

Advocacy Capacity Strengthening Strategies: Shared Experiences and Ways Forward

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In October-December 2009, the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA), ACT International and ACT Development conducted a survey to better understand member experiences and capacity needs with regards to advocacy. The study included an online survey and follow-up telephone interviews with members belonging to more than one of the three networks.

A total of 47 organizations participated in the study, including 40 that completed the online survey and 7 that only did the interview. Of these, 40% were from Europe, 21% from North America, 17% from Africa/Middle East, 13% from Asia/Pacific and the remaining 9% from Latin America. Conversations and correspondence took place with 54 people, including staff from ACT and EAA.

Current campaigns. At the time of the survey, all responding organizations indicated they are working on one or more advocacy campaigns. The most common frequently mentioned issue was climate change (mentioned by 80% of respondents), followed by human rights (59%), food (57%) and HIV (57%). The majority of organizations work on the campaigns with multiple partners and/or as part of a coalition, with less than 10 organizations working alone. Approximately 15 agencies mentioned working on campaigns through networks, sometimes in addition to the coalitions and multiple partners.

Current capacity strengthening activities. Participants indicated that during the last two years they had either attended (71%), organized (73%) or funded (55%) advocacy capacity strengthening activities. Most of the times these activities took the form of training workshops, with meetings to share information being the second most common activity. The content of these workshops focused for the most part on general advocacy concepts and strategies. The primary drawback was lack of time for participants to apply what they learned during the course of their work, while the primary benefit was improved ability to analyze a problem, identify stakeholders, organize planning or implement a campaign. A number of respondents mentioned that the skill level of the participants tended to be very uneven in the workshops. Other types of capacity strengthening activities included:

- supporting partners to attend international meetings
- organizing study tours
- promoting a hands-on approach to advocacy.

Trends. From the responses it is possible to conclude that there exists within the EAA/ACT membership capacity to build advocacy skills in a number of sectoral areas, such as HIV, combating sexual aggression, health care finance, and human rights. It is also possible to identify a number of trends with regards to advocacy capacity strengthening by EAA/ACT partners. While some are focusing more on increasing the advocacy capacity of their congregations, others are more concerned with the capacity of churches. There is also a definite interest in focusing on capacity strengthening at the grassroots level. The overriding trend is a general movement for organizations working abroad to providing greater support for the advocacy work of their local partners.

Good practices. A number of organizations and networks are reflecting on the best way to support partner advocacy capacity. A few of the strategies being used include:

- looking at long-term (not short-term gains)
- focusing on building capacity to lobby government bodies and multinational organizations
- using scheduled international events as opportunities to strengthen capacity
- maximizing support for research that informs policy
- separating out capacity building and funding relationships.

Capacity strengthening priorities. The online survey confirms strong member interest in learning more about food advocacy, as well as advocacy related to climate change and human rights. With regards to skills areas, members expressed a strong interest in learning about advocacy evaluation,

followed by skills related to fundraising, lobbying, public mobilization, preparing policy papers, and conflict resolution.

General Issues around Capacity Strengthening. While members express a concrete need for advocacy capacity strengthening, they also urge organizations to be realistic about what partners can do. There is an expressed need to support ecumenical advocacy and build the willingness and capacity of churches to advocate. Respondents hope that capacity strengthening activities will be coordinated to avoid duplication. Various respondents expressed the hope that capacity building will be a part of the future program of ACT.

Challenges to Member Advocacy. Members described a number of challenges they encounter when doing advocacy. The main one is dealing with scarce resources. Other challenges mentioned included forging a common understanding of advocacy, defining the role of churches in advocacy and connecting with communities in meaningful ways.

Partner Dynamics. Since so many EAA/ACT members work in funding or coordinating relationships with other agencies, there were frequent references to the dynamics particular to partnerships. These included control and conflicts over agenda setting, efforts to empower southern partners and general coordination concerns.

Information Sharing. A number of comments referred to information exchange. There is consensus that online information gathering and dissemination within the EAA/ACT family needs to be improved and that information dissemination will become more important as funds for meetings become scarcer. Conversely, EAA and ACT staff experience difficulties in getting information from their members that they can use for advocacy. Information sharing at the country or regional level through the ACT Forums is considered very helpful.

In-House Resources. A number of organizations already have in-house resources related to advocacy. Five agencies mention the capacity to train field staff, members or targets; two refer to in-house training of trainer capabilities. Fifteen EAA/ACT members have developed advocacy training manuals, although it was not always clear if these were for internal use or could be shared. Respondents made reference to a range of topics related to advocacy, including skills (e.g. working with the media), of focus on target (advocacy in the UN). Campaign materials are also available in many forms.

After reviewing responses and interview transcripts carefully, the following suggestions are submitted to EAA/ACT staff and members as they consider what steps to take next:

1. Compile advocacy training materials and tools produced by members and post on a website, with an emphasis on advocacy evaluation.
2. Organize region/country level advocacy capacity strengthening activities centered on the food campaign.
3. Create a mechanism to document member advocacy experiences and facilitate self-managed communication between members on advocacy issues. Document differences in advocacy experiences attributed to regional/country-specific characteristics.
4. Promote capacity to formulate policy by encouraging and providing technical support for members to participate in country and international reporting and practice negotiation.
5. Compile information on electronic advocacy and information technology and make it available to members.

In January 2010, 23 member organizations met with EAA and ACT to discuss the above findings. Three priority areas were identified by the group: developing a website, developing a tool for evaluation of

advocacy, and developing a strategy for advocacy capacity building around the food campaign. Suggestions for moving ahead with these three areas are proposed in the final section of this report.

1. Introduction

a. Objectives of the Study

This initiative was taken under the leadership of EAA in partnership with ACT Development and ACT International, taking into consideration that the member churches and organizations of the three networks have significant experience in advocacy but very different capacities. Through member feedback, external evaluation, or program planning, all three networks have identified the need to embark on strengthening member capacity to carry out advocacy.

The paper is the latest in a series of exercises examining roles and priorities related to advocacy for EAA, ACT International, ACT Development and the World Council of Churches:

- *Prophetic, Pragmatic and Practical: A Review of Global Advocacy undertaken by the World Council of Churches, Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, ACT International and ACT Development* (2007)
- *ACT and Advocacy: A discussion paper for members of the ACT alliance leading to an ACT policy paper on advocacy* (2008, internal document)
- *Evaluation of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance* (2008)
- *The Cooperation Crunch: A think piece on cooperation and ecumenical advocacy* (2009).

Feedback from members was gathered to better understand their experience and needs with regard to advocacy and particularly with regard to capacity strengthening – so as to develop a more robust and comprehensive plan of action for 2010. Secondary aims include collecting information regarding existing advocacy resources.

b. Methodology

The information was collected through two main methods: an online survey and follow-up interviews (primarily via telephone) or correspondence.

Online survey. The survey was successfully managed using the online survey tool Survey Monkey, which made it easier to have the questionnaire available in different languages (English and Spanish) and to track responses and compilation of information. The survey covered the following main topics:

- organizational understanding and approach to advocacy
- current advocacy campaigns and activities
- advocacy capacity strengthening activities attended, organized or funded in the last two years
- advocacy capacity strengthening needs (prioritized, by sector and skill area)
- advocacy-related resources
- cooperation experiences.

The complete survey tool can be found in the appendices of this report.

Interviews and Correspondence. Organizations that participated in the follow-up activities were asked to describe in greater detail their views regarding:

- challenges faced in doing advocacy in their particular context, both internal and external to the organization
- advocacy capacity building needs
- best (and worst) approaches for building advocacy capacity
- examples of cooperation with other agencies.

When it was not possible to set up an interview, the questions were occasionally sent in writing to respondents.

This report uses EAA’s official definition of *advocacy*, which includes awareness raising, campaigning/public mobilization, and policy engagement. Additionally, this report uses the noun *campaign* to refer to all activities organized in support of an advocacy objective (and not just a mobilization or awareness raising campaign). EAA and ACT recognize that member organizations may have their own interpretation of the term *advocacy*.

c. Challenges of Data Collection

According to the original Terms of Reference, the study was to include follow-up interviews with 70 organizations. A list was generated of all members of EAA, ACT International and ACT Development and priority was given to organizations that are members of more than one of the three organizations. Emails introducing the study and requesting members to participate in the online survey were sent out in late October.

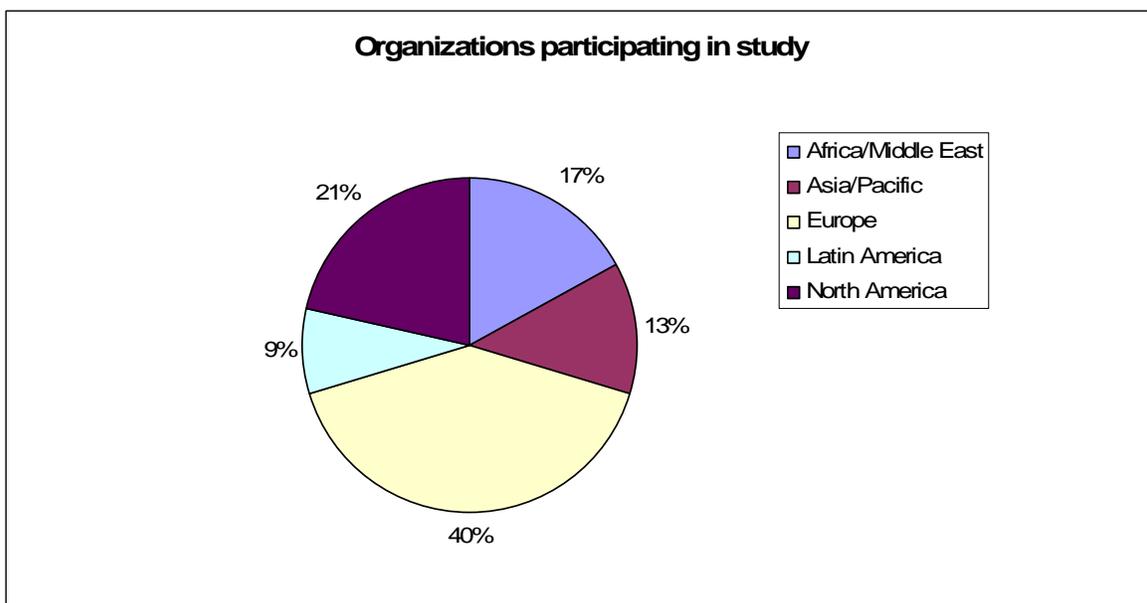
Initial response, however, was extremely low. In retrospect, a number of factors influenced the response rate. Firstly, the EAA, ACT International and ACT Development databases are not yet designed to identify advocacy contacts within member organizations. In cases when the correspondence was sent to a Board member or Secretary General, there was almost never a response until contact was made (via a separate effort) with another person in the organization.

