H

Advocacy Cycle Stage 5
Monitoring, reviewing, evaluation and learning

Section H covers Stage 5 of the Advocacy Cycle, which is about monitoring, reviewing and evaluating an advocacy project or programme, or an advocacy component within a broader project or programme strategy. It explains the differences between monitoring, reviewing and evaluation, how they interlink and why they are important, with a particular emphasis on learning. It also gives guidance on when and how to undertake them.

It is important to consider **Section H** in conjunction with **Sections F1** and **F2**, because many of the considerations that arise during monitoring, reviewing, evaluation and learning also arise during the planning process.

Facilitator's notes

This section explores a series of questions and answers. A training workshop facilitator must be familiar with this material.

Tools

This section introduces tools that can help us apply our learning in a practical way. In a training workshop, they can be used as handouts.

Training exercises

This section outlines interactive training exercises that can be used with groups, in order to deepen understanding of the issues that have been raised and to practise application of the tools that have been introduced. They are ideal for use in a training workshop.

SECTION H   Facilitator's notes

What are the differences between monitoring, reviewing and evaluation?
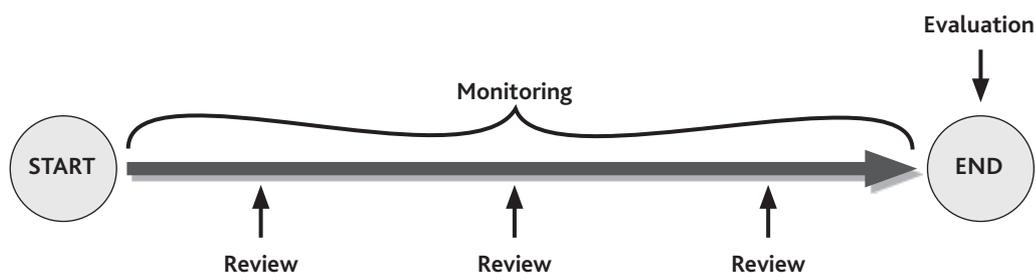
Monitoring, reviewing and evaluation are processes that combine together to enable us to assess the impact of our work. In advocacy, they help us find out whether we have influenced, or made progress towards influencing, decision-makers to bring about changes in laws, policies and practices that favour poor, vulnerable and marginalised people.

If we have undertaken **an advocacy project** of definite duration, which was designed to achieve specific impact and changes, then our success will be determined by whether the project has delivered the right Outputs at the right time and to the right cost.

If we have undertaken **an advocacy programme**, a group of related projects managed in a coordinated manner to get benefits and value not available from each project individually, then our success will be determined by whether the programme has coordinated and prioritised resources across the projects, to cause the broader, strategic, desired outcomes to be achieved.

- **Monitoring** describes the process of systematically gathering data throughout the duration of a project or programme. It is conducted on an ongoing basis as a way of tracking progress and checking that we are doing what we said we would do, when we said we would do it. It identifies successes and failures, and helps determine whether or not the project or programme is on track. It allows us to identify issues early on, providing us with an opportunity to take corrective action or make proactive improvements as required.

- **Reviewing** is done regularly throughout the duration of a project or programme, but occasionally rather than continuously. It provides periodic assessments of a project to check whether it is on track, on budget, on time and making progress towards achieving the desired changes. It ensures that we are learning from the project or programme and that we capture important lessons, which can be used to shape the project or programme, or the future design and implementation of other projects and programmes.

- **Evaluation** is conducted at the end of a project or programme, but sometimes also mid-term, to analyse what has been done and determine whether it has been effective. It assesses the wider benefit and change created by a project or programme. It should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making processes of advocates, allies, communities and donors. It is considered good practice to commit time and resources to evaluation. Many types of evaluation can be used, including real-time, participatory, and impact evaluations. The type undertaken depends on the context of the project or programme, the desired Outputs and Outcomes, and the resources available to undertake it.

Assessing Impact throughout the Advocacy Cycle

	Monitoring	Reviewing	Evaluation
When is it done?	continuously	regularly	at the end of the project or programme, and sometimes mid-term
What is it assessing?	efficiency	effectiveness, relevance, immediate impact	longer-term impact, sustainability
Who does it involve?	communities, staff, allies	communities, staff, allies	communities, staff, allies, opponents, targets
Who is responsible for doing it?	staff	staff or external consultant	staff or external consultant
What evidence is it assessing?	internal	internal and external	internal and external
Who is it for?	communities, staff	communities, staff, allies, donors	communities, staff, allies, donors, other organisations
Why is it necessary?	to confirm design of project or programme and make minor changes in design	to confirm design of project or programme and make minor changes in plan or strategy	to inform major changes in plan or strategy and apply learning to future similar projects or programmes

Why bother with monitoring, reviewing and evaluating advocacy?

