capturing the activities as they relate to the advocacy initiative is a crucial step for a MEL advocacy system. Based on CARE Tanzania’s tool, CARE USA developed an Advocacy Activity Tracker that is an excel-based spreadsheet which allows teams to easily track their advocacy activities. It is a template that should be adapted for your own context by creating a list of the various options under each topic, where applicable (author, activity type, participants, and category).
By capturing the activities, you can identify how much you have done towards an advocacy goal, what has worked and what hasn’t, and determine if your team needs to adjust the tactics. It will ultimately allow you to keep a record of the various activities that you and the team participated in, and if these activities have resulted in the assumed outcomes. For more information on this tool, see the guidance note in the MEL Advocacy Starter Kit starting on page 3.

7. **Policy Issue Ratings**

One significant area of potential interest is in understanding whether an issue or proposal is considered important by key stakeholders. As per the signs of change above, this might refer to concerns related to awareness or visibility, credibility or salience. It is common to ask whether your key audiences believe a problem is important, whether they are aware of the policy proposal you are making or how visible it is. Policy issue ratings are one common way to do that. This is designed as a self-assessment exercise. You are thus (subjectively) rating the degree to which you believe different target audience believe that the problem matters or are aware of our proposal for change. However, you can also attach evidence such as newspaper articles, public statements, etc. to support your rating.

See below for an example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interim Outcome</th>
<th>Target Audience</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem salience</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of policy proposal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Learning for Action Group (2013, page 5)

**Key:**
1. Does not perceive the problem/ is not aware of the proposal
2. A small minority of target audience perceives the problem/ is aware of the proposal/solution
3. A large minority of target audience perceives the problem/ is aware of the proposal/solution
4. A minority perceives the problem/ is aware of the proposal/solution, but those who do are a key constituency
5. A majority perceives the problem/ is aware of the proposal/solution, but few belong to key constituencies
6. A majority perceives the problem/ is aware of the proposal/solution, and many belong to key constituencies
7. A large majority perceives the problem/ is aware of the proposal/solution, and many are from key constituency

This kind of Likert scale can be adapted for various policy issues and for any audience. For example, for political will, you can construct a rating scale from strongly oppose to strongly in favour of the proposal. This should be **filled on a regular basis to track any change or progress in your audience**.

These ratings are self-reported. They are typically a self-assessment to take the temperature, but the ratings can also be verified through survey methods or interviews (e.g. Bellwether interviews).

8. **Bellwether Interviews**

If you want to **understand what policy makers/opinion leaders** think about your key issues, you may want to consider doing **bellwether interviews**, which were developed by the Harvard Family Research Project to determine where a policy issue or proposed change is positioned on the broader
policy agenda, the perceptions of key actors on this policy issue, and the level of traction it has among decision-makers (see Coffman and Reed, 2007, pg.3).

“Bellwethers” are simply influential people whose opinions are important to the success of your initiative, often policy makers or others with authority. The aim of the interviews is to understand if your issue is a priority for the decision-makers, and if so, how much of a priority among a broad range of policy issues. These interviews can be conducted either once or multiple times in order to track changes in the bellwether support for the policy issue of interest. Thus, Bellwether interviews can support two purposes: findings from Bellwether interviews can be used as a baseline evaluation of policymaker attitudes towards your issue to influence your strategy and/or as a tracking tool to see if a heavy investment for the policy issue was effective in changing the bellwether’s position or raising awareness.

The interviewers should be neutral actors such as research institutions or think tanks that are not connected to the issue or policy issue of interest. It is important that bellwethers are unaware beforehand that the interview will discuss the policy issue of interest in order to capture authentic answers.

The bellwether methodology involves five main steps common to all key informant interviews:

1. **Select the types or categories of bellwethers to interview**: For example, categories might include policymakers, the media, funders, researchers/think tanks, the business community, trade associations, or advocates. Categories chosen should represent the types of individuals whose opinions are important or influential on the policy issue of interest.

2. **Select the bellwether sample**: After sample categories are determined, criteria are developed for selecting individual bellwethers. If looking at a specific policy issue, the bellwethers interviewed should align with the targets/stakeholders for your advocacy strategy. This ensures that the interview results are valuable by providing insight on how the key decision-makers view your policy issue and therefore can be used to inform updated tactics and approaches, if necessary. Selection criteria might include, for example, bipartisanship, or gender, ethnic, and geographic diversity. Once selection criteria are developed, subject matter experts nominate bellwethers who fit those criteria.

