

Chapter 5

Learning from the Workshop

The workshop included various activities, some directly focused on capacity building under the programme, and others in relation to widening the knowledge of advocacy initiatives taking place in different parts of the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region. This chapter presents new ideas from the workshop discussions on the concept of advocacy and all programmatic conclusions drawn from the workshop.

Conceptual Understanding

The concept of advocacy itself is a new paradigm in the context of the HKH region. Many new ideas, experiences, and a useful amount of conceptual understanding were developed through the presentations and discussions. The following are some of the new ideas presented at the workshop.

The Importance of Information in Advocacy

The idea of information generation in advocacy initiatives is concerned with providing raw material to decision makers to influence decisions in favour of the poor. This concept mainly applies to policy formulation rather than operational issues. People's representatives are largely responsible for making policy-related decisions in democratic government systems. Being busy with duties other than policy making, they knowingly or unknowingly fail to allocate sufficient time to gather the analytical information required for making a people-friendly decision. Particularly in the mountain areas, policy makers at any level depend upon the bureaucracy for their information. Some participants at the workshop felt strongly that professionals working under the local bureaucracy in mountain areas are skilful at twisting the information so it is more favourable to their vested interests than to the poor.

This is the main reason that bureaucracy sometimes becomes more powerful than the legislature. Therefore, if a professional organisation with a fair attitude openly supplies the analytical information, policy makers are more than happy to accept it.



Presentation from Pakistan

This could be used as a professional way to get things done in favour of the poor, while avoiding confrontation with policy makers. If the actions have not been taken simply because of a lack of analytical information, the advocacy mission could succeed in a friendly manner, a good 'win-win' situation. Advocacy carried out by an organisation called 'Analysis of Developing Initiatives for Social and Human Development' (DISHA) in

Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India, is moving in this direction. Some participants noted that in their experience, if an impartial forum intends to analyse certain information on a regular basis for policy feedback, the government itself may be happy to cooperate and may even provide funding.

Advocates need to logically estimate their opponent's bottom line and should get information about it. If the opponent has already reached the bottom line, this could be the right time for negotiation. Delaying a negotiation process could be harmful for the advocates if the opponents change their strategy. This is a relatively new concept for all NGOs and CBOs working in the mountain areas where advocacy has so far been understood to be less confrontational than this. In the workshop, the presentation of FECOFUN Nepal about the government demanding 40% of the revenue from community forests and the federation's thus-far non-confrontational negotiations with the government on behalf of local user groups was highly appreciated by participants from other countries. However, the presentation lacked analytical information on improving this decision or having it revoked.

Building a Coalition with the Government

This idea was influenced by a presentation from Pakistan concerning the Rural Support Programmes (RSPs) which work in a way that is unique among the programme countries. The set-up of NGOs in Pakistan is different to other countries. NGOs are very close to the government, and they are also able to influence the government very easily, which is not the case in other participating countries. There are ten RSPs working in different rural areas of Pakistan. The National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) is one of Pakistan's largest rural support programmes in terms of area coverage and programme outreach. All these programmes are federated under the Rural Support Programme Network (RSPN). The programmes are registered as NGOs and receive significant government support for rural poverty alleviation.

The government entrusts these programmes with the responsibility of working with the rural poor. These RSPs and their networks have a high degree of influence with decision makers on whatever policy issues come up in relation to rural development and rural poverty alleviation. No government machinery can undermine these RSPs, mainly because of their foundation in the grassroots and the fact that the federation gives them power at the higher levels. There seems to be no need to follow a confrontational approach for policy change or for the enforcement of existing policies that benefit the poor. This programme provides a model of winning the faith of the government in favour of the mountain poor.

Entry Programmes in Advocacy

At the operational level, advocacy is not a new concept. In the past, people may not have identified the specific terms and processes they were using as advocacy, but they were nonetheless raising the voice of the poor and deprived in different ways. A number of these experiences were shared during the planning workshop. How to enter into advocacy initiatives was regarded as a relatively new strategy in this workshop.

