

Advocacy Capacity Assessment

1.0 Introduction

The Advocacy Capacity Assessment (ACA) is a facilitated self-assessment to assist organizations to review their advocacy effectiveness. Key advocacy functions or components are defined along a continuum of four levels, ranked from 1 (basic) to 4 (strong) based on detailed criteria. Organizations agree on their status and develop plans to address gaps and/or strengthen areas. Recognizing that advocacy capacity development is a process, therefore the use of the ACA tool results in concrete action plans to provide CSOs and groups with a clear road map to strengthen their advocacy programs. The ACA can be repeated on an annual basis to monitor the effectiveness of previous actions, evaluate progress in capacity improvement, and identify new areas in need of strengthening.

1.1 Steps: The ACA process is conducted in six steps, as noted below

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Step 1: Introductory Meeting: The process begins with a meeting in which the organization and facilitation team review the tool, process, and schedule and identify subgroups for specific sections as needed.

Step 2: Assessment, Scoring, and Action Identification: The objective of this step is to identify the organization's capacity level in each section of the ACA. Participants rank the organization along a continuum of 1 (basic), 2 (weak), 3 (adequate), and 4 (strong); provide a rationale for the selected scores; and propose follow-up actions. This step may be completed in small groups or plenary sessions. Facilitators record scores and justifications for the scores on the scoring and rationale sheet.

Step 3: Plenary Score Review and Prioritization: The organization meets in private to review the scoring and rationale sheets. It is their opportunity to learn from each other by discussing and coming to consensus on the findings, set a priority for addressing each issue, and recommend potential actions to remedy problems or gaps. Priority levels—low, medium, and high—help the team focus the action plan on the most important issues, as well as those that are easy to accomplish.

Step 4: Action Planning: Led by the team leader, the organization completes and finalizes the action plan (*see format*) in plenary. The team adds their thoughts on the problem statement and recommended actions, assigns priority levels, adds deadlines and responsible parties, and identifies any technical assistance needs. The facilitator then shows the score sheet (should be presented) on the LCD or in paper form as a summary for the organization.

Step 5: Closing: Participants are asked to complete an evaluation (*to be developed*) and closing remarks are made by the facilitation team and the organization. The team leader leaves the action plan behind for the organization's review. S/he asks for it to be returned within one week with any changes so that it can be included in the final report.

Step 6: Final Report: The final report is prepared by the team leader with assistance from the other facilitators and is presented to the organization within one week. This report summarizes the findings, actions, and technical assistance needs (Show the form)

Follow-up: While the action plan is usually completed at the end of Day 2, a revised/finalized action plan may need to be compiled by the organization in the days following the assessment process. The final action plan should be available no more than one week following the ACA, as it will be used as a road map for capacity development.

Final Report: Provides a section-by-section description of the identified problems and potential solutions, as well as the score sheet and action plan. Repeat: It is recommended to repeat the ACA process on an annual basis to monitor organizational and program development, identify persistent or new problems, and establish new action plans.

1.2 The context of the Advocacy Capacity Assessment (ACA)

The exercise utilizes a participatory facilitated self-assessment model using standard Advocacy Capacity Assessment (ACA) tools. It involves the CSO leaders and staff who identify gaps upon which demand driven capacity building and mentorship will be based.

1.3 The Goal of the Advocacy Capacity Assessment (ACA)

The goal of the ACA exercise is to facilitate self-assessment by CSOs to identify their own critical elements for effective policy analysis and advocacy and identifying their areas that need strengthening or further development to be affective policy changes impactors.

2.0 Objectives of the ACA

1. To identify capacity needs and gaps for the agency/ group based on the 14 advocacy domains
2. To develop an agreed detailed plan of action aimed at strengthening the group or agency's advocacy capacity.
3. To identify areas for support and drawing a technical assistance as desired and can be offered to boost and improve advocacy for the CSOs and groups.

2.1 The assessed ACA Domains and the Sub-areas

Not all areas will be relevant given the specific organization, project, or country context. ACA facilitators and organizations may adapt the sections as needed, including developing additional sections that examine an organization's technical understanding of a specific advocacy issues.