3. **Set up interviews**: Interview setup is critical. Bellwethers must be unaware before the interview begins that the interview will focus on the specific policy issue of interest. They are informed about what the interview will generally cover such as the country’s overall political agenda, but do not receive specific details. This approach helps to ensure that bellwethers’ responses are authentic and unprompted.

4. **Conduct the interviews**: Interview questions determine what bellwethers know and think about the policy of interest. For example, the interview might start by asking bellwethers what issues they think are at the top of the policy agenda. Their responses (which will be unprompted because they do not know beforehand which specific policy issue you are exploring) indicate whether the advocacy issue of interest shows up on that list, and if so, where, and along with what other issues. Later questions can get more specific and ask about bellwethers’ familiarity with the issue of interest and probe on what they know, allowing later content analysis to determine whether advocates’ messages surface in bellwether discourse about the issue. Questions also might ask bellwethers to predict

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8 Bellwether Methodology pulled from Coffman and Reed, 2007, *Unique Methods in Advocacy Evaluation*. Additional resources on Bellwether Interviews can be found here
whether they think the issue will advance in the near future or longer term. You can also include interview questions that ask about the main organizations that are trusted by the bellwethers to see if CARE and/or partner organizations are considered a trusted and reliable resource on the policy issue. Again, the question would not ask the bellwether about CARE specifically, but for a list of organizations to see if CARE or partner organizations are listed by the bellwether unprompted.

5. **Analyze and use the data to inform strategy**: The bellwether methodology returns both summative and formative data. Bellwether data can indicate how effective, according to this audience, advocates have been in communicating their messages and whether they have been successful in moving their issue either onto the policy agenda or at increasing its importance. Formatively, bellwether data can inform advocates about specific gaps in bellwether knowledge about how their messages are playing with this audience. This method is repeatable over time if the advocacy strategy in order to capture changes in the bellwether’s stance over time.

9. **Policymaker Ratings**

The Policymaker Rating tool was first developed by the Harvard Family Research Project, and it was designed to appraise policymaker support on issues (e.g., number of bills introduced on the issue, number of bill co-sponsors or co-signers, number of votes for or against specific bills).

The tool goes one step beyond policy issue ratings, and depends more on insider knowledge about individual policymakers’ stances on policy issues. It isn’t intended to create additional work for advocates, but instead transfer what they already know from gathering intelligence around the positions of key actors they aim to influence. You can see how this tool has been adapted by CARE Norway here.

Advocates rate policymakers of interest on a series of three scales that assess:

- **Policymaker level of support**: Individual policymaker support for an issue based on his or her public behaviours or actions on behalf of the issue;
- **Policymaker level of influence**: Policy maker influence on the policy issue of interest (similar to the idea of a power analysis). Ratings are based on criteria that research shows relate to policymaker influence.
- **Rater level of confidence**: Confidence in the accuracy of ratings on the first two scales.

At least 3-5 advocates (the more the better) should participate in the rating process. Advocates can either rate policymakers as a group (arriving at a consensus group rating), or rate policymakers independently and then average their ratings.

Once ratings are complete, composite ratings are computed and aggregated across policymakers. Data, such as individual policymakers’ party affiliation, district representation, committee membership, or caucus membership, can be added to enable different ways of looking at the analysis. Like the bellwether methodology (mentioned above), this method is repeatable over time to determine whether and how policy maker support is shifting. See below for an example:

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### Sample Policymaker Rating Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policymaker Level of Support</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Not at all supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No evidence this person has spoken or taken any action in support of the issues (includes opposition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Somewhat supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Has indicated being favourably disposed to the issues (e.g. expresses support for the issue or mentions it in one-on-one or small group conversations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Occasionally takes action either publicly or behind the scenes in support of the issues (e.g. speaks out at public hearings, gets quoted in the media, includes it in speeches, assigns bills to a power legislator, encourages colleagues to support policies, plays a role in budget negotiations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Extremely supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Has a well-known reputation for being a champion of the issues and regularly takes leadership on advancing it (e.g. makes it a key part of his or her platform or agenda)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Policymaker Level of Influence | 1      | Not very influential                                                        |
|                               |        | Meets none or only 1 criteria                                               |
|                               | 2      | Somewhat influential                                                        |
|                               |        | Meets at least 2 criteria                                                  |
|                               | 3      | Influential                                                                 |
|                               |        | Meets 3 or 4 criteria AND/OR is on a key committee                          |
|                               | 4      | Extremely influential                                                       |
|                               |        | Meets 5 or 6 criteria AND/OR holds a formal leadership position AND/OR chairs a key committee |