Secondly, organizations working with partners were not sure whether their responses should focus on their own national-level advocacy efforts or the work of their partners. Sometimes the person assigned to complete the survey was from a communications department (focusing on own national campaigns) while at other times they were from an operational department (focusing on work with partners).

Thirdly, the kind of information sought cannot usually be obtained from a single individual within an organization. LWF pointed out after completing the survey that the responses could really only be considered to reflect the work of one office or department at best.

d. Characteristics of Responding Organizations

A total of 47 organizations participated in the study, including 40 that completed the online survey and 7 that only did the interview. The regional breakdown of participants in the survey and the follow-up interviews is illustrated below:



Within the organizations respondents hold different positions:

- advocacy/campaign manager or staff (12)
- program or technical staff (8)
- executive director, secretary general or other senior staff (8)
- policy manager or staff (3)
- engagement/communications staff (2)
- program directors (2)
- other positions (5)

Since the study was sponsored by EAA, ACT International and ACT Development, members belonging to more than one agency were given priority for the follow-up interview. As it turned out, most respondents completed the online survey only *after* being contacted for the follow-up interview hence most of them belong to more than one of the sponsoring agencies. In the final count, 78% of respondents were members of EAA, 68% of ACT Development and 58% of ACT International.

Organization Advocacy Profile

More than half (58%) indicated that their advocacy priorities have changed in the past year. Within this group, more than half indicated that their advocacy agenda was being re-directed to climate change, with one specifying that this shift had been planned for some years. Another three said they would also focus on food issues. Single responses included:

- facilitating direct CBO advocacy
- health/MDGs
- regional priorities (not specified)

One respondent indicated that the change in priority was due to budgetary cuts.

In response to a question as to whether the global financial crisis had affected their advocacy plans, 78% of respondents said that it had. Fully half of these indicated that the crisis would result in financial cutbacks or a smaller pool of potential [donor] partners. This will decrease funding for programs but also limit the amount of funding available for advocacy. Some southern partners have already been informed that their donors will not be able to support them at the same level in the future. One made reference to the cutting of the Kairos budget by the Canadian government. Four organizations said that the global crisis was affecting their work and thus becoming a focus of their efforts and they are incorporating stories and cases related to the crisis in their work.

Three organizations mentioned that an unexpected side effect of the global crisis is that issues related to government accountability and taxation have become more popular. Three organizations are planning to lobby their home governments or the G-20 to maintain funding levels for development.

From an organizational development perspective, 75% of respondents indicate that advocacy is included in the organization's regular strategic planning work and 35% indicate that all projects have an advocacy component. Almost all the respondents have a strategic plan for their organization, and nearly all of them claim that the strategic plan includes advocacy. Fully 24 respondents (60%) have a system for monitoring their advocacy and slightly fewer than half of all respondents have a system for evaluating the impact of their advocacy work.

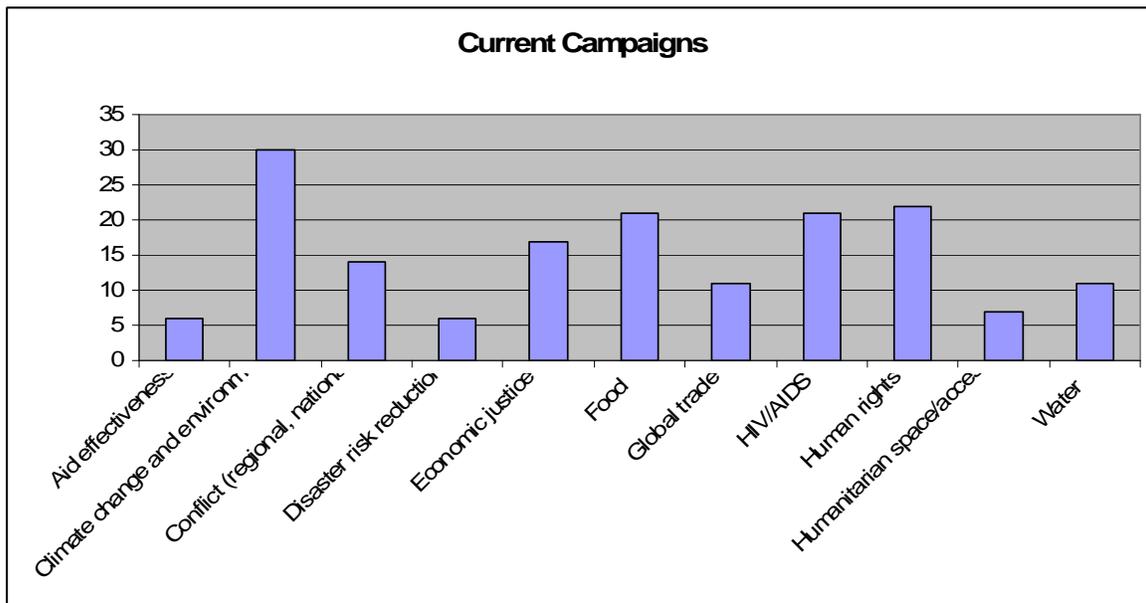
Currently the majority of the organizations (55%) are working on either one or two campaigns although four organizations are working on more than 10, with one organization working on 20 campaigns. Some of these campaigns are educational campaigns and not necessarily advocacy. Slightly less than half (45%) said that their campaigns had resulted in a policy change.

All respondents indicated they belong to at least one network or coalition, with many belonging to more than 10 and at least three to more than 25. About a fourth of respondents indicated they issue between 0-2 statements a year. Then there is a jump to those that issue ten or more a year, with many issuing more than 10 and one issuing as many as 150.

With regard to funding, 25 respondents (68%) said they have funds designated especially for advocacy and 14 respondents (38%) have funds available for partners.

2. Highlights of Member Advocacy Campaigns

All of the respondents to the survey indicated that they are currently involved in advocacy. As illustrated in the graph below, 80% of organizations are currently working on climate change issues. The second most common issue is human rights (59%) closely followed by food (57%) and HIV/AIDS (57%).



Other common issues were: health/social services, peace, and trade/fair trade (5 agencies each).¹ A handful of issues were country-specific such as “Protecting village from a mega road project” or “securing US support for reconstruction and reconciliation in northern Uganda.”

Campaign structure. The majority of organizations work on the campaigns with multiple partners and/or as part of a coalition, with less than 10 organizations working alone. There were few responses that addressed how agencies make campaign decisions when working in groups. Overall there was no indication of conflict in decision-making, with these agencies using terms such as “working in a fluid arrangement,” doing “collective strategizing” and “cooperative decision-making as part of collaborative work.”

Two agencies gave detailed descriptions on how decision-making roles are assigned within a coalition in order to expedite the process. In the first case the agency has accepted its decision-making role, while in the second the agency delegated making decisions to a partner within the coalition.

¹ Health/social services campaigns included increasing access of the poor people to government and non government extension services, Anti-Microbial Resistance, quality health services (Zambia), formulating policy critique and recommendation for the government health policy on “Desa Siaga,” formulating the Parallel Report on MDGs Achievement of Indonesia -- in particular in health sectors.

“The decision making of the campaign was relatively decided by the network. However, in order to accelerate the progress of the advocacy, YAKKUM had a right to independently initiate all necessary activities related to the campaign.”`

“EJN is working on the campaign with the support of National Christian Councils (NCCs) in Southern Africa. We have given NCC the leeway to lead the national launches and roundtables with policy makers in their countries. It is at the regional level where we have had a much more hands-on approach.”

A third agency explained that decisions are made at a central level (in the home country):

We worked within the Cluster Munitions Coalition and in Denmark together with the Danish Red Cross. Decisions were undertaken at the board level in the CMC and jointly between the two organizations in Denmark”

And a fourth explains that:

“[Decisions are made by] FELM together with LWF Colombia and the Lutheran Church in Colombia, and discussions with partners but the campaign is designed in Finland because it is targeted at a Finnish audience.”

Approximately 15 agencies mentioned working on campaigns through networks, sometimes in addition to the coalitions and multiple partners. Again, there were very few comments on the structure of the networks: one organization explained that within the network decisions are made by working groups specialized in lobbying, campaigns and media; and another respondent stated that decisions were made via consultation meetings with network and coalition partners.

Activities. Advocacy activities carried about by participating agencies revolved primarily around lobbying meetings, actions/events, public education campaigns, and media campaigns. The following table provides a snapshot of the typical activities reported by respondents. Innovative activities are highlighted for the purpose of sharing experiences.

Category	Typical activities	Examples of Innovative activities/ activities of interest
Lobbying/meetings	Meeting with policymakers and business entities; engaging church leaders; letters, post cards, calls from constituents, direct hill visits.	Supporting debt audits (International Symposium on Illegitimate Debt); creating working groups; using existing venues (such as UNFCCC preparatory meetings and conference in Copenhagen) to organize delegations; inviting agencies, industries, organizations to be part of campaign.
Actions/events	Walks, marches.	Mobilizing restaurants; bell ringing; rallies; boat trip with 1000 people to Copenhagen; creating a “Fair Trade Fortnight” and making Fair Trade churches a primary focus; passing resolutions at church meetings.
Public Education Campaigns	Public lectures, general awareness raising; providing forums for discussion.	Incorporating stories in other publications; Prior to an event, organizing forums the previous weekends to inform the public in general about the event; broad display of brochures, posters, banners in different parts of the town. Public fairs to prepare the

		march with the different participants (schools, organizations and society).
Media Campaigns	Published articles; gaining access to news press conference	Media briefings; having campaign participants (agencies, industries, etc.) identify themselves with a blue ribbon in their documents or advertisements.
Collecting signatures/Petitions	Collecting signatures at an event/conference	Postcard and internet petition to Prime Minister.
Research		Fact finding by National Commission on Human Rights.

Other innovative approaches to advocacy include: tying a non-advocacy project (such as the construction of water cisterns) to an advocacy activity for the grassroots and communication with government and public bodies; fostering engagement through a planning process (e.g. developing a national advocacy plan for the churches); and making it possible for victims of torture to present their cases in person to a Committee in Geneva.

Impact. Many of the campaigns described are ongoing, so no impact measurements are available yet. Five organizations mentioned cases of policy changes:

- government of Cameroon restricts import of poultry;
- Danish ban on cluster munitions; signature and (expected) ratification of international convention;
- USAID and World bank road project re-routed;
- "sustainability" appears as a keyword in the coalition paper of the new government;
- UNCAT takes the Philippines to task for complicity in torture and other human rights violations.