1. Capacity to set and manage an Advocacy Agenda
2. Availability of Advocacy Goals, Plans and Strategies
3. Data and knowledge management in the area of preferred Advocacy work
4. Process and methods of developing the Advocacy agenda
5. Level of Stakeholder and community engagement in the preferred advocacy area
6. Choice of advocacy partners and coalitions
7. Implementation of the Advocacy Agenda
8. Advocacy Avenues
9. Credibility of decision-making structures and processes
10. Allocation and utilization of the advocacy resources
11. Levels of engagement with decision makers
12. Litigation options in Advocacy
13. Media coverage and engagement
14. Management and sustainability of Advocacy program

2.2 Expected Outputs of the ACA

- ❖ Advocacy Capacity Report
- ❖ Recommendations and Advocacy Action/ capacity building Plan

2.3 How the tool and scoring is done;

Each of the 14 (fourteen) dimensions of advocacy are scored – by the CSO staff themselves while the discussions are led by the facilitators. There is a general briefing on arrival to give the CSO staff the purpose, intentions and expected outcomes of the ACA process. Each of the staff present is given the same tool to score on their own. The lead facilitator read the statement, discussed the meaning and general implications it has on advocacy agenda/plan. The facilitator then gives each of the staff some

time to ask/ discuss/ think through and then score on the tool based on their understanding of how the statement rates (5-1) in relation to the situation at the group. The scoring is done in ascending order of capacity or accomplishment, where Zero (0) = inapplicability or no capacity and Five (5) = very strong capacity/accomplishment. The assessment team in general takes 2 – 3 days at each of the CSO (with less than 4hours during each visit – to also give the CSO time to do its other activities)

2.4 How the analysis of the data is done

Each of the scored tool is collected, given an identifier and marked (with the name of the CSO). At analysis, each statement is listed and an average score by each staff on a certain statement/ variable noted. This is added and divided by the total number of staffs who score (to get the average score). It's the average score that is plotted in the color representations at each of the variable/ statement as below.

2.5 The ACA Scoring Board

Sr.	Variable	Score Rate	Color	General Comment
1.	Not done or available/ Must be improved (<i>Never</i>)	0 - 1.99	Red	Poor/ needs urgent attention
2.	Fair/ Needs improvement (<i>Sometimes</i>)	2.0 - 2.99	Yellow	Weak/ Urgent Improvement
3.	Not Strong/ should be improved (<i>Rarely</i>)	3.0 - 3.99	Blue	Fair/ Needs Improvement
4.	Strong/ Done well (<i>Usually</i>)	4.0 - 4.99	Light Green	Good/ Needs Strengthening
5.	Very Strong/ Excellent/ (<i>Always</i>)	5.0 -	Green	Very good/ To be sustained

3.0 The Analysis and Score/ rating

3.1 Capacity to set and manage an Advocacy Agenda

Assessment Area 1: Capacity to set and manage an Advocacy Agenda						
No.	Statement	Variable Score				
		5	4	3	2	1
1.	Know most of the key sector advocacy issues					
2.	Our mission and goals directly relate the advocacy issues					
3.	We have knowledge about the issues and how they affect the target community					
4.	Have good understanding of policy environment in Uganda and how it affects the community					
5.	Conducted Advocacy Capacity Assessment and use results to inform advocacy plan					
6.	We have an internally approved advocacy Plan					
	Overall Theme Score (_)					
	Comments Key Recommendations;					

3.2 Availability of Advocacy Goals, Plans and Strategies

No.	Statement	Variable Score				
		5	4	3	2	1
1.	Has an advocacy agenda approved by the CSO leadership					
2.	Ensures participation of stakeholders in development of the advocacy agenda					
3.	Shares its advocacy agenda with all key stakeholders and partners					
4.	Is able to adjust its advocacy agenda to suit internal and external changes/ conditions					
5.	Advocacy agenda is informed by researched needs not anticipated gaps					
6.	Staff, partners and those affected, all participate in developing advocacy agenda					
	Overall Theme Score (_)					
	Comments Key Recommendations;					