'Advocacy requires an approach and a way of thinking about success, failure, progress, and best practices that is very different from the way we approach traditional philanthropic projects such as delivering services or modelling social innovations. It is more subtle and uncertain, less linear, and because it is fundamentally about politics, it depends on the outcomes of fights in which good ideas and sound evidence don't always prevail.' [11]

There are several reasons why we need to monitor, review and evaluate advocacy work:

■ **Accountability**

It enables us to be accountable to all our stakeholders, including:

• people in the communities affected by the advocacy issue, and those who have benefited from the Activities of the project or programme. This is particularly important if we have been advocating on their behalf

• allies and other organisations with whom we may have undertaken advocacy as part of a network, coalition, alliance or other joint initiative

• targets, such as the decision-makers whom we have been seeking to influence

• donors who have funded our advocacy work and those who have supported it with resources.

■ **Learning**

Learning from success means we can reward it and build on what we have done well, and learning from failure means we can correct it and make sure we do things differently to avoid it happening again. We can capture lessons learned as we reflect on progress, assess our impact, celebrate achievements, recognise issues and address problems, and adapt our plans, strategies and ways of working.

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11 This is the central premise of 'The Elusive Craft of Evaluating Advocacy', a paper by two American academics, Steven Teles and Mark Schmitt.

■ **Demonstration of impact**
It helps us to assess the progress we have (or have not) made and why, and it enables us to demonstrate the changes and impact that our work has brought about. This helps us win support for our work.

■ **Participation**
Monitoring and reviewing our advocacy work enables our stakeholders to provide feedback and shape the way the work is taken forward. Evaluating our advocacy work allows key stakeholders to assess the impact of the work and participate in how things are taken forward.

Why is learning so important?

During the lifetime of an advocacy project or programme, many lessons will be learned. Some of these lessons will be based on success, which can help others improve. Others will be learned from failure, which can help others avoid similar mistakes.

To understand lessons learned, we need to understand what worked or did not work – when, where, with whom, under what circumstances and why – and this means being able to analyse what work was done, the context in which it was done and what the outcomes of that work were. Capturing this may depend on how well we did our planning. For example, how did we handle disagreements when we worked with others in coalitions, alliances or networks? Did we make an assumption that turned out to be incorrect? Were there risks that we did not identify correctly, or that could have been managed better?

Learning only happens when there is sufficient time to reflect on practice, identify lessons and share them with others, and when they have the chance to absorb and apply the lessons. This may require us to schedule regular monitoring meetings, in order to reflect on progress and improve our practice. It may also require us to be open-minded in reviewing, so that difficulties can be acknowledged, rather than disguised.

A learning review (which can include a peer review) is a formal planned activity, which can be done virtually or with key stakeholders physically present. It can be undertaken at any stage of an advocacy project or programme, to review progress, learn from what is going well and not so well, check the scope of the plan or strategy, and make any necessary adjustments where required. It may look at process and/or technical issues to check that the project is seeking to achieve what it said it would. It normally involves key stakeholders who are directly or indirectly involved in implementing the work, in order to gain their insights and observations. You should expect some negative findings as well as positive ones. Specific recommendations should be proposed for applying the learning in the project as it progresses and/or for other future initiatives.

CASE STUDY

BRAZIL

In north-east Brazil, Tearfund partner Diaconia worked with women's groups in rural communities near to the city of Caraúbas. They focused on educating women about their rights and empowering them to engage with the Municipal Forum on Public Policy. With the support of trade unions and rural community associations, these women sought to defend the interests of family farmers in their region.

Caraúbas and the surrounding area are semi-arid and rainfall is erratic. This means it is common practice to hoard food, water and animal fodder. This can be important during dry seasons, when communities rely on rainwater harvested during the rainy seasons in order to survive. However, it is not always reliable, and water sometimes runs out.