Other types of impact include:

- improved government services
- increased food security
- willingness of companies to participate in a worker training pilot project
- invitation to civil society to provide input on land policy
- greater awareness of issues
- debt elimination
- change of attitude of policy makers.

The above brief presentation of ongoing campaigns reported in the survey suggests that EAA/ACT members are quite active in advocacy. Campaigns span a wide range of issues, linking groups across the globe, such as:

- Progressio applying pressure on officials from the Dominican Republic in London,
- a painting exhibition by Palestinian children on tour in Australia and New Zealand,
- a group in the Philippines protesting government cutbacks to an ecumenical network in Canada.

The campaigns described by respondents also highlight a number of potential opportunities for exchange such as advocates fighting against harmful mining practices in Latin America, the Philippines and Africa and those struggling to protect women from sexual aggression in Bolivia and the DCR.

3. Advocacy Capacity Strengthening Activities

a. Survey Results

This section reviews responses to the online survey concerning current EAA/ACT member advocacy capacity strengthening activities before discussing general views about reinforcing advocacy capacity. Respondents were asked whether they had attended, organized or funded an advocacy capacity strengthening activity during the past two years. The purpose of asking about the different aspects (attending, organizing, and funding) was to distinguish capacity building initiatives aimed at reinforcing internal capacity from those aimed at reinforcing partner capacity. A majority of respondents indicated they had attended and organized an advocacy capacity strengthening activity in the recent past.

Activities Attended by EAA, ACT International and ACT Development Members

Asked whether they had attended any advocacy capacity strengthening activities in the past two years, 71% of respondents responded in the affirmative, with no noticeable differences in responses by region.

Type of activity. Fully 23 of 28 organizations (82%) that attended an advocacy capacity strengthening activity indicated they had attended a workshop. In some cases the workshop was offered by the UN or by a network such as APRODEV, Kairos, InterAction, EJN, and the Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform. Other types of activities attended included:

- experience sharing and seminars (36%)
- training of trainers (11%)
- mentoring (7%)
- sharing materials (7%)
- online advocacy course (4%)
- training in country offices (4%).

Training is a good start, but it is not enough. The challenge is to get partners interested and then work with them side by side.

Content. Almost half of the respondents (46%) said the topic for the advocacy capacity strengthening activity was 'general advocacy.' Other topics covered were media (17%) – including how to engage media coverage during a crisis, interfaith dialogue, and advocacy related to specific sectors such as:

- climate change
- evaluation of advocacy effectiveness
- food security
- health
- human rights/justice
- land policy
- peace negotiations
- water.

Level of Difficulty. Most of the activities were attended by beginners. (There was some confusion among respondents as to whether 'level of difficulty' referred to difficulty of the course or the skill level of the participant.) There were, however, a number of activities for experienced advocates. In several cases the level of participants was mixed, with beginners experiencing difficulty understanding the activity.

Challenges. Asked what challenges they encountered after attending a capacity strengthening activity, three organizations noted that there had been none. The most common response, however, was that afterwards people were too busy to integrate what they had learned. Other challenges listed included

limited financial resources and dealing with the complexities of a particular cultural and political context. Single responses included:

- level of difficulty of supporting materials
- absence of a shared structure for learning to fill in the remaining skill gaps within the organization
- different level of understanding
- meeting the need for ongoing coaching
- online advocacy methods not suited to organization's broad and complex needs.

Participation. Participants from member organizations who attended capacity strengthening activities were almost evenly divided between advocacy/policy staff (38%) and general/program staff (35%). Participants also came from a wide variety of fields, ranging from information systems to pharmaceutical services and from health programs to policy and media. Approximately 19% were executive or board staff. Member churches were listed as participants by one organization and the heads of community-based organizations by another.

Follow-up. The most common type of follow-up after attending an advocacy capacity strengthening activity was more interaction with a network, contacting other participants from the workshops, and sharing experiences. One group developed a lobbying manual and another worked on an evaluation instrument. In two cases, follow-up after the workshops included developing an advocacy strategy. A handful of organizations did lobbying or legislative work or were able to engage targets or volunteers. In three cases organizations co-facilitated workshops around the world (two cases) or did a consultancy (one case) after attending capacity strengthening activities.

Benefits. The majority of organizations attending an advocacy capacity strengthening activity felt that it improved the organization's ability to analyze a problem, identify stakeholders, organize planning or implement a campaign. Other benefits included improved communication skills, for example in the issuing of public statements, and a better understanding of advocacy. In one case the benefit of the capacity strengthening activity was direct impact in changing budget allocations for health at the national level.

Activities Organized by EAA, ACT International and ACT Development Members

At 73%, slightly more respondents have organized capacity strengthening activities in the last two years than have attended them. In a few cases, the activities had been both organized and attended by the respondent, which suggests that a number of EAA/ACT members are working to reinforce their own institutional capacity for advocacy.

Type of Activity. The most common activity organized was again workshops (61% of respondents). Other activities included meeting with church leaders, capacity building/mentoring, sharing materials and supporting the implementation of a public debt audit. In most cases the activity was organized to respond to a need identified through a training needs assessment, although in some instances it was based on anecdotal evidence and in very few cases in response to a staff or constituency request.

Content. The content of activities organized by respondents is slightly more focused on general advocacy skills (57%) and less focused on media and communications (9%), with approximately the same emphasis on advocacy by sector.

Participants. The majority of participants for these activities are staff (55%). Some include partners along with staff (14%) and some organized the workshops specifically for partners (14%). A handful of respondents organized activities for their members, including members of congregations, CBOs and directors of theological institutes.

Follow-up. There has been a wide range of follow-up to these activities. The most common has been monitoring and supporting those who participated in the activity (20%) and enhancing an advocacy strategy (20%), followed by improving the implementation of a strategy (15%), maintaining

communication and networking (15%), and sharing through electronic media (15%). Other follow-up activities cited were conducting research and organizing a TOT.

Level of Difficulty. Most of the advocacy capacity strengthening activities organized were beginner level activities, with a few intermediate and advanced activities. In some cases the level of participants was mixed.

Challenges. Respondents encountered various problems in organizing their activity. The most common related to the selection and availability of participants, particularly of suitable participants and of government officials, and to scheduling the activity. Funding to organize campaigns was also cited as a problem. Other difficulties encountered included:

- changing the mindset of staff
- finding a common language
- connecting to the mission of the church
- dealing with multiple languages
- reconciling different participant expectations
- dealing with a changing political context
- staff turnover after the training
- finding culturally sensitive trainers.

Benefits. Respondents indicated that the most common benefit of the capacity strengthening activity is gaining a better understanding of advocacy concepts and a common understanding within an organization or a sectoral group about the causes of a problem and how to move forward. Capacity strengthening activities have an inherent advocacy aspect because they raise awareness of rights, both in communities and among leaders, and generally strengthen civil society. Respondents indicate that increased networking and sharing are other benefits of such activities, which help to build relationships from which to launch new campaigns. Some respondents also reported that the activities have resulted in improved strategic plans and better program implementation.

Cooperation. Just over half (53%) of respondents that organized a capacity strengthening activity in the last two years indicated they had cooperated with another organization on this activity, although only a handful specified with which organizations. Of these, three respondents indicated they had cooperated with other members of EAA/ACT.

Activities planned over the next six months. Thirteen organizations indicated they plan to organize other capacity strengthening activities in the next six months. In general, the bulk of activities revolve around training; however, a few of them will focus on production of advocacy materials:

- Training of church leaders, staff, and administrators in advocacy; partnership building meeting with Ministry of Health and its provincial offices. (CHAZ, Zambia)
- Advocacy training for staff and network members in the field (CCDB, Bangladesh)
- Peace Module, Voters' Education for the 2010 national elections (NCCP, Philippines)
- Advocacy capacity building, Media campaign, network management (RDRS, Bangladesh)
- Developing module, TOT course and building capacity of CBOs in advocacy (YAKKUM, Indonesia)
- Local advocacy needs assessment in several partner countries for sectoral topics, support to ACT Alliance advocacy strengthening anticipated in 2010 (FCA, Finland)
- RBA training in January for all staff (FELM)
- Human rights training workshop in DRC, February 2010; Ongoing series of workshops on rights-based approaches to development (LWF, Switzerland)
- Production of a tool kit (WACC, Canada)

Activities Funded by EAA, ACT International and ACT Development Members

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had funded advocacy capacity strengthening activities that they did not organize or implement themselves. Although 55% responded in the

affirmative, a number of these point out that they do not have centralized information on these activities, making them difficult to estimate. A range of activities were funded, such as supporting a climate change network, sharing experiences with ecumenical partners in another country, funding a training of trainer's activity, hiring an advocacy officer and supporting EAA plans for capacity building of members.

The activities covered various sectors, including climate change, right to food, health, alternative and rural development, sexual aggression impunity, trade justice and IDPs. In general, these activities targeted medium and top level managers, although the level of difficulty remained mixed.

b. Types of Capacity Strengthening Activities

The responses to the online survey presented above indicate that EAA/ACT members are focusing both on reinforcing their institutional capacity to advocate and that of their partners (for those that work with partners). It appears that when organizations attend capacity building activities, they either opt for workshops or somehow they are limited to workshops as the main way of learning about advocacy. When they organize activities themselves, workshops remains the most frequent type of intervention, but other types of activities are organized more frequently. Participants appear to be mixed in many cases, which suggests either imprecision in the selection of participants or insufficient opportunities for learning to separate participants by their skill level. The challenges and benefits of activities, whether attended or organized, appear similar, although (understandably) the organizers can speak with greater detail about these aspects.

Discussion with members through the follow-up interviews highlighted a number of points related to strengthening capacity to advocate. As expected, in addition to supplying core grants or providing financial assistance, members of EAA/ACT support their partners through a variety of capacity strengthening activities:

- **Partner learning exchange.** A number of EAA/ACT members are promoting sharing of experiences at regional and international meetings, such as PWRDF's 50th anniversary celebrations and CWS-NZ's partner learning exchange. Everybody benefits from opportunities to share experience, including successes and failures, with others doing similar work. "Someone in the next country may be doing the same work and we are trying to reinvent the wheel. It is important to make people aware of what works and what does not." Sharing is a preferred activity among local partners, but as Christian Aid points out, the financial crisis is likely to have curtailed these exchanges: "We are going to be challenged going forward because one of our models has been supporting meetings."
- **Supporting partners to attend international meetings** (and accompanying them). Numerous **respondents** referred to facilitating partner attendance at international meetings, such as the climate change meetings and UN advocacy week.
- **Organizing study tours.** In 2009, 17 participants from four Lebanese women's networks took part in a study tour to Denmark in conclusion of the advocacy capacity building project sponsored by Dan Church Aid. The tour included visits to some of the most prominent women's organizations in Denmark and two meetings with Danish women parliamentarians to learn about their role in promoting Maternity Leave Funds in Denmark. The visitors also met with experts to discuss technical issues related to maternity leave.
- **Promoting a hands-on approach to advocacy.** Every year in March the World Alliance of YMCAs trains young people from six YMCAs from the regions on the workings of the UN Human Rights mechanism. After a week participants do hands-on advocacy work at the Human Rights Council, lobbying their own government delegates. In this manner youth were able to influence the Resolution on the Administration of Juvenile Justice.
- **Developing a training model that can be adapted to a particular context and creating a multiplier effect.** Christian Aid has run a number of workshops and trained trainers who are now in turn running their own workshops. Although advocacy tactics cannot be automatically

transplanted to a different cultural context, many of the principles of good advocacy – such as ensuring legitimacy and participation of the affected group – are valid regardless of the context.