| Confidence in ratings | 1      | Not very confident                                                          |
|                      |        | Ratings are a guess based on 3rd-hand, unverifiable, or unreliable information about the leader and his or her related (or lack of related) interests (e.g. the policymaker or her staff saying they “love the issue” in a small meeting where they feel pressure to speak positively). |
|                      | 2      | Somewhat confident                                                          |
|                      |        | Ratings are a fairly informed guess. For example, the team have picked up consistent information from more than one source, but sources may not be 100% verifiable or reliable; or the information collected is somewhat vague. |
|                      | 3      | Extremely confident                                                          |
|                      |        | Ratings are based on advocates’ direct contact with the individual or information from a trusted and reliable source. |

You can also adapt your rating scales. It may be, for example, that the problem is not lack of awareness and support directly. Some key decision-makers understand the issue or proposal well, but might strongly oppose it. They may be a key blocker to policy change, so the goal may be to reduce their opposition.

10. **Champion Scorecard**

The champion scorecard is similar to the policymaker ratings tool, but is intended to track the policymaker over time. Once you’ve identified the individuals and key government officials you want to target, you build a list of actions that characterize a “champion,” resulting in measurable champion actions or “traits” that are directly linked to your advocacy priorities.

You then assign a numerical score (1 – 5) based on CARE’s priorities among the actions that define a champion. The lowest scores should be assigned to lower-effort actions dealing primarily with expressing interest in an issue, while the highest scores should be reserved for actions most closely associated with policy change or implementation. Each selected champion trait falls into one of
three major categories: (1) demonstrating interest in the issues; (2) promoting awareness and understanding of the issue to various groups; and (3) advocating improved policies and practices.

The first category – **demonstrates interest** – includes relatively low-effort activities that highlight a champion’s inclination to learn more about the target issues. Examples include requesting information from CARE and/or partner organizations on a policy issue, or visiting development projects related to a CARE supported policy issue.

The second category of champion traits – **promotes awareness and understanding** – outlines a series of activities that show increasing commitment to relevant policy issues. Examples include interviews with local or national media outlets, speaking publicly in support of certain policies, and recruiting colleagues to visit development projects related to a CARE-supported policy issue.

The third category – **advocates improved policy and practices** – focuses on policy-specific actions such as drafting legislation, implementing or funding policies, adopting CARE’s recommendations, organizing government briefings, and personally lobbying colleagues to achieve desired outcomes in line with CARE’s advocacy objectives.

Once the champion traits are finalized and put into the selected categories, the scorecard then calculates a numerical score for an individual’s actions represents the level of “champion-ness” on the target issue/theme.

Finally, you are left with a scorecard that demonstrates how your target policymaker is engaging on your issues over time, and how much he or she is a “champion” of your advocacy priorities. In general, it is recommended to limit yourself to a few key traits, otherwise it can become a very laborious exercise. You can use this scorecard to measure the impact of your advocacy work, as well as an accountability tool to demonstrate to policymakers that you are holding them accountable for their commitments, statements and actions. Additional resources on CARE’s champion scorecard can be found [here](#) as well as an example on how CARE adapted it to Gender specifically.

### 11. Progress Marker Journals

**Progress markers** come from Outcome Mapping. They are a specific kind of scalar approach that describes a progression of behaviour change for a particular actor or boundary partner.

Progress markers are always described as **changes in behaviour** (actions, activities, relationships, policies or practices) because this is the most practical (and feasible) way of observing change in an actor – it may be that we are seeking to influence their perception of an issue, but the only way we will know if these changes have come about is through changes in behaviour, actions or relationships. The three levels of change are defined in this way:

- **Expect to see:** The minimum change we would expect to see in response to the initiative. These are often reactive indicators.
- **Like to see:** These indicators often reflect a more active and engaged behaviour.
- **Love to see:** A profound change occurs in the boundary partner. This should be sufficiently high to see deep changes.
Progress markers are not a description of how change must occur; rather they describe milestones that indicate progress towards an end goal – a theory that is regularly monitored. And these behavioural changes are logged in progress marker journals.