There is legislation in Brazil that commits the government to provide universal access to water. Unfortunately, the federal government has traditionally outworked this law by ordering the Ministry of National Integration to purchase polyethylene (PVC) tanks for water storage and ordering the National Health Foundation to distribute them in the semi-arid areas.

Diaconia was concerned about this practice because it undermined local knowledge of good practice in water storage. It also disempowered people and took away their dignity. As a result, they formed a coalition with other organisations to launch a campaign with a simple slogan: 'Say no to PVC tanks!' Many people were mobilised, including women's groups, family farmers and local churches. Public meetings were held, where they expressed their dissatisfaction about the PVC tanks and asked the federal government to allow them to build cisterns using their own local knowledge.

It was not easy and it took time. However, eventually the federal government agreed to change its practice. Diaconia learned that they needed to persevere and be patient. They learned that it was important to encourage participation from all affected groups. They also learned that it was wise to suggest constructive alternatives to the federal government, rather than just criticising the way it outworked the law.

How can advocacy be monitored and reviewed?

Monitoring and reviewing both involve gathering data. The data gathered must be useful. If data is not analysed and used, then there is no point recording and collating it. Sometimes, we collect data that is irrelevant, which can be a waste of time, effort and resources.

Someone once famously said, *'Not everything that counts can be counted. And not everything that can be counted, counts.'* In other words, we must ensure that we gather data that is both quantitative and qualitative:

- **Quantitative** data is about numbers, amounts, averages and statistics. It can be objective, so it often needs to be contextualised. It can be used to prove that something has improved or changed.

- **Qualitative** data is about description, explanation, context and comparisons. It can be subjective, so it is important not to estimate or conclude anything beyond the original observations. It can be used to demonstrate that something has improved or changed.

In gathering data, it is important to ensure that different people are consulted and different perspectives considered. It is also important to ensure that the data is not just collected, but also recorded, analysed and acted upon. There are many tools that can be used to do this, eg questionnaires, direct observation, semi-structured interviews, surveys, logs, etc[12] (see **TOOL 49**:

12 Details are set out in *ROOTS 5 – Project cycle management*.

Log for data monitoring and reviewing and **TOOL 50**: Questionnaire for advocacy evaluation). Whichever tool we use, we need to determine:

■ Have we done what we said we would do, when we said we would do it?

■ How well have we done what we said we would do?

■ Where have we done well? What can we improve further?

■ Where have we not done well, why is this and what can we learn?

■ What needs to be changed in order to get our strategy back on track?

The important thing is to learn lessons every time we monitor or review our advocacy. These lessons will help us decide whether we are going to make changes to keep on track, continue with things as they are, or even stop what we are doing (perhaps because the factors justifying our advocacy are no longer relevant or perhaps because the risks involved have become too high). Learning is fundamental to good monitoring and reviewing.

Here is a worked example, based on a review of an advocacy activity that mobilised people for a street march:

SAMPLE

What happened…	To learn for next time…
The street march was peaceful	Seek permission from the authorities well in advance of a march, and stress the peaceful nature of the march in all literature and announcements
Many groups were involved	Start building relationships with key allies far in advance of the march, and make sure everyone is kept informed of plans
Key decision-makers attended	Inform decision-makers early
Changes in policies resulted	Give decision-makers a platform to announce planned changes, for example through the media
Disorganised on the day	Ensure one person is in charge of organisation and that he / she has phone numbers of all involved to ensure coordination
Some church representatives did not come	Speak to all churches in advance of the day and explain the exact nature of the event

How can advocacy be evaluated?

Evaluations are considered good practice. There are several ways they can be done. The option we choose will depend on the nature of our advocacy project or programme, and factors such as time, money, resources, staff capacity, the indicators set when we made our advocacy plan or strategy, the levels of accountability required by donors and beneficiaries, the extent of stakeholder participation expected and the lessons learned.

Some of the most common methods include:

■ **Knowledge Attitude Practice Surveys**: an educational diagnosis of the community, revealing increases in knowledge about the issue, attitudes towards the issue and change in practice.

■ **Community-led video diaries**: community members use cameras to record changes that have occurred using film.

■ **Outcome Mapping**: a measurement process that focuses on behavioural change exhibited by beneficiaries, comprising a lengthy design phase followed by a cyclic record-keeping phase.

■ **Most Significant Change**: the collection and interpretation of stories of change, in order to facilitate improvement.