The entry point of advocacy is an important dimension of policy change. Environment, the management of water or forests, issues of displacement due to large infrastructure construction and so on, are visible undertakings in communities. Organising and making people understand issues related to visible impacts in their day-to-day lives is very easy. If advocacy regarding these issues is undertaken on a small scale, the possibilities for success are high. The people affected as well as the advocacy initiators build up the confidence to speak out and influence policy makers.

The presentations in the planning workshop from the G.B. Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development, Arunachal, and the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment (ATREE), West Bengal, highlighted these strategies for advocacy initiatives. These presentations contained considerable information on such issues in their constituencies. The presenters questioned the wisdom of jumping into abstract issues such as gender discrimination, the property rights of women, basic human rights and so on, in the initial stages of advocacy, and advised that the initiative concentrate on more concrete situations where the inequitable results can be seen clearly.

The Role of Professionals and Activists

Activists clearly play a vital role in advocacy initiatives. The main aim of activists is to get things done no matter how much effort it takes. Activists are not as concerned about their professional careers as about their advocacy work. Furthermore, activism as such is not a career. For example, a good lawyer can be a women activist for some time in a mission to stop the trafficking of girls, but she does not make this into her professional career. Because of their lack of personal concern, such activists can be very strong and influential advocates.

However, someone who is working as a professional in advocacy initiatives cannot work as strongly as can an activist. This is because their advocacy work is voluntary or part time, and they should not be living on the earnings from this work. Moreover, advocates can sometimes go beyond the bounds of legality, while professionals cannot do this.

A professional should be able to earn a livelihood from his or her career. Professional advocacy workers naturally follow the approach of 'stay and support' during the advocacy discourse. This means that they assist in planning actions, and providing the appropriate tools for advocacy. They always follow legal methods. Activists therefore, receive intellectual rather than physical support from such professionals. Activists can easily carry out mass mobilisation, demonstrations and so on. With intellectual support from professional advocates, their advocacy becomes more effective.

In the mountain context, anyone who speaks out is an advocate. Participants clearly articulated this point during the workshop discussions. Some participants who were true activists did not trust processes, the media, and tools such as lobbying and the capacity building of decision makers. Another group of participants expressed the idea of more professional support to make activists stronger and more logical in their approaches.

Workshop Conclusions

Participants unanimously accepted the proposed strategies for the capacity building of community organisations in the HKH. To create the conceptual setting, several presentations were made by workshop participants. The participants learned from the successes and failures discussed in the presentations and the following interaction. This was made clear through informal discussions, individual comments during the workshop evaluation, and feedback following the workshop. Conclusions were made about future activities of the programme and are as follows.

Formation of a Regional Advocacy Forum Working Initiative

The organising team brought up the idea of forming a regional-level advocacy forum in the workshop, an idea that was unanimously accepted. However, how to start the process was a matter for discussion. It was suggested that a multinational working group would initiate the preparatory process for a regional forum. One member from each country would be included in the working group. Country-wise group discussion resulted in the following persons being selected for this working group:

Mr. Malik Fateh Khan, NRSP, Pakistan
Ms. Tuku Talukdar, HIMAWANTI, Bangladesh
Dr. Shanta Thapalia, LACC, Nepal
Mr. Subhash Mendhapurkar, SUTRA, India

Some discussion was held on the idea of allowing two people from India to be included in the working group – one from the Western Himalayas and one from the Northeast.

Although geography supports the idea, the final conclusion was to leave the working committee as one person from one country.

Working Group Terms of Reference (ToR)

All participants presented suggestions for developing the working group's ToR. The suggestions were collected individually and compiled later. What follows are the compiled and consolidated suggestions given by the workshop participants for the working group ToR. Participants suggested that the working group should be able to accomplish the following.