3.3 Data and knowledge management for Advocacy work

No.	Statement	Variable Score				
		5	4	3	2	1
1.	Collects and utilizes information on issues that affect our target community					
2.	Is aware of current policies and how they influence development of our community					
3.	Validates information and data before using it for advocacy work					
4.	Shares our community related information and materials with its members and staff					
5.	Disseminates reports and materials related to our advocacy agenda with partners					
Overall Theme Score (_)						
Comments Key Recommendations;						

3.4 Process and methods of developing the Advocacy agenda

No.	Statement	Variable Score				
		5	4	3	2	1
1.	Knows key players in legislative, administrative, and litigation in the sector					
2.	Our advocacy agenda has clear targets, tactics, major activities, and expected results					
3.	Monitors internal and external policy changes and has strategies to adopt changes					
4.	Has a plan to regularly assess own advocacy capacity					
5.	Tests new and adopts improved strategies, tactics and methods for advocacy					
Overall Theme Score (_)						
Comments Key Recommendations;						

3.5 Level of Stakeholder and Community engagement

No.	Statement	Variable Score				
		5	4	3	2	1
1.	We subscribe to advocacy in our sector with the advocacy networks and associations					
2.	We regularly communicate with partners on our advocacy progress and opportunities					
3.	We have categorized key sections of the public to educate about our agenda					
4.	Utilizes appropriate communication strategies to canvass, educate and mobilize					
5.	Has a plan to expand the size of its health advocacy network					
6.	Builds the knowledge base and advocacy skills of its stakeholders					
7.	Engages collaborators to influence decision makers in support of its advocacy plans					
Overall Theme Score (_)						
Comments Key Recommendations;						

3.6 Choice of advocacy partners and coalitions

No.	Statement	Variable Score				
		5	4	3	2	1
1.	Has done a stakeholder analysis and knows key partners in the sector					
2.	Engages with coalitions and networks specific in our focus advocacy areas					
3.	Does joint advocacy activities with coalition partners					
4.	Has a communication strategy to improve information exchange with partners					
5.	Seeks to engage non-traditional allies in advocacy to limit opposition					
6.	Plays leadership roles in respective advocacy coalitions and networks joined					
Overall Theme Score (_)						
Comments Key Recommendations;						

3.7 Implementation of the Advocacy Agenda

No.	Statement	Variable Score				
		5	4	3	2	1
1.	Has clear messages tailored to its target audiences for advocacy					
2.	Bases advocacy messages on reliable, credible and up-to-date information					
3.	Uses own staff and partners as messengers to advance advocacy work					
4.	Uses several media strategies to communicate its messages					
Overall Theme Score (_);						
Comments Key Recommendations;						

3.8 Advocacy Avenues

No.	Statement	Variable Score				
		5	4	3	2	1
1.	Good relations with friendly policy-makers and partners in the sector					
2.	Is aware of agency's internal policies & procedures and their impact on our community					
3.	Endorses allies and partners that are friendly to their cause					
4.	Has alternatives to address advocacy issues based on challenges faced					
5.	Knowledge of legislative processes and options related to advocacy agenda					
6.	Works with appropriate legislators and stakeholders in advocacy					
7.	Engages legislators and advocates in developing advocacy priorities and plans					
Overall Theme Score (_)						
Comments Key Recommendations;						

3.9 Credibility of decision making structures and Processes

No.	Statement	Variable Score				
		5	4	3	2	1
1.	Leadership is able to make timely decisions on crucial advocacy activities					
2.	There are regular internal updates on status and direction of advocacy efforts					
3.	Has a risk and threat analysis/ mitigation plan related to its advocacy agenda					
4.	Evaluates progress of advocacy efforts and uses lessons to inform decisions					
5.	Staff have knowledge and experience in the required advocacy areas					
Overall Theme Score (_);						
Comments Key Recommendations;						

3.10 Allocation and utilization of the advocacy resources

No.	Statement	Variable Score				
		5	4	3	2	1
1.	The leadership and staff are commitment to advocacy					
2.	We have a staff whose tasks are dedicated and committed to advocacy work					
3.	We fully understand the local and national policies and how they are related to our own advocacy agenda					
4.	Have adequate staffs, board members, and volunteers to do advocacy work					
5.	The staff have committed/ obligated time to do/ engage in advocacy					
6.	Our strategic plan and annual work-plans have advocacy as a thematic area					
7.	We usually involve donors in our advocacy work					
8.	We apply for funding and sponsorship specifically for health advocacy work					
Overall Theme Score (_)						
Comments Key Recommendations;						