Many CARE country offices have used progress markers and journals to track behaviour change. You can find further explanation of exactly how to do this using a practitioner’s guide from the Outcome Mapping Learning Community (OMLC), find an example of them being used here, and additional guidance here.

Back to Methods and Tools Across the Initiative Cycle: Reflect, Adapt, and Learn

Component 3: EXPLAIN what CAUSED the observed outcomes and why/how they happened

This section provides options for tools that aim to help us understand what caused an outcome (explain the how and why an observed change happened). If an outcome hasn’t materialised, you should go straight to Component 4: REFLECT on what worked, what didn’t and why, and adapt.

The options presented here are designed to help us understand cause and effect, our contribution to the observed outcomes, how significant our role was, and the evidence behind this. In turn, some of these tools can produce information that may be used in communication pieces around our advocacy work, or capturing the whole story behind a win.

Ultimately, claims you make about influence are about three things:

1. Significance of the outcome
2. Level of contribution
3. Strength of evidence

This can be represented as a cube (see right):

You need to articulate why you believe an outcome is important. Is this a major change? Will many women and men benefit?

You also need to articulate how important your contribution was to that outcome. What specific contributions did CARE and our partners make to that outcome? Was there a key moment where our input was necessary or decisive? What did other actors do? And are there any alternative explanations for the change? What do opinion leaders and policymakers say about your role in the outcome?

You should also consider how strong your evidence is to substantiate your claim. Your claim of influence should be based on logical steps – a clear process which describes the key moments or
actions you believe were decisive to make the change a reality. In this context, ‘strength’ refers to how good a fit the evidence is to the claim you make. You need to be certain these steps really happened. And you ideally want to know if there is any evidence that shows you and your partners make a unique contribution to the outcome.

All of the tools and methods mentioned below draw on these three key dimensions in different ways.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>What is it?</th>
<th>Why use it?</th>
<th>When use it?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>12. Advocacy and Influencing Impact Reporting (AIIR) Tool</strong></td>
<td>A questionnaire-like tool that aims to capture various aspects of an advocacy or influencing win.</td>
<td>To capture evidence on the win, and contribution on an advocacy or influencing success towards this.</td>
<td>After a major advocacy/influencing win.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13. Outcome Harvests</strong></td>
<td>A statement structure to help effectively describe outcomes, potential contribution and significance of outcomes.</td>
<td>To clearly and concisely articulate an outcome and our contribution to it.</td>
<td>After a win occurs, and you want to unravel what you think the key outcomes were and how we might have contributed to these.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14. Contribution Ranking</strong></td>
<td>A tool to quickly assess potential level of contribution.</td>
<td>To decide whether a claim is important enough to evaluate.</td>
<td>After a major advocacy/influencing win.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15. Contribution Analysis</strong></td>
<td>An approach using the intervention’s strategic plan to assess a contribution story.</td>
<td>To ensure a structured process to assess contribution to an outcome.</td>
<td>After you have articulated an outcome statement and want to analyse the credibility of a claim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>16. Process Tracing/Contribution Tracing</strong></td>
<td>A method designed to help you define what evidence to look for and with criteria to judge the strength of a contribution claim.</td>
<td>To help test the strength of a contribution claim to an outcome, based in the quality of evidence.</td>
<td>After an outcome has been articulated and you want to rigorously test the validity of claims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>17. Rapid Outcome Assessment</strong></td>
<td>A mapping tool that draws links between key actors and behaviour change.</td>
<td>Useful tool to map out causal links between actors, intervention and outcomes, and help rule out competing claims of influence.</td>
<td>After an outcome has been articulated and you want the team to assess the credibility of claims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>18. Summit Workshop</strong></td>
<td>A panel of relevant stakeholders who are provided evidence and then asked to assess the contribution to the outcome.</td>
<td>To help corroborate our own claims of contribution to an outcome by external stakeholders.</td>
<td>After a contribution claim has been made about a win to assess from external sources the significance of your contribution.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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12. **Advocacy and Influencing Impact Reporting (AIIR) Tool**