- **Funding alternative projects.** EAA/ACT members are providing funding to enable networks to come together. For example, Christian Aid provided seed funding to the PanAfrican Climate Justice Alliance, a small group that is becoming increasingly imaginative. On the other hand, LWR makes it a point to make small annual contributions to other advocacy organizations for collaborative projects.
- **Promoting networking and maintaining ongoing discussion on issues.** EAA/ACT members help to strengthen advocacy capacity when they assist partner staff to link up with networks working on the same issue in a region. Helping partners talk things through and reflect on their own advocacy approach, including possible outcomes and risks, are important aspects of building advocacy capacity.
- **Providing moral support.** Asked what groups like EAA and ACT contribute to their members, one member responded, "The one thing they offer is for us to know that we are not alone. You are not fighting an isolated battle."

c. Trends

Interviewees shared many examples of how they approach advocacy strengthening. While reading the following it is important to keep in mind that while information on advocacy capacity strengthening activities may not readily available at the central level, much is happening. Respondents indicated this in the online survey and it became even clearer during the interviews.

For example, in addition to offering governance advocacy training and generic advocacy training for staff in the UK, Christian Aid has conducted advocacy training in Israel/OPTs, Sudan, DRC, Uganda and Sierra Leone and with staff in Nicaragua, Jamaica and Honduras. Since 2007, DCA has conducted a series of four weeks of advocacy training in collaboration with Pact in Uganda, Ethiopia, Palestine (West Bank and Gaza), Lebanon, Kyrgyzstan and Honduras. Similarly, LWF can point to advocacy capacity strengthening activities taking place in at least five countries.

"The budget cycle in our country has changed and we need to understand it. We also have a new performance-based financing new project – to assess the performance of all the institutions which we support. Instead of looking at government performance, we want to be able see how we internalize transparency on our own – because we are asking about accountability, but how accountable are we?" CHAZ, Zambia

- **There exists within the EAA/ACT membership capacity to build advocacy skills in a number of sectoral areas.** For example,
 - Caritas recently organized a workshop that focused on advocacy to increase access to early testing and treatment for children living with HIV or HIV/TB Co-infection and to increase coverage of Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV.
 - In Bolivia, MAP International has done capacity building of judges on correct procedures for handling cases of sexual aggression from start to end.
 - In Zambia, CHAZ is planning to train all staff involved in advocacy to do budget tracking, including church leaders and technical staff working in mission health facilities, who interact with district health offices, because they participate in the planning and the implementation in CHAZ health facilities.
 - The Christian Conference of Asia has asked NCCP to co-sponsor a human rights training.
- **Some EAA/ACT members are focusing their attention on building the advocacy capacity of their members and congregations,** particularly if they are a network or a council of churches. For example, at the next Ecumenical Advocacy Days (March 2010 in Washington DC), Church World Service will be targeting grassroots organizers and denominational advocacy people to

raise their awareness on certain issues and engage them in campaigns. In some cases organizations are encouraging relationship building between their constituencies and global partners, such as UCC's Middle East Peace trip in June 2009.

- **Others continue to advocate for greater advocacy by churches.** In October 2009 LWF held a two-day meeting to discuss the theological basis of advocacy that resulted in a 'Call for Churches Critically to Engage with Governments' on accountability issues. AACC is planning to step up advocacy work related to HIV/AIDS by capacity building of church leaders for advocacy.
- **Some organizations continue to build capacity at the local level.** Groups like LWF work directly with CBOs and building advocacy capacity at the local level. For example, in Uganda, LWF works with Community Based Advocacy Groups to help people at the village level organize themselves and begin advocating for their rights. In Cambodia, LWF facilitated the first National Level workshop on Rights Based Advocacy with PACT/API and has hosted the Special UN Reporter to visit LWF project areas and learn about land rights violations. LWF also facilitates linkages with rights organizations and NGOs for awareness and advocacy campaigns.
- **There is a general movement for organizations working abroad to support the advocacy work of local partners,** to the extent that a couple of respondents indicated that the focus of a network like EAA should be on building advocacy capacity rather than doing the advocacy directly. For some time there has been a growing awareness among all actors that local partners provide legitimacy to international groups. Additionally, there seemed to be a sub-text to the interviews suggesting that advocacy should be increasingly rooted in the direct needs and priorities of communities. Organizations like NCA are already making a commitment to 'rooted advocacy.'

d. Good Practices

- **Looking at the long term.** In a few cases organizations and networks are thinking about advocacy capacity development of partners in the long term and trying different models. For example, in Central Asia APRODEV has initiated a long-term advocacy capacity strengthening program of partners, which, while expensive, has developed into a joint advocacy program. A number of organizations are participating in this effort, including ICCO, DCA, Christian Aid, NCA, FCA, EED and BFW. In Ethiopia DCA accompanied a network for over a year whereas in Zambia DCA provided regular capacity building at intervals over six months – to give only a few examples.
- **Focusing on building capacity to lobby government bodies and multinational organizations.** Examples include CIDSE's work to raise awareness on how to do advocacy work at the multilateral level and APRODEV workshops for local partners on how the EU works and how to approach the EU institutions. In a separate example, Christian Aid organized a workshop for Palestinian and Israeli human rights groups to learn how to lobby the EU. The initiative included members of the commission, parliamentarians, and delegates of member states. There were some interesting results from the initiative, such as three Israeli organizations coming together to fund an individual to represent their common interests. In a follow-up meeting in Bethlehem in November 2009, participants discussed specific approaches to use with the EU, such as the issue of third state responsibility and the extent to which EU bilateral agreements with Israel make the EU complicit with Israeli human rights violations. Similarly, LWR supported advocacy training in Colombia for their partners, which in part consisted in learning how USAID works and how Colombian organizations and rural communities can engage USAID on an advocacy level. Finally, the Christian World Service (New Zealand) National director attended an advocacy workshop that allowed participants to analyze recent government announcements and statements on changes to NZAID.

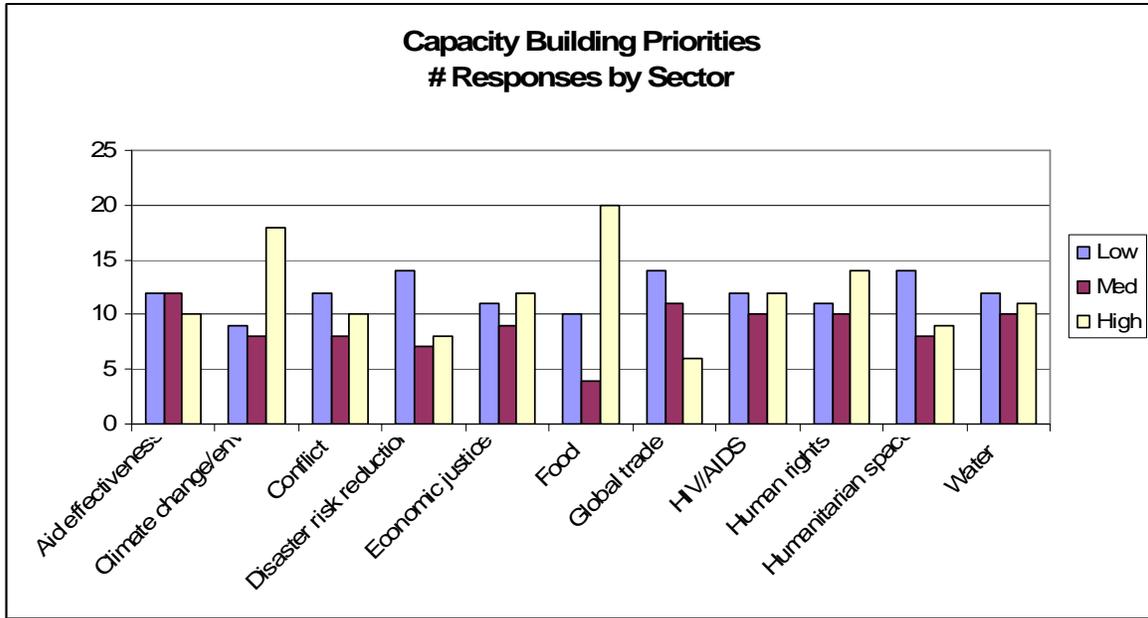
- **Using scheduled international events as opportunities to strengthen capacity.** The long planning process and pre-conference meetings that accompany large international events scheduled years in advance can be used to support and accompany local partners as they learn to engage with their country governments and learn negotiation techniques. A case in point is the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. Various APRODEV members accompanied their partners to pre-meetings from Accra to Bangkok. As one member said, "Had there not been preparatory workshops, they would not have engaged in this issue." APRODEV members have expressed excitement over the capacity building model used for climate change and Copenhagen.
- **Maximizing support for research that informs policy.** Progressio's policy/advocacy team tries to draw on partner experience and initiate research or evidence gathering that will inform the organization's overall advocacy plans. Take the example of water within the context of Copenhagen: Progressio has undertaken a serious study about water usage in poor communities in Peru, hiring an external expert and partnering with a local technical institute. More informally, Progressio encourages partners to articulate their views by seeking their input on certain issues. "We ask them, would you have a particular position on this, or an example to illustrate this issue?"
- **Integrating advocacy into overseas programs.** A number of EAA/ACT members are increasing their focus on advocacy and on strengthening their own capacity and that of their partners. For example, over the last few years Christian Aid has been going through a process to integrate advocacy work into their overseas program, whereas before advocacy was seen as a separate program. New structures are emerging such as CWS' Global Advocacy Task Force.
- **Separating out capacity building and funding relationships enhances learning.** In an example of joint capacity building of APRODEV members in Central Asia, ICCO contracted INTRAC to conduct capacity building with partners for a period of two years, both in organizational development and some advocacy. The aim was to separate the capacity building relationship, which requires open discussion of institutional capacity, from the funding relationship so that partners could feel comfortable talking about their weaknesses. In retrospect, the partners learned to trust INTRAC and were confident that their findings were presented to the donors in the aggregate.
- **Supporting group processes is effective for encouraging the accumulation of trust.** Group analysis and processes are perceived to be an important factor in strengthening advocacy capacity. In Malawi, the members of the ACT Forum have been working together since 2002. The group is quite active, meeting every two months, and has joint research programs and peer monitoring where staff of one organization visit, monitor and learn from another. LWR points out that when groups come together to advocate on an issue it takes time for them to feel comfortable with each other. There are no short-cuts to building trust and partners must be given enough time for trust to grow.