- Ensure effective participation of all interested actors at the regional forum. For this purpose, this working group should contact other like-minded organisations at the state /country level.
- Follow a democratic, neutral, and fair process every step of the way. It is necessary to honour other actors' views in many aspects.
- Prepare (a) a charter of the network; (b) criteria for new members; (c) a constitution of the network; (d) a legal registration process; (e) documents for legal registration; and (f) a code of conduct for member organisations.
- Determine the scope of work of the network at the regional level and define its structure accordingly.
- Prepare administrative and financial processes, provisions, possibilities, and requirements in a draft form.
- Start regular interaction among potential member organisations in the region.
- Take up the responsibility of developing national- / state-level networks.
- Work as bridge between potential member organisations and the ICIMOD management.
- Develop an effective communication mechanism among group members and other potential member organisations.
- Organise meetings/ interactions of committee members in different countries, possibly on a rotational basis.
- Organise a final assembly at the regional level and hand over management of the regional forum to a legitimate executive committee.
- Complete all preparatory work within one year.
- Select a coordinator among themselves to organise the activities of the working group more systematically.

Several participants suggested that the working group should complete its work within one year, indicating that workshop participants want to formalise a regional forum within this time.

Case Studies

According to the budget available for the programme, ICIMOD presented the possibility of using 20 case studies as learning tools along with themes that had been

tentatively identified. Participants suggested keeping the themes open for the time being so that individual researchers could develop the most appropriate themes within the programme's framework. A proposal was suggested and accepted at the workshop's conclusion, as follows.

- The total number of case studies from all four programme countries will be twenty. Of these, ten will be carried out before conducting the proposed ToT.
- Interested organisations will submit a concept note for the case studies to ICIMOD (Nani Ram Subedi) by the end of December 2003.
- ICIMOD reserves the rights of acceptance/ rejection of the proposed case studies.
- ICIMOD will inform all organisations or individuals who submit concept notes of their final decision by the end of January 2004.
- The duration of time for completing the first batch of case studies will be between February and May 2004
- The case studies will be submitted as drafts to ICIMOD by the end of April 2004 for use as learning cases during the ToT in June 2004.

Training of Trainers (ToT) on Advocacy Skills

All workshop participants were in favour of organising a ToT for potential advocacy trainers. However, participants were concerned about selecting the correct participants for such a training opportunity, commenting that if the wrong person received the training, there would be no positive result. A definite procedure was decided upon, as follows.

- **Criteria for participant selection:** Clear and precise selection criteria should be prepared. ICIMOD should circulate guidelines and selection criteria for participants in the ToT by the end of January 2004.
- **Initial selection of participants from the communities:** Potential and interested organisations (NGOs and CBOs) will nominate two to three potential participants and will send their names to ICIMOD by the end of February 2004.
- **Final selection of participants:** Based on the fulfilling of all criteria and recommendations from the local organisations, ICIMOD will make the final selection of participants.
- **Date for ToT:** The first ToT could possibly be organised by ICIMOD during June 2004.

Contents for Training of Trainers (ToT) in Advocacy Skills

Workshop participants, on an individual basis, were asked to suggest contents for the ToT. The suggested contents have been compiled and are listed under certain broad headings, as follows.

Historical Background

- Knowledge about the historical background of advocacy
- Concept of advocacy

- Concept of local governance
- Need for advocacy initiatives
- Overall concept/ knowledge of political ideology and globalisation
- Concept of customary laws, as well as general land revenue laws
- Relation between conflict resolution and advocacy
- Principles of advocacy

Rights-based Approach

- Rights and rights-based approach (RBA) to development
- Relation of RBA to advocacy

Concept of Natural Resource Management (NRM)

- Concept of natural resource management
- Techniques using client-friendly terms and examples in NRM

Common Issues

- Legal issues in relation to government policies
- Clarity regarding issues for advocacy
- Relation of issues in day-to-day life
- Impact of the issues on people / nature / the economy etc.