The Advocacy and Influencing Impact Reporting (AIIR) tool has been developed by CARE to easily collect information and evidence on an advocacy or influencing win. It aims to capture the
significance of the win, the level of CARE and our partner’s contribution, who stands to benefit from
the change, and what evidence we have to support a claim of change or impact. With the wide range
of successes within influencing work and the various roles CARE may have played in this win, this
tool can quickly capture the key elements that determine the significance of an advocacy win. It
looks at the success, potential impact/reach, actual impact/reach, contribution, and a space to
discuss reflection and learning. Additionally, CARE’s post-win reflection tool is another tool that can
capture a big win and can facilitate meaningful reflections on the advocacy win.

13. Outcome Harvests

One effective way to articulate outcomes is through an outcome harvest. An outcome harvest
comes from the Outcome Harvesting methodology.\(^\text{10}\) See here for CARE Nepal’s guidance note.

In most cases of policy change, it’s quite clear what the outcome was – the policy, the plan, or the
budget was approved. But it may be that you have various intermediate outcomes as well such as an
issue being raised for the first time in parliament, submission of a law bill, or even minor
amendments of a local plan.

Outcome Harvesting collects (“harvests”) evidence of what has changed (“defined as outcomes”)
and, then, working backwards, determines whether and how an intervention has contributed to
these changes. It has proven to be especially useful in complex situations when it is not possible to
define up front and concretely most of what an intervention aims to achieve, or even, what specific
actions will be taken over a multi-year period.

You first have to design a harvest by identifying key questions and agree on what information is to
be collected and how you believe your actions influenced actors.

At the heart of the harvest are outcome statements of changes that actually happened. Each of
these should be one short and clear paragraph. The basic information that needs to be included in
an outcome statement are:

- Who changed their behaviour?
- What changed?
- When did it change?
- And, where did it happen?

In addition, each outcome statement should describe how the initiative contributed to it. You can
also articulate the significance of the outcome and the context in which the change takes place.

Below you can see an example from the Outcome Harvesting guidance:

**Outcome Description:** In 2009, The Palestinian Authority revitalizes an employment fund for
qualified people living in Palestine.

**Contribution:** In 2007, a research report on the economic impact of unemployment in Palestine was
released. The Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP) coalition in Palestine followed up by
coupling dialogue with the government and popular mobilization – including the “Stand Up and Be
Counted” campaign, which mobilized 1.2 million people in 2008. Working with the Ministry of
Labour, the coalition helped secure multilateral funding and delineate management of the fund.

\(^{10}\) Additional information on Outcome Harvesting can be found in CARE’s Qualitative Methods Guidance p. 4
You are encouraged to make outcome statements as SMART (Specific Measurable Achieved Relevant and Timely) as possible. In particular, the more specific your outcome statements are, the easier it is to substantiate your claim of influence. The outcome statement should be formulated in sufficient detail so that a primary intended user without specialized subject or contextual knowledge will be able to understand and appreciate who changed what, when and where it changed, and how the change agent contributed (Wilson-Grau and Britt, 2013: 10, 11).

14. Contribution Ranking

Another very straightforward way to articulate the level of contribution comes from Save the Children. The below table simply encourages teams to grade our contribution by three levels. A low contribution suggests the changed would have happened anyway, a medium contribution suggests we made a significant contribution alongside other actors, and a high contribution suggests the change would not have happened without us. It also asks you to provide evidence to back up your claims. See below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Rationale for rating and evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>There is reason (evidence) to believe that the change would clearly not have happened without CARE’s efforts. Alongside our own actions this could also include significant actions from partners which we have supported technically or financially. (as long as it reflects that it about working with partners and decision makers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>There is reason to believe that CARE contributed substantially but along with other partners</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>CARE was one of a number of actors that contributed but this change may have happened regardless.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Save the Children, n.d.

There are two particularly useful methods that can help explain the credibility of claims of advocacy and policy influence: contribution analysis and process/contribution tracing. These can also be combined into a common process as we show below.

15. Contribution Analysis

Contribution Analysis was first designed by John Mayne. Its main strengths are in providing an iterative process to verify or confirm a Theory of Change with empirical evidence (see Mayne, 2008). It can help a team systematically verify that the steps and assumptions in the intervention Theory of Change were realised in practice, and account for other major influencing factors.