4. Advocacy Capacity Strengthening Priorities

After examining current member advocacy capacity strengthening activities and taken into consideration the challenges they face, it is now time appropriate to review what EAA/ACT members perceive to be their capacity building priorities.

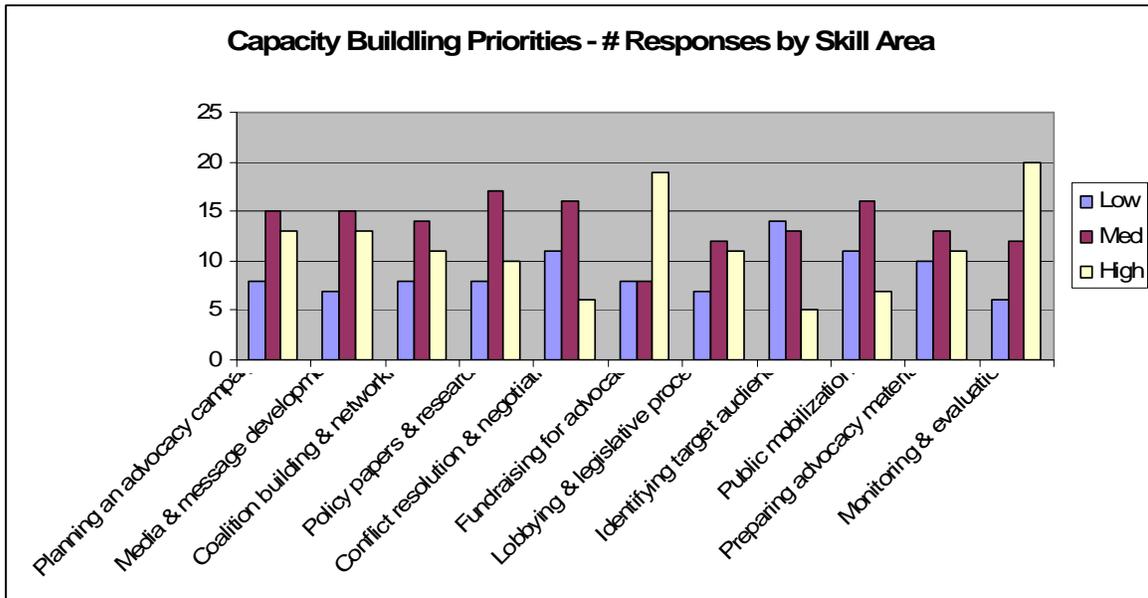
a. Priority Sectors and Skills

In the online survey, respondents were asked if they were interested in receiving advocacy capacity strengthening and to rate their priorities by sector and by skill area on a scale of 0 (not a need) to 5 (high priority). The graph below presents a simplified version of the results, where responses of 0-1 have been combined to represent the category of no/low priority, 2-3 as medium priority and 4-5 as high priority.



The majority of respondents indicated an interest in capacity building of advocacy skills. The graph above suggests that respondents assign greater priority to capacity strengthening in the sectors of food, climate change and human rights. There is less need expressed for capacity strengthening in disaster risk reduction, global trade, and humanitarian space. When asked if there were any other sectors requiring advocacy capacity strengthening, there was an interest in health (three responses) as well as gender, Palestinian refugees, and financial crisis (1 response each).

Similarly, EAA/ACT members were asked to rate their interest in receiving strengthening in 11 advocacy capacity skill areas. The responses are illustrated in the same simplified manner below:



The above graph suggests that there is significant interest in skills related to monitoring and evaluation of advocacy as well as fundraising for advocacy. There is also considerable interest in

acquiring skills related to lobbying, public mobilization, preparing policy papers, and conflict resolution. Respondents are least interested in skills related to identifying the target audience.

"The impact question is always there for advocacy, for any organization."

The responses to the online survey provide a clear picture of member capacity priorities. From the sectoral perspective, priorities are in line with EAA's current campaigns of food and HIV/AIDS. From the skills perspective, there is a definite demand for capacity strengthening in advocacy evaluation, an area that ACT is already contemplating.

During the interviews, members had a lot to say about advocacy capacity building needs and priorities. While some organizations are quite sophisticated in their ability to do advocacy, the majority expressed that some kind of introduction to advocacy is very useful. As one person interviewed expressed:

"I participated in a workshop on advocacy two years ago. Until then, I had not analyzed how a certain situation could be changed by doing advocacy, by analyzing stakeholders and thinking how people could be influenced. It was really, really helpful and many members would appreciate something like that, even if it is not a workshop, but something to trigger a discussion."

Caritas echoes the view: "Within the Caritas Confederation and with other Catholic organizations, many members and organizations are so focused on service delivery that they do not understand the principles and techniques of advocacy. Also, some organizations located in countries in which democracy is not strong believe that it is not possible to influence legislators, policy-makers, decision-makers. Thus it is important to give a sense of empowerment and help members to strategize and build capacity for advocacy. It is also important to help them define specific advocacy goals and objectives."

b. General Issues around Capacity Strengthening

There is a definite need for capacity building of members and their partners around advocacy.

Topics for capacity strengthening raised repeatedly by respondents included advocacy planning, evaluation of advocacy and participating in country reporting. Other suggestions included the need for small organizations to learn to avoid taking on too many issues and getting sidetracked. "There is a tendency for FBOs to work on something because we should, and not be very strategic." At the same time, we are reminded that capacity strengthening is not limited to training: "Advocacy is not only for specialists, it is something that can be done in daily life. Although more professional training is needed, this aspect of advocacy should not be forgotten."

Organizations need to be realistic about what their current partners can do and may need to look for new partners if they want to support advocacy. Many local organizations are doing service delivery or local community advocacy and may not have the time or the right people for high-level international negotiations. Keep in mind that not all organizations may want to do advocacy.

It is important to support ecumenical advocacy. For example, Progressio is supportive of those who commission theological reflection papers with academic pieces aimed at church leadership, hoping to provide them with food for thought and reflection, i.e., to help church leaders at the theological level. LWF suggests that not all churches differentiate between the need for improved services and the need to change policy.

One respondent points out, "It is very helpful for smaller groups to have a mapping and an understanding of resources available, and to be able to link advocacy efforts at the different levels. In one case in Indonesia, there was a coordinated effort from the grassroots to the national and international levels. Advocates were effective because an international organization and a newspaper helped expose the case." Capacity building initiatives are dependent on the context of every country

and the particular qualities and views of local leaders, so having many tools is not effective. It is more effective to link the grassroots with the higher levels and help them in their struggle to expose local powers to the global arena. One of the criticisms of advocacy work is its lack of effectiveness when groups choose to work alone.

An important aspect of strengthening advocacy capacity of members is to share strategies to avoid duplication. Resources are increasingly scarce –and advocacy need not always be an expensive endeavor.

Various respondents expressed the hope that capacity building will be a part of the future program of ACT, one that promotes a mutual learning process. They see ACT as an effective platform for addressing issues that affect us all. There is a need to continue networking and sharing what is happening elsewhere. There is also a need to encourage ACT members to conduct research.

"Our capacity is still at the infancy level. It would be nice to conduct an analysis of advocacy competitiveness, identify gaps in capacity and fill these so that members within ACT are able to do advocacy or conduct research."

c. Building Capacity around Research and Writing

A theme echoed by various respondents was the need to build capacity to collect and present sound information. They made the following suggestions:

Help partners collect sound information and write good reports. Partners often need to learn what a good information-gathering process is and how to produce a useful strategic report. People writing reports need to consider the audience and whom they are trying to influence. Realistically, what information will be needed to achieve their objective, what is the best methodology and how much will it cost to write the report? As WACC points out, "Advocacy works a lot better when it is evidence based."

Help partners document and disseminate their research. All too often, groups begin documenting a problem from scratch because the work of others has not been made available to them. They start from scratch when there is no need to do so. In Ethiopia the members of the climate change network are doing various studies. All of them will be compiled into one document and posted on the internet. The network plans to disseminate a similar publication every year.

Encourage partners to write reports. If there is a UN convention related to an issue, states are likely required to submit regular reports on their compliance with the convention. Civil society organizations are either included in the government report preparation process or they prepare shadow reports monitoring government performance and if necessary criticizing the government reports. For example, UNAIDS encourages countries to put together an annual monitoring progress report, but often civil society and/or FBOs are not included in the process. EAA encourages FBOs to get involved in this process. Preparing these reports provide an opportunity for organizations with emerging advocacy and policy capacity to practice articulating arguments and raise their voice.

Build capacity in practical skills, such as preparing briefing or talking points. It is all part of the critical analysis process. To prepare briefing points one has to think through one's objectives and factors that will influence the target audience.

d. Other Suggestions for Capacity Strengthening

Enable people to come together. Christian Aid points to the example of a workshop in Malawi in 2002. During the workshop participants identified that they wanted to change the Constitution, but thought it was problematic. Christian Aid did not fund the campaign, but provided the space and an

enabling environment for the advocates to meet. Eventually the President did not extend term of office so the project was abandoned.

Work efficiently: cooperate and support networks. Since funding is scarce, it is important to take advantage of every opportunity. Dedicated agencies that can take the lead on specific issues should be identified and made point organizations. Another way to increase impact is to fund networks and help to bring partners together.

How to build advocacy capacity of members?

"It comes down to providing training, resources and having a common articulated goal, which is really important."

Build up advocacy capacity of people whose job it is to support partners. Some of the EAA/ACT members with regional and country offices expressed that while they have advocacy capacity in their headquarters, their regional staff are often lacking in advocacy skills and experience. For this reason, it is important to build them up so that they can properly support partners.

Learn to hire the right people for policy and advocacy work. Non-policy organizations have people hiring for positions that are not lobbying or campaign experts. Sometimes organizations intentionally seek to avoid hiring campaign professionals. In the long run, however, it is not beneficial to the campaign. Organizations hiring policy or advocacy officers need hiring guidelines and criteria.

