

Training Report

April 3rd-4th 2019

Gracious Palace Hotel, Lira,

Author: Beate Farukuoye

Policy Maker Engagement, Media Engagement and Network Building



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3000

With funding from the



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1. Introduction

Since 2014 a Consortium of 5 Austrian NGOs is implementing a project with the objective to strengthen capacities of East African NGOs regarding policy dialogue. Since then the project provides tailor-made capacity development for East African CSOs, financial support of 9 partner organisations for their policy dialogue engagement as well as room for capitalizing experiences and spreading recommendations.

The specific objective of the present project phase is to “Further strengthen capacities of East African CSOs regarding their policy dialogue engagement”. The long term change process the project envisages is that a more effective engagement of Civil Society in Policy Dialogue leads to a stronger reflection of the population needs, especially the ones of the most marginalized, in national and local policies.

In the beginning of 2017, a capacity development needs assessment was conducted in order to inform the capacity development plan for the current project phase (2017-2019). Besides various cross learning activities within the partner network and two collective trainings in October 2017 and July 2018 on various topics (among them: strategy development, risk management, research and documentation, monitoring and evaluation and resource mobilization for policy dialogue/ advocacy), Country Workshops in Uganda and Kenya were planned.

The Country Workshop in Uganda is planned by 2 Ugandan partner organizations in the project: CARE Uganda and SOS Children’s Villages Uganda with support and guidance from HORIZONT3000 – Austrian Organization of Development Cooperation (Lead Agency of the Consortium) and their Austrian Partners. The country workshop allowed participants to get insights and share experiences in the following fields regarding Policy Dialogue:

- Policy Maker Engagement
- Media Engagement
- Network Building

Besides partner organizations of the project, relevant civil society stakeholders, media representatives, policy makers and experts were invited to join the workshop and share their experiences as guest speakers. In total, around 30 persons participated, including representatives of CARE Uganda and its partners, SOS Uganda and partners, HORIZONT3000 and partners, SOS Tanzania, local councils, members of parliament and representatives of media houses.

2. Objectives

The overall goal of the workshop is to enhance the capacity of the Ugandan partner organizations, which are SOS Uganda, CARE Uganda and WORUDET, as well as their own partner organizations, networking partners and other stakeholders in the country to effectively engage with media and policy makers and build networks and partnerships for policy dialogue.

3. Insights and Findings

For detailed training contents, please see the **Master Slides attached**. In this chapter presentation contents are not repeated, but rather complemented and discussions/ participants’ contributions summarized.

a) Policy Maker Engagement

The effective engagement and strategies how to best interact with policy makers was a major point of participants' interest. To comprehensively address this topic, policy dialogue was put into perspective of the policy cycle and its integration into advocacy and advocacy campaigns discussed. Learning from good practices for advocacy, it became evident that effective policy maker engagement can only happen when CSOs plan their efforts strategically and act according to a long-term plan. The participants agreed that the foundation for successful engagement includes **issue identification, problem analysis and the formulation of advocacy goals and plans.**

The importance of having an advocacy plan based on thorough research and a stakeholder analysis as a prerequisite for effective policy engagements was highlighted. Stakeholder group work identified relevant individuals and groups in government, politics as well as in the economic and the private sphere. Through analysis along the lines of influence and interest the participants identified allies, neutrals and opponents for their advocacy projects and discussed adequate stakeholder management strategies per group. Using the analogy of bringing a knife to a gunfight, the facilitator pointed out the **importance of understanding the different stakeholders and their interests to be adequately prepared and equipped for successful policy engagement.**

During two interactive sessions with local councilors and their participation throughout the workshops, participants gained practical insights regarding best practices concerning cooperation with government officials. Examples stated described a proactive communication approach of CSOs with LCs, e.g. by sharing their budget so that planned activities are understood and can be complemented at LC level.

Participants highly appreciated the informative interactions with the local councils and elaborated that regular interactions with political leaders are required to foster their accountability and their understanding of the population needs. However, participants also pointed out their disappointment that MPs who had confirmed their participation at the workshop could not attend and that therefore learnings how to best engage with such higher level officials could not be taken away.

b) Media Engagement

Trough presentations and engagement from three media representatives, pathways for successful media engagement were explored with the participants. While the high cost for CSOs to bring media on board is often complained about, the importance to notice the difference between paid and earned media was emphasized.

When issues and the information provided are highly relevant and newsworthy, they attract attention and justify free publicity. In many cases advocacy campaigns fulfill that criteria, however, the engagement revealed that it also requires knowledge of the media operators, structures and channels as well as to understand what makes news to be able to get coverage. As a reminder, it was highlighted that newsworthy content needs to answer five Ws: What, Who, Why, Where, When and How. The facilitators highly recommended to **investment in media relations when seeking to attain media coverage. A strategic approach as well as organizational learning** are supported by a media plan and through tracking the organizational performance in the various channels.

To put the discussions into practice, a press release for an advocacy issues was developed in groups and plenary feedback collected. The exercise of drafting the messages and presenting a highly relevant issue fostered high commitment from the participants, who, with the support of one media person per group developed elaborate statements representing their cases, such as child labour in pozolana mining and gender issues in marriage.