■ **Cost–Benefit Analysis**: a systematic process for comparing the total expected cost of each option against the total expected benefits, to see whether the benefits outweigh the costs, and by how much, and for determining if a sound investment decision was made with the project or programme.

■ **Social Return on Investment**: a principles-based method for measuring social and other non-financial value relative to resources invested, in order to evaluate impact on stakeholders, identify ways to improve performance and enhance investments.

Evaluations must:

■ **Be participatory**: people-centred and involving stakeholders of an advocacy project or programme such as affected communities, allies and targets.

■ **Assess impact**: analysing the changes that can be attributed to an advocacy project or programme, both intended and unintended, by asking how things would have changed if the work had not been undertaken.

■ **Be objective**: conducted by a person or people who have not been involved in the advocacy project or programme, and who are able to be neutral in their views about the work.

The following decisions need to be made before going ahead:

■ **Who?**
Who should do the evaluation? It could be done by a small internal team or by an external person or team.

■ **When?**
When should the evaluation be done? It is normally done as soon as possible after the end of a project or programme. If it is left too long, the key people involved are likely to begin forgetting important information.

■ **What?**
What should be evaluated? It is important that the evaluation identifies both planned and unplanned change. It also needs to assess efficiency (ie whether resources were used appropriately and strategically) and effectiveness (ie whether the advocacy has had an impact that is sustainable and transformational).

The starting point for an evaluation is the drafting of Terms of Reference (ToR) for the person or team conducting the evaluation. The main sections usually include:

■ **Background**: information about the project or programme, and why an evaluation is needed.

■ **Purpose**: what our organisation wants the evaluation to achieve.

■ **Questions to ask**: central questions that the evaluation must address.

■ **Specifics to consider**: what specific areas (internal and/or external) we want the evaluation to address.

■ **Methodology**: broad parameters of the approach and techniques we would prefer the evaluators to use.

■ **Logistics**: timings, costs, etc.

For practical guidance and suggestions of questions to consider, see TOOL 50: Questionnaire for advocacy evaluation.

It is good practice for any evaluation to be written into a report.

Evaluation report outline

- Introduction and background
- Summary of situation before the advocacy was undertaken
- Details about the advocacy issue:
  - How was it identified?
  - Who was involved in selecting the issue?
  - Was there enough research and analysis of the issue?
  - What were the underlying causes and effects of the problem?
  - What were the proposed solutions?
- Details of advocacy strategies used:
  - Were the right people targeted?
  - Were they influenced in the most effective ways possible?
  - What methods and Activities were used?
- Summary of Inputs and analysis of Inputs leading to Outputs
- Summary of Outputs and analysis of Outputs leading to Outcomes
- Information about circumstances outside the control of the organisation
- Details of Outcomes and Impact:
  - To what extent were the goal and objectives achieved?
  - What unintentional consequences resulted and why?
- Conclusions and recommendations

The important thing is that our evaluation leads us to learn lessons. There are lots of reasons why a project succeeds or fails. Here are some examples:

LESSONS ABOUT SUCCESS	LESSONS ABOUT FAILURE
We had good contacts with decision-makers because we built on previous good relationships.	We overlooked some risks that were not obvious when we did our risk analysis.
We had reliable, accurate and detailed evidence, based on thorough research, which supported our advocacy messages.	We should have anticipated that some decision-makers would not listen and/or that we would not be able to get access to them.
We made good use of existing contacts, networks, coalitions and alliances.	We did not always have enough information to answer questions.
We used all the information available, so that our funding applications were successful.	Initially, we chose the wrong issue to advocate about.
Our objectives were realistic, which meant that they could be reached within the given time frame.	We did not have enough people or time and therefore could not implement our planned strategy.
The local community were mobilised to represent themselves to decision-makers.	We should have allowed for the possibility of funding cuts and the impact this would have on our advocacy activities.
The issue is one that was of real concern to local people.	We could not find enough allies for the type of advocacy we chose to do and there were not enough allies for the advocacy issue we were concerned about.
We had clear lines of responsibility and authority.	We should have allowed more time to build relationships and develop trust with potential allies.
	The process was much slower than we had anticipated.
	Some people were allocated tasks within the planning phase, but they did not always do the activities they promised.
	We failed to invest adequately in getting enough technical and/or legal understanding.

TOOL 49   Log for data monitoring and reviewing

It is good practice to establish a monitoring and reviewing process before beginning advocacy work because it helps with planning and delivery. This tool provides suggestions of what information to collect and where to find it.

