MEASURING YOUR CAMPAIGNING IMPACT: AN INTRODUCTION

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On 17 September 2015, NPC held a seminar for charities seeking to measure the impact of their campaigning and influencing work. The event, chaired by **Enver Solomon, Director of Evidence at the National Children's Bureau**, took place as part of NPC's impact measurement seminar series, designed to give charities an introduction to various aspects of impact measurement.

At the event, **Cecilie Hestbaek, Consultant at NPC**, outlined NPC's approach to measuring the impact of campaigning. Delegates then heard from **Peter Grigg, Director of Campaigns, Policy and Research at The Children's Society,** and **Claire Hutchings, Head of Programme Quality at Oxfam,** who shared how they have put theory into practice within their organisations. This report highlights the main themes discussed during the seminar, drawing on the experience of those in attendance.

What do we mean by campaigning?

Campaigning activities and objectives are very diverse, and NPC distinguishes between two main types:

- **Policy change and influencing** campaigns employ a range of different tactics: advocacy and lobbying; research; advice and recommendations for policy content or processes; and direct action or activism, including demonstrations or mail petitions. These campaigns might work on an **inside track**—through directly advising, negotiating with, or lobbying policymakers—or on an **outside track**—by indirectly appealing to decision makers by mobilising public support.
- **Behaviour change** campaigns are mainly about influencing the attitudes, opinions and actions of 'the public' or specific groups through education and awareness-raising. This could be to promote better health, to change behaviour towards certain groups such as people with disabilities, or to prevent certain behaviour eg, domestic violence or FGM.

For an increasing number of charities, measuring impact has become integral to their work. However, many charities are less advanced in measuring the effectiveness of their campaigning compared to their service delivery. It is therefore important for campaigners to develop the skills and acquire the tools needed to improve how they assess and learn from the impact of this work.

'Now, more than ever, it's crucial that charities are able to speak up for their beneficiaries in powerful campaigns that make a difference to the people they serve—and we're seeing a real appetite in the sector to keep improving campaigning effectiveness through measuring impact and ensuring rapid learning.'

Cecilie Hestbaek

Why measure the impact of campaigning?

'It is incumbent upon the voluntary sector to hold a mirror up to ourselves and to question whether we are making a difference through lobbying and campaigning.'

Enver Solomon, National Children's Bureau

Good measurement and evaluation will allow you to monitor whether or not your campaign is helping you achieve your charity's objectives, bringing advantages that include:

- **Learning on the job:** Campaigns are often complex and long-running, involving a range of tactics that are delivered in parallel. Effectiveness may therefore be subject to changes in the external environment, which become especially pronounced over the longer term. Continual assessment helps bring clarity—particularly if you use an evaluation framework—which will help you proceed in a more structured and evidence-based way.
- **Showing accountability to stakeholders:** If you can explain the causal links between your tactics and the social change you hope to bring about—and report on your progress—members, staff and those you are campaigning on behalf of will find it easier to understand the bigger picture of how your campaigning efforts bring about change, helping ensure stakeholder support. It also allows you to evidence that you are adhering to charity regulation[1].
- **Appealing to funders:** Demonstrating how your campaigning work has contributed to change can help you attract funding, and will also make it easier for funders to monitor their own impact.

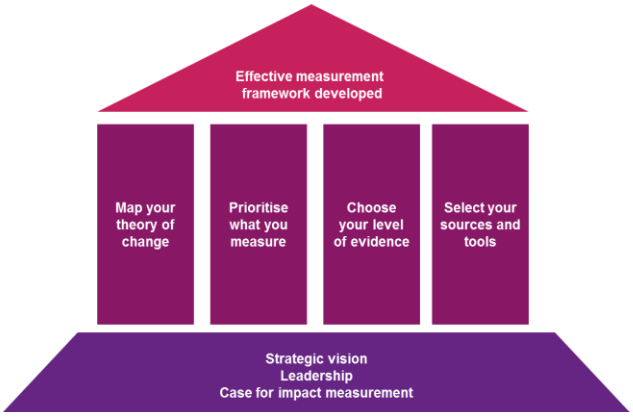
Getting started: How to measure the impact of your campaigns

Structure and planning is key to measurement success.*NPC's four pillar approach*[2] is a useful framework that can help you measure the impact of your campaigning and influencing work. This simple step-by-step process allows organisations of any size or type to start thinking about their social impact.

The approach comprise of four steps:

1. Map your theory of change[3]
2. Prioritise what you measure
3. Choose your level of evidence
4. Select your sources and tools

Figure 1. NPC's four pillar approach



Step one: Map your theory of change

It can be hard to know where to start when measuring the impact of a campaign. With a theory of change you can track the progress you make towards your final goal by setting a series of intermediate goals. If the causal links between intermediate and final outcomes are well evidenced and you can show improvements to intermediate outcomes then it is reasonable to expect the final outcomes will occur.

[1] Namely the *Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act* and the *Charity Commission's CC9 guidance.*

[2] Kazimirski, A. and Pritchard, D. (2014) *NPC's four pillar approach*. New Philanthropy Capital.