Furthermore, it was put forward, that many times media persons lack knowledge about gender sensitive reporting, while CSOs feel that they would like to know more about how to use digital media technologies for policy dialogue.

c) Networking and Coalition Building

The group of participants provided a wide range of experience in policy dialogue, which supported dynamic sharing of experiences from different fields throughout the workshop. The interactive methodologies applied reinforced exchange and networking among the members from different organisations, learning together and from each other.

The facilitator pointed out that groundwork for effective networking and coalition building includes a stakeholder analysis and **conscious management of different groups with varying interests or power relations**. Identifying potential partners and bringing those together who may have similar goals can be a successful strategy to promote an advocacy topic, on the other hand there may already be existing coalitions working for a cause. Joining them could also be a viable pathway to strengthen the work with a stronger base. Finally, winning the decision makers to support the plans will eventually be required to implement policy change. Strategies elaborated to engage with stakeholders include advocacy planning and the application of **effective negotiation strategies, striving to create win-win results for the parties involved** to gain support.

In groups the participants discussed past advocacy efforts from their organisations and they evaluated the success and failure factors, capturing the learnings for future engagements.

4. Outcome

Through a very **participatory training methodology and lively engagements**, the 24 participants were capacitated in policy dialogue and cycle, advocacy and advocacy campaigns. Issue identification, problem analysis and advocacy goals also formed part of the training and the importance of having an advocacy plan was strongly highlighted among participants. Thorough research and a stakeholder analysis were identified as prerequisites for effective policy engagements. The participants also exchanged on negotiation skills and result-promoting strategies when building coalitions and during policy engagements. It was concluded that solutions that create a win-win situation have a much higher likelihood of stakeholder buy-in and support than a confrontational approach.

In two **interactive sessions with Local Councilors and media people** the participants received practical guidance on required steps for effective advocacy. Furthermore, through a group exercise to draft a press release for a relevant issue, the learnings for media engagement were applied and participants' ability to proactively engage media in their work fortified.

The training participants were provided with the training materials, notes, documentation and additional resources to support application of the learnings in their daily work. The integration is also supported by the **implementation of an action plan developed during the workshop**.

Participants reported that the workshop content was highly relevant for their daily work and it had also been presented in an accessible way, laying the groundwork application in the individual organizations and work routines. A Review of the expectations revealed that about 80% had been met at the end of the workshop.

Voices expressed the interest to further explore topics such as problem identification and analysis of policy gaps. Furthermore, development and implementation of a successful policy dialogue policy for the organisations including elements such as negotiation and movement building, monitoring, evaluation and budgeting for advocacy were highly relevant for them. Some participants are interested in deepening the knowledge about media and policy maker engagement and recommend stronger emphasis on inter-organisational exchange for future engagements.

Appendix

1. Evaluation of the Workshop
2. Notes for Public Dialogue Training
3. Presentation: Policy Dialogue for Advocacy
4. Presentation: Opening Session
5. Additional Material (KNOW-HOW3000 platform only)
6. Flip Chart Photos (KNOW-HOW3000 platform only)

Participants and Contacts:

Organisation	Name Participant	Email contact - phone number
HORIZONT3000	Beate Farukuoye	beate.farukuoye@horizont3000.org
SOS CV Uganda	Robert Bahenyangi	Robert.Bahenyangi@sosuganda.org
SOS CV Uganda	Hakim Bbosa	abdulhakim.bbosa@sosuganda.org
SOS CV Uganda	Irienge Damalie	damalie.irienge@sosuganda.org
CARE Uganda	Janepher Taaka	Janepher.Taaka@care.org
CARE Uganda	Paul Lule	
WORUDET	Betty Akullo	betty.akullo@gmail.com
WORUDET	Brenda Akot	brenda.lj41@gmail.com
SOS CV Tanzania	Ally Mpelly	Mpelly.Ally@sos-tanzania.org
SOS CV Tanzania	Michael Marwa	
SOS CV Tanzania	Festo Mgina	
Local Council Uganda	Rose Lato	
Media House Rep	Tobbas Owiny	
Media House Rep	James Owich Ocora	jamesoowich@gmail.com
Media House Rep	Justine Nabunya	umwa@infocom.co.ug
PACHEDO (CARE guest)	Sam Okuni	samokuni@pachedo.org
CEWIGO (CARE guest)	Noreen Nampewo	nampewono@yahoo.com
CARE Uganda Partner	Andrew Simbo	andrewsimbo@gmail.com
TOCI (SOS guest)	Auma Maureen	aumamaureen1992@gmail.com
Rwenzori Women Forum (SOS guest)	Kasande Josephine	kasandejosephine@gmail.com , womenofrwenzori@gmail.com
Joy for Children Uganda (SOS guest)	Kahumuza Jeniffer	kahumuzaj@joyforchildren.org
PID (H3 guest)	Opio Wilfred Opiro	opio3000@gmail.com
Resource Rights Africa (H3 guest)	Andrew Byaruhanga	akiikiandrew@gmail.com
Caritas Mityana (H3 guest)	Proscovia Nanfuka	proscoviakimbugwe@gmail.com
Caritas Mityana (H3 guest)	Fred Lutalo	
Facilitator/ Trainer	Juliet Nakato Odoi	julietnakato@yahoo.com