Type of monitoring data	Questions to ask	Information to collect
Inputs	What resources do we have for our advocacy? Are they sufficient? Do we need any more investment of people, time, money, etc?	For example: Finances – funding applications, budgets Staff time and expertise – timesheets, technical logs Materials – income and expenditure accounts, receipts
Activities	What Activities does our advocacy involve? Are we doing the right Activities? Are the right people involved?	For example: Meetings – minutes, notes of meetings Postcards and petitions – numbers of signatures Letters and emails – copies of those sent and received Mobilisation actions – campaigning action plan Media – press cuttings, radio recordings
Outputs	What is being generated by our advocacy activities? Are we producing the right Outputs? Do we need to change our Activities to achieve better Outputs? (This is usually quantitative data.)	For example: Numbers of campaign actions taken Numbers of meetings and details of who attended Numbers of letters, emails, postcards, petitions signed and sent
Outcomes (purpose)	Has our advocacy resulted in any discernible influence? Have any decision-makers taken up our advocacy messages? Have there been any changes in laws, policies or practices? (This is often qualitative data.)	For example: Interviews with advocacy targets and advocacy allies Opinion articles in the media Communications from decision-makers issued privately Statements from decision-makers in the public domain Draft legislation Policy consultation documents
Impact (goal)	How has our advocacy affected the lives of people who are poor, vulnerable and marginalised? Are the changes in laws, policies and practices leading to change in people's lives? (This is usually qualitative data.)	For example: Interviews with advocacy beneficiaries Case studies Stories of change Research about changes in practice and behaviour Statistics about implementation of laws and policies

TOOL 50   Questionnaire for advocacy evaluation

Questions for our advocacy allies:

■ How were you involved in the advocacy?

■ How good was the evidence on which the advocacy was based?

■ What additional information would you have liked to have had?

■ How clear were the organisation's advocacy goal and objectives?

■ To what extent were the right strategies used?

■ What evidence is there to show that there have been changes in laws, policies and/or practices, as a result of the advocacy work?

■ In what ways was the advocacy successful, and why?

■ In what ways did the advocacy not go well, and why?

■ What have you learned from the advocacy?

Questions for our advocacy targets:

■ What was the nature of your relationship with the organisation?

■ How much information did you have about the issue and the advocacy messages before you were approached?

■ How effective was the information and evidence about the issue that you received from the organisation?

■ What did you do as a result of the advocacy?

■ What changes have you implemented in laws, policies and/or practices as a result of the advocacy?

■ Is there anything that the organisation could have done to be more effective? If so, what?

Questions for the beneficiaries and communities affected by the issue:

■ Have you observed any changes in laws, policies and/or practices?

■ If there have been changes, how have they affected you and your community?

■ Have there been any unexpected outcomes? If 'yes', what are they?

■ Are there any issues that remain unresolved? If 'yes', what are they?

Questions for us to ask ourselves:

■ Did we select the right issue to advocate about? If not, why not?

■ Was our evidence and analysis sufficient to support our advocacy? If not, why not?

■ Did we identify the right potential solutions and demonstrate links with the root problems? If not, why not?

■ Did we enable beneficiaries from communities affected by the issue to participate in our advocacy in selecting the issue to advocate about, in planning and in delivery? If not, why not?

■ Were our advocacy goal and objectives appropriate? If not, why not?

- Did we have sufficient resources for our advocacy? If not, why not?

- How efficiently did we use our Inputs to achieve our Outputs?

- Did we target the right people and influence them in the most effective ways possible? If not, why not?

- Did we use the right Activities to persuade the targets of our advocacy messages?

- To what extent did our Outputs achieve the desired Outcomes and were there any unexpected outcomes?

- What evidence is there that we influenced decision-makers to change their opinions, attitudes and/or behaviour towards the advocacy issue?

- What evidence is there that laws, policies and/or practices have changed as a result of our advocacy?

- How much change has been experienced by the beneficiaries in the communities affected by the issue?

- What unexpected external factors had an impact on our advocacy? To what extent could these have been predicted?

- Have there been any additional unintended outcomes? If 'yes', what are they?

- In what ways was the advocacy successful, and why?

- In what ways did the advocacy not go well, and why?

- What did we learn that will help us to improve next time?