[3] See Harries, E., Noble, J. and Hodgson, L. (2014) *Creating your theory of change: NPC's practical guide.* New Philanthropy Capital.

Step two: Prioritise what you measure

Irrespective of whether your campaign is large or small, you need to ask yourself which intermediate outcomes are the most essential and meaningful to measure. It is important to prioritise those that:

- you will directly influence;
- are important to your campaign's mission;
- are not too costly to measure; and
- will produce credible data.

Figure 2. Examples of intermediate outcomes

Policymakers	• Changed policymaker attitudes or beliefs • Increased policymaker knowledge • Increased political will or support
Influencers	• New political champions
Media	• Increased or improved media coverage • Increased or improved social media engagement
The public	• Changed public attitudes or beliefs • Increased public knowledge • Increased public will or support
Organisational capacity	• Increased advocacy capacity • Increased visibility or recognition
Campaign partners	• Stronger coalitions • Collaborative action among partners

Case Study: Claire Hutchings, Oxfam GB

What?

Oxfam's campaigning and advocacy work is a major part of their activities and centres on three key themes: poverty and inequality; food and climate change; and conflict and emergencies. The charity began monitoring and evaluating their campaigns in 2008.

Why?

Oxfam noticed shifts in the external and internal environment—an increasingly sceptical public, a government needing to justify aid spending, and increased pressure from donors to demonstrate the 'value' of their activities.

The charity's diverse portfolio of campaigning methods has meant that different campaigns have been run in different ways with very different results. Improving standards of evaluation has therefore helped Oxfam to better reflect on their programmes and determine how best to improve.

Oxfam were also keen to better capture their effectiveness in a way that could be aggregated and compared across different contexts and countries.

How?

Oxfam tends to use process tracing. This method aims to reconstruct the course of events leading up to a certain outcome or number of outcomes, taking into account the different factors which may have influenced the results.

Lessons

From their experience so far, Oxfam have learned the following about the evaluation process:

- Theories of change are rarely explicit and often take some time to work out or adjust. Regularly reviewing your plan or theory of change is crucial.
- Evaluating the 'right' outcomes is very important—they serve as an important indicator as to whether or not campaigns have reached a 'tipping point'.
- The process tracing method is most effective when applied to a decision making process which occurs in the public realm, such as public lobbying or campaigning. It works less well at measuring the impact of a campaign on an organisation, behaviour change campaigns, or empowerment campaigns.

Step three: Choose your level of evidence

The results of campaigning activities can be harder to pin down than those of service delivery. You need to choose a level of evidence that is proportionate to the size of your campaign and for which you can realistically collect data.

Different types of evidence and their uses for understanding the impact of your campaigning and influencing work can be split broadly into two areas:

- **Tracking *the extent* to which the change has happened.** Quantitative methods can help you establish whether your campaign is or is not successful. They may help to establish, for example, how many saw the campaign material. It can also tell you how many people changed their attitudes, acted in a specific way, or voted for a certain policy as a result of the campaign.
- **Tracking *how* the change happened.** Qualitative methods can help you explain why your campaign was or was not successful. They may help you understand what the intended audience thought of your campaign, whether or not the campaign material made a difference to them and if so how.

Step four: Select your sources and tools

Once you have decided what you need to measure, and the level of evidence you intend to collect, it is crucial to identify the right tools for the job. Below are some tools commonly used to measure the influence of campaigning.

Type of data	Method of collection
Quantitative	**Surveys/questionnaires** can be targeted to the right population and customised around the outcomes you want to measure. **Psychometric scales** are a type of short questionnaire, designed by psychologists and sociologists. They measure subjective feelings, beliefs and attitudes, eg, self-esteem or empathy. **Quantitative content analysis** allows you to investigate the extent of linguistic changes within selected channels such as media, speeches or policy documents eg, the uptake of certain language such as ‘female genital mutilation’ instead of ‘female circumcision’.
Qualitative	**Interviews** with key stakeholders, influencers or informants help you understand the complexities of how and why change has occurred. **Focus groups** can be very useful for exploring why a campaign is or is not leading to change. Here, questions about thoughts, attitudes and beliefs towards a topic of interest are posed to a group, who share their thoughts in an interactive manner. **Anecdotes and feedback** are a useful source and can be fairly straightforward to obtain. Keep an impact or evidence log (ie, an excel spreadsheet) in which you register both formal and informal feedback on your work and results. **Social network analysis** is an analytical tool for studying relationships between stakeholders. It is particularly helpful for policy influence work, as it can help you to understand how formal and informal relationships work, and monitor the changes in these along with structures of networks. **Process tracing** applies mainly to policy influence work and uses interviews, along with qualitative analysis of documents, to trace policy ideas from inception to political salience and all the way to implementation. **Ethnography** involves the systematic observation and recording of behaviours of people in their environment. This can be useful in recording information about behaviour that is otherwise difficult to obtain.

Case Study: Peter Grigg, The Children's Society

What?

