

Hindsight 20/20: the advocacy learning document produced by Policy Forum.

Dear Reader,

This document could take the shape of a weblog, or a regularly produced compilation of advocacy experiences and lessons learned. It may be electronic, but it will certainly be paper-based. It will also be produced in Kiswahili, once we have the resources in place to manage such a thing. The intention of this document is to record the advocacy experiences of Policy Forum members and staff in a candid way. It is intended to facilitate the sharing of information as well as lessons learned in the practice of advocacy. It is written in the belief that accumulating a body of evidence in advocacy will serve to help those who engage in it to do so with the backing of other people's experience. It is also written in the belief that having honest written records may also produce a body of evidence which can be used to negotiate relations and engagement between Civil Society and Government.

This draft begins with a narrative case study of Policy Forum's engagement with the Local Government Laws (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill of 2006. It is followed by some lessons learned that were identified by the author- it is by no means a representative account but a subjective one. As it stands, this document is a draft to be discussed and may not be in its final format.

Case study: Policy Forum's Lobbying Effort against the Local Government Laws (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill, 2006.

Inception: During the October Monthly Meeting held on the 5th of that month, a member of Policy Forum made a presentation on the Local Government Laws (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill that would have its second reading in parliament during the late October- early November sessions. A number of issues were raised on the implications of the Bill for local government and for governance in general, and PF decided to lobby against the bill. It was decided to draft a position paper which would be presented at the public hearings held by the parliamentary committee. The late date gave Policy Forum about 2 weeks to prepare for the lobbying

Preparation and presentation: A team of approximately 7 people volunteered their time to draft a position paper that would be used as the lobbying tool. The process took the whole of the two weeks to complete but in the end a 5-page position paper was produced and translated into Kiswahili. Enough copies were made to distribute to the committee members and oral as well as written submissions were made to the Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional, Legal and Public Administration on the 17th of October. During the Minister for Regional and Local Government Administration's presentation, **amendments that had been made to the Bill were revealed**. The advocacy groups were excused after their presentations to allow the committee to deliberate on the Bill.

The parliamentary stage: Initial insider sources said that the bill had been withdrawn, but follow-up with clerks of the parliamentary committee and the Clerk to the National Assembly revealed that the bill was still tabled for discussion. **PF received a schedule of the amendments to the bill that were included in the second reading of the bill in parliament**, which revealed some changes that may have been influenced by the position paper presented in the committee. The newspaper reports suggested that parliamentary debate on the bill focused on the most

politically-sensitive amendment proposed (executive appointment of councilors). In the end, the bill was passed by parliament.

Aftermath: During the heat of the advocacy moment, some suggestions for follow-up on the bill included sending emissaries to Dodoma to lobby parliamentarians directly, making a statement in the newspapers condemning the bill and taking legal action against the bill. Although the bill was passed on the 14th of November, the amendments made to it suggest that the lobbying effort did not go completely unnoticed even if the outcome that PF was pushing for did not materialize. On the day that the bill was discussed and passed it emerged that a new amendment schedule had been produced and distributed. Policy Forum was able to access the document. The Bill was passed and as of December 2006 is waiting to be signed into an Act.

Continuing Advocacy:

In the event that the Bill would be passed, Policy Forum had considered how to take the issue further. Several suggestions came up again when it was discussed in the December 2006 monthly meeting, and when it became apparent that a direct presidential lobbying approach was not going to be possible, the group that put together the Position Paper on the Bill was charged with the task of putting together an analytical document that would be disseminated widely and that would alert 'the public' to the implications of the Bill.

Some lessons to consider:

1. The last-minute approach can constrain options for advocacy

In the time we gave ourselves to prepare, options for advocacy such as a quick stakeholder analysis and ally recruitment were cut off. We were able to get verbal 'buy-in' from other networks but their involvement wasn't substantive. The 'ad-hoc' element of our advocacy outweighed the strategic element at the very beginning.

2. Strategy, strategy, strategy= results, results, results.

In order to maximize the impact that we have in our parliamentary lobbying, it is better to have a 'toolbox' of strategies that can be employed depending on where in the process we enter to advocate. A well-planned and executed advocacy strategy will probably yield more results over time than one that is primarily based on reacting to situations as they arise, although this is not a method that will be ruled out. We should aim to employ the best tool at the right time for the right situation.

3. Knowledge is key.

It was evident as we progressed with our parliamentary advocacy that there were a few gaps in our knowledge about how the processes actually work. While we depended on the crucial input of the lawyer in the team, this is the kind of technical knowledge that we should all have so we can enhance our own civic

knowledge and ability to advocate effectively. It is also the kind of knowledge we can share to strengthen the workings of the entire system, by making it more widely available.

4. How do we measure success?

Legislation is a complex process, and we may tend to deal with those areas that are well-defined and visible. Good strategizing will have to include the management of our own expectations and a realistic understanding of our capacity to influence processes that have many seen and unseen elements to them. In the case of the LG Bill, I was of the opinion that we were able to make a significant impact at the last minute at the highest levels of influence, so that even if we were not fully gratified we were not ignored either. I would have considered the experience a victory, whereas those with more ambitious expectations of our influence may have seen it as a failure since we did not manage to get the Bill withdrawn. This disparity makes me think that we might want to sit down and consider our definitions of success in our lobbying efforts. In addition, there is the question of how far we can attribute any success on such a public process to the efforts of the Policy Forum. In the case of the LG Bill, there was considerable lobbying by other groups, including parliamentarians and the Donor Community.

5. Continuous advocacy:

Policy Forum had decided early on that if the Bill was passed, it would consider some other strategies to try and oppose the legislation. Eventually, it was decided that in the immediate aftermath of the Bill, continued advocacy was going to be conducted. This would take the form of trying to alert the public about the implications of the Bill for governance in Tanzania, through an analytical piece that could be disseminated widely. One advantage of this approach is that it shows the commitment and consistency of Policy Forum to the principles and ideas that we are lobbying for in the face of relative defeat.

6. Soft Skills and other unquantifiable advocacy resources:

In this particular encounter, Policy Forum was able to use some of the social capital that it has built over a period of time by banking on its reputation in order

to advocate on this issue with legitimacy. Another advantage was the provision of the position paper (which was kept deliberately short and clear) to all members of the public hearing in both languages, making our argument available and accessible to everyone present. Finally, continuous advocacy serves a less immediate function of constituency-building in the topic of good governance, by upholding the sharing of information and ideas widely to focus the attention of people who are interested in local governance problems. Although soft skills and social capital are not tangible (or quantifiable) resources or outcomes, they are important to the success of advocacy because they provide a basis of support upon which the measurable can be achieved.

Elsie Eyakuze

December 2006.