The six steps of contribution analysis are the following:

1. Mapping advocacy results using a logic model, outcomes chain, or similar approach.
2. Gathering existing evidence on those results.
3. Exploring alternative explanations for the results to determine if they might provide a better explanation of the observed results than the advocacy effort being examined.
4. Developing a “performance story” that lays out the context, planned and actual accomplishments, lessons learned, and main alternative explanations for the results, along with why those alternative explanations should not be accepted.
5. **Seeking additional evidence** where alternative evidence cannot be discounted or where the contribution argument is questionable.

6. **Revising and strengthening the performance story** where possible. If this cannot be done, either more evaluation work is required or the conclusion is that a plausible and defensible case cannot be made that the advocacy effort contributed to the observed results.

See Kane et al. 2017 for further guidance on how to conduct the process for policy advocacy work.

16. **Process Tracing/ Contribution Tracing**

Contribution Analysis is an approach, and does not spell out detailed steps to follow in data collection or discusses explicitly the types and strength of evidence used. Process tracing can help to do this through four evidence tests (Straw-in-the-wind, Hoop, Smoking Gun, Doubly Decisive).\(^{11}\)

- **The straw-in-the-wind** test is the weakest. The evidence you find may well be a coincidence because it is neither necessary nor sufficient. It is neither certain nor unique.
- **The hoop test** is necessary to confirm your hypothesis. So, if you don’t find this evidence your claim falls down.
- **The smoking gun** test is sufficient to confirm your hypothesis. This kind of evidence is quite unique to your contribution claim. This is the famous test of the perpetrator of a murder holding the gun over the body of the victim.
- **The doubly decisive** test is the most demanding of all. It is both necessary and sufficient. Evidence that passes this test is extremely rare. So, in practice, we rarely conduct this test.

The two most important tests are the hoop test for certainty (checking key steps really happened as we say) and the smoking gun test (to show unique contributions that affected the change).

Process tracing famously draws on the deductive reasoning of detective stories such as Sherlock Holmes. The tests are essentially designed to help confirm or rule out a particular idea (hypothesis) of how the change really happened.

Process tracing involves interviews, review of documentation and triangulation of information. The evaluators then find different theories of the causal effect, and difference pieces of evidence. They determine if each piece of evidence is necessary or sufficient to affirm the causal inference. See additional guidance [here](#) and [here](#).

**Contribution Tracing**

Contribution Tracing is an adaptation of Process Tracing. It combines Process Tracing with Bayesian Updating. And, in this way, it helps to formalize the evidence tests in Process Tracing by using mathematical probability to back up qualitative contribution claims.

Contribution Tracing is all about increasing your **confidence** in making claims about impact. Essentially, you make a “claim” about your intervention’s role in achieving an outcome that really happened (your contribution), and then find evidence to defend your claim.

To do this, like other theory-based methods, you need a hypothesis (a proposed explanation) about how you think change happened. You then review the connection between different steps (or components) in that process:

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\(^{11}\) See appendix 2 for a combination of contribution analysis with contribution tracing.
You identify evidence that would help support (or undermine) your proposed explanation using the four tests of Process Tracing (Straws-in-the-wind, Hoops, Smoking Guns, Doubly Decisive). What matters is not how much evidence you have, but how good that evidence is to help confirm that each part of your proposed explanation for your claim really exists (“probative value”).

In Contribution Tracing, you use Bayesian (Confidence) Updating to assign a probability (how likely it is) that the various components of your contribution claim exist; and ultimately whether your claim holds true. You then update your confidence after gathering data precisely tailored to your claim (increasing or decreasing the probability using the four tests), compare this against rival explanations, and then put it up for “trial,” inviting others in to peer review your claim.

See here for an example from CARE Ghana and here for a PowerPoint on Contribution Tracing.

Contribution analysis includes a performance story workshop and contribution tracing organizes a contribution trial. But there are two other similar options you may want to consider to bring multiple perspectives to check the credibility of evidence to support a claim of policy influence; conducting a rapid outcome assessment or a summit workshop.

17. Rapid Outcome Assessment

Alternatively, you may want to conduct a workshop to construct a Rapid Outcome Assessment map from Rapid Outcome Mapping (ROMA). The main reason for putting change in a timeline is to rule out alternative explanations.