Whether within member organizations or their partners, avoid under-resourcing advocacy staff because they have not included advocacy planning in their budget process. Grant-making and support organizations do a disservice to partners when they do not pro-actively encourage partners to secure adequate resources for advocacy initiatives.

5. Challenges to Member Advocacy

Any discussion on how to strengthen advocacy of EAA and ACT members is bound to turn to the challenges that members encounter in the course of their work. The following section discusses general challenges that members face in the course of their work. Since most EAA/ACT members work with partners, there were sufficient views about partner dynamics to justify a separate section below dedicated to that topic.

a. General Challenges to Member Advocacy

During the discussions there were four main recurring themes related to general challenges to member advocacy. These are not likely to come as a surprise to any member of EAA or ACT, but it is good to review as part of a strategic reflection on strengthening advocacy capacity of members. The themes included:

- dealing with scarce resources
- forging a common understanding of advocacy
- defining the role of churches in advocacy
- connecting with communities

General advocacy. Although advocacy has become a catchphrase around the world, one challenge for partners is the concept of advocacy itself. There is lack of clarity on what advocacy means and what specific action can be taken. "Some people are allergic to that term" and "People tend to think it is about denunciation" are quotes that express a common impression among many EAA/ACT members. These feel that more work needs to be done to promote a common understanding of advocacy concepts and reduce the negative connotations associated with the term:

"A lot of church partners are not on that page yet. They need basic training or understanding on why it is useful that links advocacy to theological concepts. In the Lutheran Family there is the concept of prophetic diakonia, naming and shaming, yet church partners do not make

that link. It has to be biblically grounded for them. There is a lot of writing on it, but the parish people may not see it."

Increasing scarcity of resources. Although not something that can be addressed through capacity strengthening, the issue of reduced resources is very much on members' minds. As one group describes, "Northern groups have been experiencing major cutbacks for the last two years and have had to do a lot of reflecting as a result. The question arises as to how we can produce the same quality of work when we no longer have experts on staff. It is frustrating. We have to change the way we are doing our work." One respondent described going from 115 staff to 20 over the last 15 years, a dramatic reduction and yet, "The workload is the same."

"Sometimes people say if you talk to politicians it is advocacy, if you talk to the church people it is advocacy, if you talk to the communities it is advocacy. I am confused. We need to focus on what we mean by advocacy. Is it writing stories? Visiting politicians in Washington?"

Role of the churches in advocacy. Ecumenical groups that are active in advocacy express frustration when it comes to the role of the churches. On several occasions respondents express the sentiment that "the churches here are for the most parts fence sitters." It is clear that the churches need a better understanding of advocacy and increased political will in order to become more active. The perception is that many people within the church structures do not understand the concept and importance of advocacy. They 'have no clue about MDGs' and do not distinguish between absence of services (requiring extra services) and lack of *access* to services (requiring a policy change). Churches are described by members as needing to work internally on issues such as treatment of disabled people and violence towards children. "Most churches, even in the north, have issues they have not dealt with properly." The perception of members is that attitudes can only be changed through ongoing discussion and self-realization.

Advocacy by churches tends to be weakest in countries where Christians are a minority. For example, in Indonesia the role of the churches has been historically apolitical. They are reluctant to criticize the authorities because they might make waves. As YAKKUM points out, "That is why we are working with the interfaith group, so that our voices can be stronger. Interfaith network in Indonesia have experienced a number of successes."

In Palestine churches represent 2% of the population at most and members perceive their role to be marginal. On the other hand, they have lots of spiritual and other powers that they are not using, because in a sense they don't want to get into trouble with the State of Israel and therefore they prefer to be on the safe side. They fear getting into trouble and do not have the numbers to resist pressure. The problem is not only with local churches, but when church delegations visit the region and go back home their countries and little to help. "They maybe mention Palestine and Israel in their Christmas homily. Their observations in Palestine do not translate into advocacy with Jewish groups."

Some organizations like YMCA have only realized in recent years how important advocacy is. They feel the need to reinforce their regional structures in advocacy capacity. Regional structures are important because regional events feed in to international conferences. "Developing a global advocacy framework is on the top of our list." Organizations like YMCA will need to develop protocols around advocacy. They will also need to conceptualize how to do advocacy as a membership movement.

The reaction from church groups suggests they are aware of these perceptions and the response is personal: "The thing that worries me is the view that we in the churches are not addressing these matters with the proper level of seriousness. I am trying." In all fairness to the churches, those within are dealing with a complex structure and trying to find their way through. NCCP in the Philippines is composed of dissimilar churches, which can be a challenge to advocacy. Throughout the years NCCP has compiled pronouncements, so when the council releases a new pronouncement, it can either refer

to a previous pronouncement or a biblical passage that justifies NCCP action. Member churches are independent and they can opt to disassociate themselves from a statement sent out by the Secretary General. NCCP has instituted a mechanism facilitating the issuance of new pronouncements as long as they do not conflict with previous ones. IOCC in the US agrees that having an opt-in/opt-out option for declarations makes it easier for complex church structures to participate in advocacy.

Connecting with communities. Whether it is linking the international and the grassroots level, connecting a home audience to a community in need of assistance halfway across the globe, or simply reaching out to one's own congregation, the challenge of making connections with communities in order to support advocacy is very much on the minds of the EAA/ACT members. Advocates are challenged when they lack a physical presence in an area, do not understand how advocacy works in a foreign context, or need to mobilize audiences as the following examples highlight:

"I think the biggest problem for so many of our members is that they lack capacity in so many areas."

- LWR points out that it is very difficult to do advocacy without a direct presence in the affected area. "We have staff in Colombia who can tell members of the US Congress about their direct experiences. We also do advocacy work in northern Uganda – pushing for people's return from the camps – and there is a bill before Congress. The challenge is that we do not have programs in northern Uganda. We may be asked a question but have no one to call to on the ground to verify numbers. We need to work closely with groups like LWF, which does have programs there. But there is a disconnect between advocacy and the program."
- Most northern agencies do advocacy in their home countries, but as LWR points out: if a member wants to support an advocacy effort in a country other than their own, how do they go about doing it? How do they even learn how to do it? Intra-country advocacy is already taking place, for example with groups from the Philippines and Palestine making declarations about the recent Canadian government funding cuts of the Kairos network. The question is whether there are mechanisms to allow potential advocates to learn about a contest and to facilitate this type of initiative.
- In DRC when it comes to gender-based violence there is clearly a need for advocates to say, 'we cannot just respond to certain violations, we need to something about them.' However, people who have grown up with a problem in an unstable situation find it sometimes difficult to think about what could be done to change it. "It is clear for those who come from outside that certain elements or ways of dealing with each other should not be considered a normal part of life, they are violations and we should tackle them. In certain ways some northern members may be a little more diplomatic, while southern members are more straightforward."
- Advocates may start a wonderful campaign and get completely overwhelmed and everything falls apart. One of the challenges is to raise sufficient consciousness in the constituencies to drive the campaign. Churches in South Africa are also confronting the rise of televangelism, which alienates people by offering them a pie in the sky. As a result people tend to be content with the injustices that are inflicted upon them, hoping that God will provide for them. Liberation theology is difficult to communicate.

Minor themes that arose during the discussion of challenges to ecumenical advocacy related to the mixed level of partners, the challenges of coordinating around a campaign, and the difficulty of retaining good advocacy staff:

Capacity for local partners to advocate can be extremely mixed.

Some EAA/ACT members are working in areas where there is very limited capacity for local communities to advocate. As LWF Uganda points out "Awareness that you have rights and can advocate is very low, especially among former IDPs who have lived in camps for many years. We have not encountered challenges in terms of being stopped or threatened, or anything like that. The challenges are capacity and awareness, including among duty bearers." On the other hand, some partners have very high level skills. CWS-NZ reminds us that

some of their partners are more sophisticated than they. Progressio deals with a wide range, from environmental think tanks to sex worker support groups that provide a coordinating and mouthpiece role for sex workers around questions of their rights and HIV/AIDS.

Respondents said that **the most common challenge to cooperation is lack of resources**, closely followed by lack of time and adequate staffing. Other challenges cited were:

- different policy context and political positioning (for example with those who are providing services and must use a collaborative approach to working with government)
- moving quickly for advocacy in the midst of slow bureaucratic processes
- competition among organizations
- getting the right identity balance between the individual organization and the network or coalition
- different organizational cultures
- developing a joint advocacy strategy
- different agendas and philosophies

Coordination around campaigns has a mixed history. Sometimes it has been difficult, like during the Make Poverty History campaign. It was a good effort, but also painful and there is still resistance to coordination as a result. The trade justice movement: has brought a lot of large and small groups together, including trade unions, FBOs and many southern groups. Another organization refers to "branding wars" and tensions over strategy, for example on how to engage with government and whether or not to mobilize public support or just focus on a media event.

Retaining advocacy staff. LWF Cambodia reports having great trouble finding and keeping qualified Advocacy Coordinators and Officers in their main office and for field offices. "The job comes with fears of threats and harassment from powerful people and the government. Some community partners have been harassed and even jailed over land rights issues. Without good staff it is hard to network and engage in higher level advocacy."

Similarly, a year after 27 participants completed an intensive four-week advocacy training activity organized by DCA in Uganda, an evaluation found that fully 50% of the participants had moved on to other organizations. While the advocacy capacity remains in Uganda, the benefits of the advocacy capacity strengthening activity are not going where DCA intended and as a result the organization is developing guidelines to improve the selection of training candidates.

With the above discussion of general challenges faced by EAA/ACT members completed, it is possible to turn our attention to the topic about which respondents had the most to say – that of partnership dynamics.

b. Partner Dynamics

From the amount of discussion that took place around partnerships, it is clear that working in partnership is a cross-cutting theme of great interest to the large majority of EAA/ACT members. In today's global world, advocacy is more than ever a collaborative effort. The main issues raised around partnerships related to:

- agenda setting and conflicts
- empowerment of southern partners
- coordination

Agenda setting and conflicts. Northern and southern partners alike are aware that the selection of an advocacy agenda is a charged issue. Many northern respondents highlight that it is crucial for northern partners to avoid imposing their advocacy agenda on local organizations. They point out, for example, that while the Climate Change Conference has been an excellent opportunity for strengthening advocacy capacity of partners, climate change represents only ONE of many issues that southern countries area dealing with. "The challenge is to find a development agenda that everyone can agree on." One respondent went as far as to say, "Some of the southern partners - not all - would say that all policies are enacted in the north." Conversely, not all northern organizations are convinced that the campaigns conceptualized by membership organizations like EAA are relevant to their countries. Finally, when southern groups adopt northern agenda issues, they may be putting themselves at risk, not least of which is the raising of expectations that will not be met. As one northern respondent explained, "They raise their interest and then let them stand out in the cold."