The Children's Society is a national charity that runs local projects for vulnerable children and young people. It also campaigns to change laws that lead to children suffering from poverty and neglect.

The charity is halfway through a five-year journey to better impact measurement. One aspect of this is evaluating the success of its work campaigning to improve the lives of vulnerable children.

Why?

In recent years, The Children's Society has noticed an increase in external demand for its activities and this requires enhanced governance, systems and processes. Furthermore, the need to communicate internally and externally about the charity's work, and a desire to be a 'learning organisation', encouraged the staff to think about how and why their campaigns are effective. The aim of doing so was to:

- capture the attention of the right audiences for their campaigns;
- deliver understandable and clear messages;
- influence beliefs or understanding;
- ensure a credible and robust evidence base for whether or not their campaigns work and why; and
- support the creation of social contexts that lead to desired outcomes.

How?

The Children's Society goes through a number of steps when evaluating its campaigning. During the planning stages, the staff map out clear outputs, outcomes, and indicators of success within a theory of change. They then employ various evaluation elements including: monitoring outputs and outcomes; interviews with internal and external stakeholders; and discussions with coalition partners. They seek feedback from all partners including those who may have been hostile to the campaign's focus.

Lessons

The Children's Society is conscious that impact evaluation is difficult—the lives of vulnerable children are complex, and so is policy change—so it works to ensure evaluation efforts are relevant and proportionate. It has now developed a standard evaluation framework that it can apply to all campaigns to make comparisons.

Top tips for measuring the impact of your influencing work

Spend time and effort on planning

This could involve properly developing your theory of change. Ask yourself: Does your plan make sense? Is it realistic? Do you have the necessary resources to carry out (and evaluate) the campaign? Or does your focus need to shift in order to get most out of your resources?

Use what you already have

Think about the information your organisation already collects, and how that might help inform the evaluation of your campaign. This could include media hits, meetings held with policymakers, twitter engagement levels and website visits.

Be proportionate

Ensure you are prioritising measurement for the most important outcomes. Your campaign may result in a number of outcomes—intended or otherwise—but impact measurement must be proportionate, so focus on what is instrumental to your work. Similarly, do not feel you have to collect all of the required measurement data yourself. You may be able to obtain the information you need elsewhere eg, from government data or academic research.

Focus on learning

Learning and improving is a key reason that charities should be seeking to measure the impact of their work, and campaigns are no exception. A good way to do this is to have a thorough debrief with your team in which you can thoroughly scrutinise the results. Think about what your results show, what went well and what didn't, and what you will change next time.

Differentiate between contribution and attribution

Most campaign successes happen because all the pieces in a large puzzle come together. For example, legislative change may occur as the result of your campaigning, but it is most likely that it was also brought about by a combination of shifting political factors, changing public opinion, and external events. You may not be able to **attribute** this change to your campaign, but you need to at least be clear on what your **contribution** was, whether that was influencing the media, mobilising specific groups, or building a wider coalition.

Final thoughts

Measuring the impact of influencing, advocacy, or behaviour change campaigns can seem endlessly complex, but with the right step-by-step approach it can be achieved even while you carry out your campaign—with huge benefits for your organisation's learning and effectiveness. As the case studies here hope to reflect, there is good reason for charities to measure the impact of their campaigning work. It is a difficult but rewarding process, and with the right tools and knowledge it is possible.

More in this series

This guide is part of a series developed from NPC seminars to give an introduction to various aspects of impact measurement. Other topics in this series include:

Keeping it in proportion: Impact measurement for small charities

Stories and numbers: Collecting the right impact data

Result! What good impact reporting looks like

We will soon have new dates and topics for our measurement seminars in 2016, so check the events section of our website for the latest information.

Further resources

Hestbaek, C. (2014) *Closing in on change: Measuring the effectiveness of your campaign.* New Philanthropy Capital.

Kazimirski, A. and Pritchard, D. (2014) *NPC's four pillar approach.* New Philanthropy Capital.

Lamb, B. (2011) *Campaigning for change: Learning from the United States.* NCVO.

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TRANSFORMING THE CHARITY SECTOR

NPC is a charity think tank and consultancy which occupies a unique position at the nexus between charities and funders, helping them achieve the greatest impact. We are driven by the values and mission of the charity sector, to which we bring the rigour, clarity and analysis needed to better achieve the outcomes we all seek. We also share the motivations and passion of funders, to which we bring our expertise, experience and track record of success.

Increasing the impact of charities: NPC exists to make charities and social enterprises more successful in achieving their missions. Through rigorous analysis, practical advice and innovative thinking, we make charities' money and energy go further, and help them to achieve the greatest impact.

Increasing the impact of funders: NPC's role is to make funders more successful too. We share the passion funders have for helping charities and changing people's lives. We understand their motivations and their objectives, and we know that giving is more rewarding if it achieves the greatest impact it can.

Strengthening the partnership between charities and funders: NPC's mission is also to bring the two sides of the funding equation together, improving understanding and enhancing their combined impact. We can help funders and those they fund to connect and transform the way they work together to achieve their vision.

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