In a workshop participants work through each of the changes observed and use their knowledge and experience to propose the factors that influenced them and then draw lines between the different elements of the timeline. You can see an example of a map on the below:

**Example of a Rapid Outcome Map**
Time runs from left (start of the initiative) to right (today). Horizontal lines show changes observed in seven key stakeholders (BP1 – 7). Below this you have Project actions or milestones and events in the External Environment (EE). Each circle describes observed, verified changes that have occurred among those actors. The lines are added during the workshop to indicate causes. Each line is backed up with a statement providing the rationale behind the causal link.

18. Summit Workshop

One option, which comes from Collaborative Outcomes Reporting (COR), is to organize an outcomes panel and a summit workshop.

An outcomes panel consists of people with relevant political, scientific, technical, or sectoral knowledge who are brought together and presented with a range of evidence compiled but the initiative. They are then asked to assess the contribution of the intervention towards goals, given the available evidence and to explore rival hypotheses that could explain the data.

The Significant Policy Improvement (SPI) method, which was also developed by Jess Dart, recommends a verification process in which a panel to judge whether instances of policy change are:

- Significant/ newsworthy and sufficiently evidence-based
- Sufficient contribution and sufficiently – evidence based account for contribution

Summit workshops are organized to compile key information and bring together the operational knowledge of the project team and the contextual knowledge of other stakeholders. It requires mapping:

a) the timeline of the initiative;

b) key changes among different policy and intermediary actors;

c) important changes in the external environment; and

d) links and influences between these different points.

The next step is to triangulate and refine conclusions. Through the information gathered, the team should be able to describe the contributions of the project through observed outcomes. The timeline identifies informants to interview which will help to triangulate the information and determine the nature of the contribution to change.

Back to Methods and Tools Across the Initiative Cycle: Reflect, Adapt, and Learn

Component 4: REFLECT on what worked, what didn’t and why, and adapt

As we mentioned in our introductory section, reflection, learning and adaptation should happen continuously to make sure that our advocacy initiatives can adapt to emerging evidence of what works and what doesn’t and to any changes in the context and stakeholders that it wishes to influence or work with(in). Tools mentioned throughout this document, specifically in the define and describe sections, should be reflected and adapted regularly.
## Tools to regularly reflect on and adapt

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder Mapping and Analysis</td>
<td>Biannually and/or each time a key event happens which significantly affects your planning</td>
<td>Windows of opportunity open and close, and which actors matter also changes. And this can happen very quickly. So, stakeholder analysis should be reviewed regularly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory of Change</td>
<td>Biannually and/or any time you notice a significant change in context that might undermine your key assumptions</td>
<td>Take time as a team to focus on bits of your theory you think are most vulnerable because of the changes you see around you. Think about how you might need to change your tactics and strategies accordingly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log Frame</td>
<td>Every 4 to 6 months</td>
<td>To monitor your progress and adapt your log frame to match how your initiative is working in reality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy Activity Tracker</td>
<td>Every 4 to 6 months</td>
<td>Monitoring your activities and having space to reflect on your tactics within your initiative can help you course correct if need be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Issue Ratings</td>
<td>Biannually and/or after a key event that significantly affects the issue</td>
<td>To track any change or progress in your audience on key issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policymaker Ratings</td>
<td>Biannually and/or after a key event that significantly affects the policymaker</td>
<td>To assess if the policymakers are changing their stance on policy issues over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress Marker Journals</td>
<td>Every 4 to 6 months, as an on-going monitoring tool</td>
<td>An ongoing monitoring tool to assess progress towards your anticipated results.</td>
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Advocacy and influencing initiatives occur in fast-paced environments, leaving little time for reflection and learning. However, in order to improve our advocacy work globally, it’s important to take a step back to reflect on what worked, what didn’t and why, so we can adapt in the future. The tools presented in this section can help us capture the lessons learned during our advocacy work, whether or not a win may have occurred, to help us refine our tactics and approaches.

In addition to the tools provided through this document, it is important to capture advocacy wins in CARE’s Project and Program Information and Impact Reporting System, PIIRS. Guidance on how to input your advocacy/influencing wins (including policy formation, policy change, budget allocation, adoption of CARE model/approach, etc.) can be found here. Additionally, questions regarding inputting advocacy into PIIRS forms can be directed to piirs@careinternational.org.