3.11 Levels of engagement with decision makers

No.	Statement	Variable Score				
		5	4	3	2	1
1.	Monitors related policy debates and takes actions with policy-makers					
2.	Engages with influential people/ policy makers to amplify advocacy voices					
3.	Has a plan to engage with each stakeholder on specific advocacy activities					
4.	Conducts/ joins activities aimed at deliberately building advocacy relationships					
5.	Has trained paralegal officers/ teams					
	Overall Theme Score (_);					
	Comments Key Recommendations;					

3.12 Litigation options in Advocacy

Assessment Area 12: Litigation options in Advocacy						
No.	Statement	Variable Score				
		5	4	3	2	1
1.	Believes and is open to use of litigation as a strategy in its advocacy work					
2.	Has Memorandum of Understand (MOUs) with legal service providers					
3.	Has access to competent legal teams whenever legal advice is required					
4.	Participates in popular efforts to challenge policies legally					
5.	Monitors court cases/ policy challenges for joint follow-up and actions					
	Overall Theme Score (_);					
	Comments key recommendations					

3.13 Media coverage and engagement

No.	Statement	Variable Score				
		5	4	3	2	1
1.	Has capacity to monitor media coverage related to its advocacy agenda					
2.	Has a list of media contacts relevant to advocacy work					
3.	Disseminates and communicates own advocacy agenda					
4.	Has an advocacy media engagement plan					
5.	Intentionally identifies, builds & maintains good media relations					
6.	Has an active social media presence and uses it for advocacy					
7.	Has a crisis management strategy to counter situations of negative publicity and possible violence					
	Overall Theme Score (_)					
	Comments Key Recommendations;					

3.14 Management and sustainability of Advocacy program

No.	Statement	Variable Score				
		5	4	3	2	1
1.	Monitors, evaluates and reports about its advocacy programs and activities					
2.	Has adequate internal controls and financial management systems to effectively manage advocacy resources and funds					
3.	Intentionally raises resources for its advocacy programs					
4.	Commits own internal resources to do advocacy					
5.	Has capacity to interpret policies and draw required advocacy actions					
	Overall Theme Score (_);					
	Comments Key Recommendations;					

4.0 The Final Report Score and findings

The FINAL REPORT A report (*See below*) includes a section-by-section description of the identified challenges and potential solutions, as well as the score sheet and action plan. It provides direction to the groups and CSO and any assistance that needs to be provided by the facilitators. Facilitators need be requested to write up their own sections while their memory is fresh and provide it to the team leader for compilation and finalization. There may be others, such as donor groups, who would like the report; the organization should be consulted on any others with whom this should be shared. The organization should always have the opportunity to review the final draft before it is shared with a wider audience.

No.	Variable	Variable Score				
		5	4	3	2	1
1.	Capacity to set and manage an Advocacy Agenda					
2.	Availability of Advocacy Goals, Plans and Strategies					
3.	Data and knowledge management					
4.	Process and methods of developing the Advocacy agenda					
5.	Level of Stakeholder and Community engagement					
6.	Choice of advocacy partners and coalitions					
7.	Implementation of the Advocacy Agenda					
8.	Advocacy Avenues					
9.	Credibility of decision-making structures and Processes					
10.	Allocation and utilization of the advocacy resources					
11.	Levels of engagement with decision makers					
12.	Litigation options in Advocacy					
13.	Media coverage and engagement					
14.	Management and sustainability of Advocacy program					
	Overall Theme Score (_);					
	Comments Key Recommendations;					

4.1 Team and Time

- **The Team:** The ACA is implemented with a team of facilitators who ideally have skills in advocacy, meeting facilitation, and capacity-building.
- **Time:** The initial ACA may take one to two days to complete and must result in an agreed-upon action plan to map priority areas and the actions the organization needs to take to address gaps.
- **Reference:** Part of this Advocacy Capacity Assessment Tool was adopted from different sources including the tool and process by *Initiatives Inc. and PATH under the Advocacy for Better Health cooperative agreement no. AID-617-A-14-00004.*