Tools and Techniques for Advocacy

- Knowledge about tools and skills in advocacy
- Most effective tools, processes, and live examples of advocacy
- Participatory monitoring process in advocacy initiatives
- Media advocacy and its uses
- Advocacy strategies for different contexts
- Cultural, social, and religious norms for advocacy
- Time management in advocacy

Networking

- Alliance and institution building techniques
- Networking and network mobilisation techniques
- Leadership skills in advocacy and mass mobilisation techniques

Training and Facilitation Skills

- Needs assessment process for capacity building programmes
- Training and facilitation skills
- Use of audio-visuals in training
- Communication skills – expression style in advocacy, handling of question-answer sessions, people-friendly language (use of terminologies familiar to the general population), handling different levels of thinking and schools
- Training method for illiterate participants

- Effective public speaking techniques and the dialogue method
- Methods of practical-based training
- Use of drama/play and song
- Energisers useful for advocacy

Case Studies / Examples

- Case studies related to advocacy/ how to prepare a case study in advocacy
- Experience sharing and learning from experiences

Limitations

- DOs and DON'Ts in Advocacy
- When to withdraw
- How to withdraw

The contents suggested above is not final, and not every TOT session will cover all the suggested topics. However, it will provide good suggestions for professionals who will design the training later on.

Learning from the Workshop Evaluation

All participants received a short, open-ended evaluation questionnaire at the end of the workshop. A brief analysis of the participants' evaluation is given below.

Workshop Content

Most participants commented that the workshop contents, including presentations for sharing, were appropriate. Most examples brought up for discussion were useful for ongoing advocacy initiatives in different countries. Presentations made by fellow participants were rich in terms of advocacy processes and methods. Some participants suggested that it would have been even more interesting if the contents had focused more on advocacy issues than on the process.

Structure of the Workshop

Most participants approved of the workshop's structure and the variety of programmes that had been incorporated within four days. Some people found the workshop overloaded with too many presentations, and others felt that the time allocated for plenary discussion was not sufficient.

Workshop Facilitation

Most participants were satisfied with the workshop facilitation by different individuals. Some participants commented that a new facilitator could have been arranged for each session. A few people indicated that they were sometimes confused by the roles facilitators played. However, many others said that facilitators were good, friendly, and neutral.

Field Visit

Most participants commented that the field visit incorporated into the workshop was very good, providing a clear idea about the issues of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The interaction programme in Rangamati added further value.

Key Learning from the Workshop

Participants highlighted different lessons learnt. Most said the workshop provided good exposure to advocacy initiatives taking place in other countries on different issues, e.g., the Chipko movement, HIMAWANTI and natural resource management, issues of internalisation by grassroots women, ways of discovering root causes, perceiving people as the main force for change, the socioeconomic condition of programme countries, certain country-specific issues, and the women's property rights issue in Nepal. Some of the presentations also provided the opportunity to verify the process of advocacy taking place in participants' home countries. Participants said they were well exposed to different successful cases from other countries.

A few participants were made uncomfortable by the use of different languages, i.e., Hindi and Bengali. They suggested that since it was an international workshop the organisers should have chosen one international language.

Logistical Arrangements

No participants expressed dissatisfaction about rooms, food, or other arrangements at the workshop venue. However, some participants commented that the workshop materials and equipment were not arranged and managed properly. Some equipment caused repeated problems.

References

- Advocacy Institute (AI) - The Advocacy Institute is dedicated to strengthening the capacity of advocates working for social justice and movements to influence and change public policy. www.advocacy.org
- Meha, Ajay K. et al (eds) (2003) *Society, Politics and the Voluntary Sector*. New Delhi: Voluntary Action Network India (VANI)
- National Centre for Advocacy Studies (NCAS). Pune: www.ncasindia.org
- Pandit, Vivek (2000) *Fearless Mind: Rights-based Approach to Organising and Advocacy*. Pune: National Centre for Advocacy Studies (NCAS)
- Sammuel, John (2000) *Social Action: An Indian Panorama*. New Delhi: Voluntary Action Network India (VANI)
- Sammuel, John et al (eds) (2003) *Social Watch India*. Pune: Centre for Youth and Social Development, Bhubaneswar and National Centre for Advocacy Studies (NCAS)
- Sprechmann, Sofia et al (2001) *Advocacy Tools and Guidelines: Promoting Policy Change, A Resource Manual for Advocacy Training*. USA: CARE International