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<td>19. After Action Review</td>
<td>A tool used to facilitate ongoing learning and organisational improvement</td>
<td>To assess what actually happened after an advocacy or influencing win as a report.</td>
<td>After a significant moment to capture what happened.</td>
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<td>20. Intense-Period Debrief</td>
<td>A list of questions to help advocates process and capture their work</td>
<td>To help advocates debrief what happened, lessons learned, and base future strategy on lessons.</td>
<td>After an intense period of advocacy work when opportunities arise for advocates.</td>
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<td>21. Advocacy Strategy</td>
<td>A tool that identifies gaps, through a scoring system, in the three phases of advocacy strategy: planning, executing, review</td>
<td>To identify weaknesses in your advocacy strategy. Allows for improvement and enhancement of your advocacy strategy.</td>
<td>You can determine how frequently you want to use this tool, but ideally every 4 to 6 months.</td>
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19. After Action Review

After-action review (AAR) is a straightforward and flexible tool used to facilitate ongoing learning and organizational improvement by convening a team to discuss an activity, event or project in an open and transparent manner. There are lots of different ways to conduct AARs. Most involve a very simple core asking questions about what worked, what didn’t and why. And in many projects and initiatives this is a common practice. CARE often carries these out following proposals, and particularly during humanitarian programming.

After-action reviews typically ask relevant stakeholders questions such as:

- What was anticipated to happen?
- What actually happened?
- What worked?
- What didn’t?
- Why?
- What would you do differently next time?

Better Evaluation offers one good example of a proposed structure, including an example from CARE and partners in a Joint After Action Review in Sri Lanka.

20. Intense-Period Debrief

An intense-period debrief is an approach developed by Innovation Network and it is typically used in advocacy evaluation that capitalizes on the nature of advocacy itself (Coffman and Reed, 2007).

As part of their work, advocates often engage in a flurry of activity as windows of opportunity open. These intense periods often contain lessons for advocates, if they explore what caused the window to open, how they were (or were not) able to take advantage of the window, etc.

However, once the intense period is over, advocates need to take the time to actively process what happened – otherwise these lessons are likely to be lost. If advocates gather to debrief what happened, they can codify their lessons, and base future strategy on what they have learned.

As part of the process, advocates can meet and hold a discussion that addresses:

- The events contributing to the policy window,
- Advocate actions contributing to the opening of the policy window,
- The actions that advocates took to move their agenda forward,
- The outcomes that were achieved,
- The outcomes that advocates hoped for but were not achieved, and
- Whether the advocates might have done something differently to achieve a more favourable outcome.

### Guiding Questions

1. What events triggered this intense period?
2. How was the organization’s response agreed? Who was responsible for that decision? How was that decision communicated to other partners and allies?
3. Which elements of our response worked well? Which elements could have been improved?
4. What was the outcome of the intense period? Was the result positive or negative?
5. What insights will you take away from this experience that might inform your strategies going forward?
It can also be important to consider who participates in these debrief meetings. It can often be helpful to include people from different levels and spheres of influence, or indeed with varying perspectives (program, influencing, and communications staff).

21. **Advocacy Strategy Evaluation Tool**

CARE USA partnered with Dalberg, an international consultancy firm, to develop a tool that identifies gaps in an advocacy strategy in the three main phases of an advocacy initiative:

1. Planning and designing an advocacy strategy
2. Executing and implementing an advocacy strategy
3. Review stage following completion of an advocacy strategy, including unsuccessful advocacy initiatives

The tool ([found here](#) or [here](#)) has three separate sheets (one for each phase), and the various questions per phase identifies weaknesses in the strategy based on a scoring system. Once your team answers the questions on the relevant sheet, you can evaluate each answer by providing a score of 1 to 5. By scoring each answer, you can identify specific areas for improvement and enhance your advocacy strategy for the relevant phase. Additional information on this tool and best practices can be found here in the [CARE Power Tools](#).
List of Resources:


37. Save the Children (2017) Save the Children International’s Advocacy and Campaigns Impact Monitoring Framework, Presentation


NOTE: Additional MEL Advocacy Resources can be found in the Care International SharePoint folder