The selection of an advocacy agenda is not always thorny. Many issues relate to crosscutting problems that interest or affect many people. However, even in those cases sometimes there exist diverse views on how these issues should be raised in different societies. Put bluntly, the Americans think the Europeans are too radical, while the Europeans have the same view about other groups. The more radical stance is often (and understandably) due to the fact that a population is severely affected by a problem that threatens their life, livelihood or identity. However, cultural norms also come into play: some southern groups would prefer their partners to be more radical – while the northerners are concerned about toning down a dramatic message to avoid losing credibility with target decision makers and audiences at home.

"Capacity building is not only what you need to do to implement a project the most efficient way."

In some cases, northern and southern groups may have opposing stances. For example, international organizations working on the EU position vis-à-vis Israel and Palestine will take an almost opposite stance from that of their local partners. "What they are trying to do will not work in Europe and will not change anyone's position in Brussels." Rather than accusing the EU of supporting Israel, groups in Europe are looking for ways to accuse the EU of violating their own stated values.

Empowerment of southern partners. One of the challenges that respondents raised is that southern partners do not feel they are being heard. Partners on both sides are looking for ways to breach the divide and a number of respondents are developing practices that empower southern groups and encourage them to formulate their own agenda and advocacy stances. For example, in the run-up to Copenhagen, a representative of Bread for the World traveled to several countries asking partners to come up with their own declarations to be compiled and distributed in a publication at the summit. Similarly, CIDSE has been consciously reflecting on how northern groups can ensure a common advocacy agenda, testing different approaches. The organization found that joint north-south working groups worked to a certain extent. However, it was not clear to what extent the resulting agenda was a common one, whether there was sufficient mutual benefit or whether it was the best way for southern groups to influence northern policy. Another approach used by CIDSE is to identify partners already working on the same priorities, making for a more equal partnership.

Agenda issues aside, getting the right relationship balance between partners can be very challenging. On the one hand, smaller groups may be reluctant to work with an international organization because they do not feel empowered. They may feel overwhelmed when the international organization comes in with experts. On the other hand, there are examples when smaller organizations clearly enjoy being accompanied and supported by larger organizations. For partnerships to work, one has to be open to collaboration and comfortable acknowledging any weaknesses and learning from those who have experience.

This last point raises the question of who has the experience. As CWS-NZ points out, "Advocacy is something that many of our partners already do well. They can learn best in south-to-south conversations. Sometimes the richer countries in the world are unwilling to pick up the sharper

political analysis and challenge which they share." This is particularly true when local advocacy veterans are asked to listen to donor 'experts' or participate in basic advocacy workshops. This is not to say that imported technical assistance and training are not useful – many cultures confuse activism and advocacy and benefit from an introduction to current international advocacy practices – but well-intentioned training activities need to be grounded in a solid understanding of local historical struggles for change. In contrast, southern partners have a responsibility to express their views if they are not receptive to certain capacity strengthening initiatives and not remain passive. Take for example the following view,

"Often we do a lot of work and do not do follow up. People come because they want to please donors and partners. If we attend workshops, it is like going to international meetings. Fantastic, but come home and there is no time to follow up."

These are the types of situation that northern donors want to avoid. And one of the best ways of doing that is to listen to groups and really empower them to speak frankly about their needs.

Coordination. In a curious coincidence, this study discovered two cases of the same participants attending advocacy workshops conducted by two different EAA/ACT members. While the workshops were not identical and it is not necessarily objectionable for people to attend multiple workshops on the same topic, the occurrence does highlight certain points that should be taken into consideration by agencies planning advocacy training:

- **organizing training events together.** This means being familiar enough with other organizations to know whether they are planning activities not only this year, but in the next two or three years.
- **sharing training materials** (particularly if they are not in English)
- **conducting careful selection** of training participants, including finding out previous workshops attended.

Coordination around advocacy capacity strengthening is beginning to emerge, as exemplified with ACT Forum in Central Asia and in Palestine, and it is these examples that need to be followed.

Other coordination issues raised relate to donor visits and sharing of information. Encouraging advocates and key decision makers to visit an area and meet with affected communities is an important advocacy tactic. It is also very demanding on southern partners. In order to avoid placing too many demand on local partners caused by too many visitors, CWS-NZ uses a round-table model in which partners travel to a country at the same time. In this way, the local partner can provide a single update to all their international partners, who often go out on field trips together. All too often, this is not the case and one delegation is arriving as the other is just leaving. As one respondent said of northern NGOs, "They mention good coordination at the grassroots level, but they do not do it at their level." Other forms of coordination such as standardization of reporting and monitoring requirements for southern partners can indirectly enable a southern partner to free up more resources for advocacy.

6. Information Sharing & Electronic Advocacy

Advocacy is heavily dependent on information. This includes information about the causes and impact of a problem that are used to formulate policy positions and influence audiences but also information that helps us to identify allies and share experiences so that we can benefit from the wisdom of others who have gone before us.

This section has been added to encourage the ongoing reflection within the EAA and ACT membership about information sharing needs and strategies by presenting some of the points that were raised during the follow up interviews. The author recognizes that EAA and ACT are already thinking about these issues and have been trying to find solutions.

- There is consensus that **online information gathering and dissemination within the EAA/ACT family needs to be improved** and that information dissemination will become more important as funds for meetings become scarcer. For example, there is no readily available information on member or forum activities, making it difficult for ecumenical advocacy groups working on the same issues to identify and contact each other.
- **EAA and ACT staff experience difficulties in getting information from their members that they can use for advocacy.** To give an example, ACT had difficulty in getting concrete feedback on the impact of WFP programs for a consultation in Rome.
- **Ability to organize action on short notice is not well developed and previous efforts have been disorganized.**
- **Information sharing at the country or regional level through the ACT Forums is considered very helpful.**
- **Small organizations feel an acute need for information,** particularly if they do not have people on the ground. However, they will not use just any source and feel more comfortable if they are familiar with the organization putting out the information (better yet if it is an ecumenical group).
- **There is some interest in newsletters as a way of communicating information** on current events and new resources.
- **Cultural norms regarding the internet differ from country to country.** As MAP International points out, "We don't have a culture of looking for allies on the internet."
- **Some church groups need at least six weeks of lead time** to disseminate information to their congregations.
- **Some groups are still struggling with inter-office communication, while others are dealing with complex networks.** As SACC (South Africa) points out, "We have 26 member churches representing 18 million people. We are trying to get a message to the 18 million by talking to the 26. Most have access to emails. But how does information get from the General Secretary of a church to the Synodical or diocesan structure?"
- **Some members have excellent ties to the media and to broadcast media but have not prepared a media mapping** showing how information on their campaigns can be disseminated, through newspapers, newsletters, online publications, community radio, church radio and TV stations, etc.

Email

- **Email is considered an effective means of communication,** but at the same people get overwhelmed with emails and it is difficult (if not impossible) to assess the usefulness of email correspondence.
- **Local partners of members do not currently receive information from networks like EAA or ACT.**

Electronic Advocacy

- **Electronic advocacy is an emerging field** but organizations do not know much about it and they are limited in their ability to use it by the technical capacity of their staff.
- **An organization like YAKKUM (Indonesia) envisions direct internet connection with CBOs by next year.** They also try to introduce cellular phones to connect simple people so they can share information on problems via SMS. At the highest level they use Facebook and want to promote IT as a tool to the people and invite solidarity.
- **Some groups have used electronic advocacy** but feel these have limitations, "Unless people sign up for an RSS feed, they won't get it."

Intranet

- **A number of members strongly support the idea of an intranet for shared information** that would make many more resources available to members on advocacy work.
- Finding the right technological response is a challenge. In response to member request for such a platform, ACT made an earlier attempt to set up an information sharing mechanism with SharePoint. However, this turned out not to be convenient.
- **The APRODEV climate change working group has had a server on Google** where all documents are located for member to access. They also receive a weekly alert about new items posted.
- **The Ecumenical Water Network is also working on a resource database.**

7. In-House Resources

One of the objectives of this study is to begin to identify EAA/ACT member in-house resources related to strengthening advocacy capacity, including training, manuals, and campaign materials.

Training Capacity

Twenty survey respondents stated their organization had some form of in-house training capacity related to advocacy. At the other end of the spectrum, four said they had none. Five agencies specifically stated they had the capacity to train field staff, members or target people and two others mentioned they had in-house training of trainer capabilities. Two others noted they had staff that specialized in advocacy: an Advocacy Manager (Christian Aid) and Learning Facilitator for Lobbying and Advocacy (ICCO). Finally, one organization indicated it had an online course under development (Norwegian Church Aid). Respondents shared an impressive list of in-house areas of expertise, as follows:

Advocacy methodology/skill areas:

- General advocacy: how to identify issues, develop strategies (CARD, FAC, CREAS, CA)
- Advocacy evaluation: developing frameworks and processes (Christian Care); Evaluation processes (EED, CREAS)
- Strategic Planning (CREAS)
- Advocacy in UN and other international policy forums (LWF)
- Use of media in advocacy efforts (LWR)
- Approaching Congressional representatives (LWR)
- Community Organizing (CREAS)
- Rights-based approach (FELM)

Issue areas:

- Water (MECC)
- Gender issues (PWRDF, CREAS) and women's rights (NCCP)
- External debt (CLAI)
- Conflict resolution (FCA)
- Voter's Education (NCCP)
- Peace-building (NCCP)
- Environment; disaster/development management; (NCCP, CREAS, CA)
- Ecumenical Movement (ELCC, CECG, CREAS)
- Mining (CREAS)

Advocacy Training Manuals

While five respondents specified they had no training manuals available to share, 15 replied in the affirmative. However, it was not always clear if the manuals were for internal use only or could be adapted. Some agencies did not give specific titles of manuals because they had too many to mention

(e.g. DanChurchAid has many manuals developed with PACT), while others gave specific examples as presented below.

