People-Centred Advocacy GOAL Uganda's Approach

Advocacy is designed to influence the distribution of power and resources within a society. It functions as a cornerstone of democratic governance. In far too many places, however, citizens lack the skills to petition their governments effectively – a problem made all-the-more urgent in countries where corruption, non-compliance, and poor management have created cultures of impunity.

In Uganda today, most advocacy efforts are spearheaded by NGOs or civil society organisations that speak on behalf of affected populations. While many of these organisations have experience navigating various government spaces, they often lack evidence to demonstrate their credibility as representatives of ordinary citizens in the face of skeptical government officials. "Community participation," under the NGO/CSO model, is frequently passive, with affected people consulted about pre-determined ideas or strategies, but rarely supported in ways that cultivate meaningful leadership among themselves.

In recent years, a small but growing movement in development circles has begun pushing away from this traditional model of advocacy. GOAL Uganda counts itself among this movement. Through its work leading a multi-year health accountability programme with funding from UKAid, GOAL Uganda developed and piloted an innovative people-centred advocacy curriculum designed to provide affected communities with the skills to effectively petition their various district governments. GOAL uses the following definition of people-centred advocacy:

> a systematic process owned and led by those affected by an issue that uses evidence to influence people with power at different levels to make sustainable change in practices, policies, laws, programs, services, social norms, and values for the betterment of those affected by the issues

Our approach

The goal of people-centred advocacy is to provide affected communities with the tools they need to compel their duty-bearers to set agendas that respond to the community's actual needs. While NGOs and CSOs can play an important role in the training and support of advocates, people-centred advocacy strives to prevent professional elites from appropriating the voices of affected communities.

In 2016, GOAL's health accountability programme began working with small groups of community advocates in 18 districts across Uganda. Through a consortium that includes three Uganda-based organisations – HEPS Uganda, the Kabarole Research and Resource Centre (KRC), and Multi-Community-Based Development Initiative (MUCOBADI) – the programme provided intensive trainings on how to develop and execute advocacy campaigns that strengthen health governance. To date, most of the programme's work has supported district-based advocacy, although the consortium is currently supporting a national pilot designed to address the issue of health worker absenteeism at the ministerial level.

Training and Support in Creating Advocacy Campaigns

- Training on the civil rights guaranteed within Uganda's constitution, and on the material and procedural entitlements codified within the country's laws and policies
- Identifying an advocacy problem(s)
- Developing evidence collection tools with (support from facilitators and monitoring and evaluation officers)
- Gathering evidence (both quantitative and qualitative) that demonstrates the extent of a given problem
- Developing advocacy statements
- Identifying primary and secondary duty-bearers within local government, with advocacy messages customized to those individuals/groups
- Developing advocacy monitoring plans to track progress
- Community resource mobilization to support advocacy rollout
- Sessions on roleplay and message delivery

Implementing Advocacy Campaigns

- Delivery of developed messages and "asks" to primary and secondary audiences
- Community feedback sessions
- Monthly/bimonthly follow-up meetings with NGO officers to monitor and strategize on progress made (including setbacks)
- Participatory data analysis to review implementation activities and develop next steps, based on initial responses from district duty-bearers

People Centered Advocacy - GOAL Uganda