SECTION H   Training exercises

EXERCISE 54   The basics of monitoring, reviewing and evaluating advocacy

Aim   **To understand the basic terms that are important in advocacy monitoring, reviewing and evaluation, and the connections with planning**

TYPE   Group exercise

METHODS   Matching pairs game, plenary discussion

ADVANCE PREPARATION

1. Using the teaching notes from pages 122–123 in **Section F1** (planning) and pages 212–214 in **Section H** (monitoring, reviewing and evaluation), write out or type all the key words on A4 sheets of paper, one word per A4 sheet. Depending on the number of participants, these could include Monitoring, Reviewing, Evaluation, Input, Activity, Output, Outcome, Impact, Risk, Assumption, Accountability, Learning and Participation.

2. Using the same teaching notes, write out or type all the definitions of the key words on other A4 sheets of paper, one definition per A4 sheet, making sure that all the words selected have matching definitions.

3. If the A4 sheets have been typed, remember to print them out.

4. It is important to create enough words and definitions for each person in the room to have just one piece of paper. If necessary limit your list or repeat some of the word/definition combinations. If you have an odd number of participants then a facilitator should join in to make up a full set of pairs.

STEPS

1. Mix up the A4 sheets of words and definitions.

2. Give out one A4 sheet to each participant, with the writing face down.

3. Indicate when it is time to start, and ask all the participants to find their other half. This means that if they have a word, they need to find the matching definition, and if they have a definition, they need to find the matching word.

4. When the participants have found their partner, invite the pairs to discuss between themselves whether or not they agree with the definition and why. Allow time for this.

5. Gather everyone together and invite pairs to share their thoughts about their word and definition. After each pair has spoken, pin or tape their word and definition next to each other on the wall.

EXERCISE 55   Monitoring advocacy

Aim   **To understand what data to monitor in an advocacy project and where to source such data**

CONTEXT   Group exercise. Please note: this exercise only works if participants have either brought a logic model, logframe or planning worksheet with them to the workshop, or if they have completed a logic model (**TOOL 30**: Advocacy logic model) or logframe (**TOOL 31**: Advocacy logframe) or an advocacy plan (**TOOL 33**: Activity planning worksheet) during the workshop (these three tools can be found in **Section F1**).

METHODS   Small group discussion, creative feedback, plenary discussion

HANDOUT   **TOOL 49**: Log for data monitoring and reviewing

STEPS   1. Refer participants to what they covered in planning, and ask them to look again at their Logic Models or logframes, and their Activity planning worksheets.

2. Divide them into small groups of three or four, ideally with the same people as they worked with for planning.

3. Assign half the groups to identify what quantitative data needs collecting to monitor and review the indicators they set, and the other half to do the same for qualitative data.

4. Invite the participants to be specific about how they would obtain the required data, what documents they would consider, who they would ask, etc. Encourage them to use **TOOL 49**: Log for data monitoring and reviewing to help.

5. Allow for feedback in plenary and lead a discussion around the key themes and approaches that emerge. Encourage sharing of real-life experiences where possible.

EXERCISE 56   Evaluating advocacy

Aim   **To identify good practice in advocacy evaluations**

TYPE   This exercise will work best with a group of at least eight people, ideally more. However, it can also be done if there are fewer people.

METHODS   Work in pairs, small group discussion, role play, plenary discussion

HANDOUT   **TOOL 50**: Questionnaire for advocacy evaluation

STEPS   1. Select an advocacy issue. This may be a real issue that participants are working on outside the training workshop, or a worked example that they are using in the workshop, or a case study (real or made up, but provided by the workshop facilitator).

2. If possible, divide participants into four groups of two. Assign each pair an identity as
   • the organisation
   • the advocacy allies
   • the advocacy targets
   • the affected community.

   If the group is smaller than eight, double up the identities per pair.

3. Each pair has now to plan and prepare. They are going to be interviewed, using their pair's identity, for the evaluation. They are also going to be interviewing the other pair that has been paired with them. In both cases, they need to work out how they will respond to questions and how they are going to ask questions, using **TOOL 50**: Questionnaire for advocacy evaluation to help.

4. Invite each pair, in turn, to use role play with the other pair, to both interview and be interviewed. Those not taking part need to act as observers.

5. After each role play, obtain plenary feedback about what did and did not work. Draw out common themes of learning and good practice in conducting an advocacy evaluation.