Advocacy methodology/skill areas:

- ABCs of Advocacy (DCA, English and Arabic, January 2010)
- Advocacy for Beginners (CREAS, likely Spanish)
- Advocacy planning: Strategy Guidance (Christian Aid); Structure of FCA advocacy plan (FCS); Rough Guide to Country Advocacy (CIDSE)
- Advocacy lobbying (ICCO, draft version available)
- Working with the media (LWR); Media Advocacy Training Toolkit (WACC)
- Defense of Just Causes - Self empowerment (MAP International)
- Working with youth (LWF)
- Advocacy in UN and other international policy forums (LWF)
- TOT: Manual for Facilitators of Advocacy Training Sessions, (BfW/WOLA/CEDPA)
- Manuals for graduates of Public Advocacy for church leaders of the Institute of Training Studies. (CREAS)

Issue Areas:

- Reconciliation and peace-building (toolkit available on Caritas website)
- Peace Module (NCCP); Culture of Peace (CECG)
- Gender issues: LCCB Human Rights and Gender Manual (CHAZ); 'Mission Possible': A Gender and Media Advocacy Training Toolkit (WACC)
- Health (YAKKUM/ Christian Foundation for Public Health)
- HIV-AIDS (LWF)
- Climate justice (toolkit to be available on Caritas website); climate change, (LWF)
- Ecology (NCCP)
- FWS Development Module (NCCP) [Faith, Witness and Service]

Campaign Materials

Participants were asked about any campaign materials their agencies had to share (draft letters, games, posters, online courses, multi-media materials). There were a variety of responses ranging from 'none/not much' (nine respondents) to 'multiple/too many to list/see website' (three respondents). In addition one agency noted it had materials but they were not easily shared because they were all in Finnish, while another added that its materials were tailored to a specific geographic area.

Respondents with more specific information mentioned campaign materials for the following issue areas:

- Right to food (BfA, CWS-NZ)
- Climate change/climate justice (BfA, CWS-NZ);
- Peace-building (Caritas, CECG, WACC)
- Health: YAKKUM/ Christian Foundation for Public Health
- HIV/AIDS (Caritas, CECG, Difäm)
- Migration (Caritas)
- Trade, (CWS-NZ)
- Debt (CWS-NZ)
- Human Rights (NCCP)
- Elections (WACC)

Depending on the agency, campaign materials are available in many forms, including policy papers; postcards, letters and campaign widgets; audit reports; posters; church bulleting inserts, videos and books. In additions some agencies have posted their materials on websites (e.g., Caritas, Difäm, CWS).

8. Capacity Strengthening Opportunities

Throughout this document there is the recurring theme of maximizing existing resources to achieve common goals. To this end, there are a number of meetings, events and networks that could be used as opportunities to strengthen advocacy capacity of EAA and ACT members. For example, at the 2008 International HIV/AIDS Conference (IAC) in Mexico last year EAA and others organized a special faith-based pre-conference day of meetings that was considered very productive by attendees.

As an illustration of available opportunities, the following presents a selection of events mentioned in the interviews and/or surveys. (Dates and location are included when available.)

International Meetings:

- International AIDS Conference (July 2010, Vienna)
- World Council of YMCAs (July 2010, Hong Kong)
- Global Forum on Disaster Risk Reduction,(UN annual event)
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (December 2009, Copenhagen)
- Ecumenical Advocacy Days (March 19-22, 2010, Washington DC)

International Campaigns:

- Trade Week of Action
- Jubilee Campaign (UCC/EAA) for debt cancellation, Ecumenical Advocacy Days (March 2010, Washington DC)
- Food Campaign (EAA)

Regional Structures or Networks

- YWCA: Regional Training Institutes (scheduled for Latin America, Middle East and Europe in 2010, every four years)
- EAA strategy group consultations (Food, HIV, each meets twice a year)

Country and regional-level Opportunities

- ACT country and regional forums (some meet as often as twice a month)

Connections

- Special Rapporteur to the UN High Level Task Force on Global Food Security Crisis

EAA/ACT and their members should consider using the above list as a starting point to develop a list of potential opportunities for strengthening advocacy capacity. The list should include regional and national opportunities as well.

9. Policy Formulation Capacity Building

One of the questions asked during the interviews was whether organizations are supporting the development of policy analysis and formulation skills in southern partners. The unanimous answer was, 'no, not directly.' A few respondents argued against focusing on this area because (1) there are already too many demands on the limited human resources of southern groups and (2) there is a risk that northern groups will co-opt the southern groups into adopting their position during the writing process.

Nevertheless, this is an important skill for any serious advocate and should be considered for inclusion in any advocacy capacity strengthening initiative. Some organizations are already providing important technical support in this area. For example, two German consultants analyzed in detail the draft declaration to be issued by heads of state at the World Food Security Conference and the results were made available to others. As we have seen in an earlier section, some EAA/ACT members are encouraging southern partners to formulate their own arguments and prepare country and shadow reports. These types of efforts should be continued and increased.

One respondent points out that ACT could play an important role in preparing positions and statements for members to use when lobbying their governments as such information helps put advocates on an equal footing with government officials.

10. Advocacy in a Changing Environment

One of the challenges for international organizations and networks aiming to support advocacy in different parts of the world is to understand how local political and cultural norms affect an advocacy strategy. It is an often heard argument that western advocacy techniques cannot be used in such-and-such culture, but the fact is that such arguments have never been tested or well documented – mainly because those who are doing advocacy are too busy to write about their work. Thus it is difficult to differentiate between what *will not work* in a country and what is *simply not done*.

The field of global advocacy would be considerably advanced by such analysis and the EAA/ACT network is situated in an admirable position to collect together a great deal of wisdom and insight about doing advocacy around the world. To provoke a reflection on this issue, a few of the regional and national characteristics mentioned in the follow-up interviews are highlighted below – although they have yet to be examined for their validity:

In **Malawi**, the political environment for advocacy is currently quite open.

In **Ethiopia**, the political space for advocacy is currently very narrow and it is difficult for local NGOs to advocate there. Support and intervention from the international level can be particularly helpful.

In **Cambodia**, avoid promoting only western watchdog tools or using a 'naming and shaming' approach to advocacy campaigning.

In more **liberal democratic systems** where local partners are knowledgeable, there should be sufficient political space for local partners to meet on equal footing with government officials.

The situation in **Honduras** has been very tense and requires rhetoric of reconciliation and respect for the opinions of others.

In **Central Asia** the situation appears to be worsening and the media – in particular the foreign media – is under attack. There is even discussion of reintroducing the death penalty in relation to a law that protects the president from criticism. Also in Central Asia, people – including NGO workers – are accustomed to being told what to do because of the influence of the soviet era. Therefore, a partner organization must be especially careful to avoid telling a local partner what to do and endeavor at all times to encourage partners to develop their own ideas.

Latin America has a history of organizing and a strong sense of solidarity. There is much more political discussion and questioning of US policy, for example. Advocates tend towards the activism side of the advocacy spectrum.

In **Sierra Leon**, a group formed to promote women's rights and prevent rape is feeling threatened.

In **Colombia**, international presence is deemed necessary to protect local groups.

Organizing a demonstration is the last thing you would do in **Yemen**.

Prevailing absence of trust in **Rwanda** means that people feel more comfortable if freedom of expression is curtailed to ensure security.

In **El Salvador**, an NGO could be self-funded from independent sources.

The above examples highlight how EAA and ACT are well positioned to draw a lot of lessons learned from the work of their members.

11. **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The discussion below takes into consideration the role of EAA/ACT in linking to international structures, coordinating member activities, mobilizing around a campaign and building capacity, as well as the role and direct experience of members involved in advocacy at various levels.

The online survey and follow-up interviews show that members are currently working on a wide range of advocacy campaigns and at the same time confirm the findings of earlier exercises that members are very interested in advocacy capacity strengthening. It is important to note that the capacity level of members is very mixed, with some groups being quite experienced and others admitting to being late arrivals to the field of advocacy. Depending on their area of focus, members have expressed a need to strengthen advocacy capacity at various levels:

- internally, or within their regional structures
- within churches
- within partners
- in grassroots communities.

We have seen that a few EAA/ACT members have developed training programs and materials or initiated advocacy capacity strengthening activities. Some have already invested in developing training materials for various target audiences and in different languages. Coordination of capacity strengthening activities has been limited in the past, although there are signs that coordination – and even cooperation – are on the rise. Various models of capacity strengthening are being tested, notably training workshops, experience sharing events, accompanying partners on the ground, and providing regular technical assistance to advocates.

Evaluation of advocacy training and anecdotal evidence suggests that full-length advocacy training courses mainly benefit experienced advocates who are already working on campaigns and that heavy investments in training reap fewer benefits when they are aimed at beginners. In contrast, beginners tend to find introductory sessions or 1-2 day workshops that explain the basic principles of advocacy extremely helpful because there is still considerable lack of clarity among some institutions as to what advocacy is about and how it can be helpful. There is a general consensus that working on a issue is a prerequisite to any advocacy training that goes beyond the most basic level.

With the above considerations in mind, the following recommendation(s) are made for EAA/ACT to:

1. Compile advocacy training materials and tools produced by members and post on a website, with an emphasis on advocacy evaluation.

These should include session plans, training manuals and handouts in all available languages. If necessary, EAA/ACT could do some work to integrate these materials. The ultimate objective would be to have full materials available online for the following types of sessions:

Overview of advocacy (e.g. 2 hours) to be offered as an option at international, regional, country or working group meetings. The material would be simple enough for any trainer or person involved in capacity strengthening within a member organization to administer/facilitate by themselves. Topics would include why advocacy is important, the basis of ecumenical advocacy, basic principles of successful advocacy (participation, legitimacy, etc.), why we need to analyze stakeholders and prepare messages aimed at target audiences (and not ourselves), etc. For example, YWCA could opt to offer this type of session at their RTI meetings every four years.

Introduction to advocacy. (1-2 days) This session would be aimed at those who are expecting to get involved in advocacy but do not have experience yet. Trainers/facilitators from member organizations would offer these sessions, perhaps with initial training or even long-distance

support from EAA/ACT. An example would be the ACT Forum Palestine introduction to advocacy organized by ACT members in November 2009.

Advanced advocacy course. This course would be for participants actively working on an advocacy issue. It would a range of topics such as working with the media, lobbying, coalition building, etc. There could be specialized topics such as how to get media coverage during a crisis. Such a course could be offered in modules. DCA has already developed a full course and other organizations may have also. Although one member reported an unsatisfactory experience with an online course, it is worthwhile learning more about the online advocacy course currently being developed by CIDSE.

Evaluation of advocacy. **Respondents to the online survey ranked advocacy evaluation as the highest priority for advocacy skills development.** ACT is already working on advocacy evaluation indicators for its OCA tool, but a full-manual is needed. There are existing advocacy evaluation tools but they tend to be complicated. Thus it will be useful to have a working group for the specific purpose of developing advocacy evaluation guidelines.

As part of this component, EAA/ACT should identify meetings and events at which optional sessions on general advocacy could be offered. For example, consider offering an optional introductory session to advocacy at the annual ACT two-day orientation/induction workshops for all ACT members.

2. Organize region/country level advocacy capacity strengthening activities centered on the food campaign.

Food emerged as the priority sector for advocacy capacity strengthening in the online survey. A logical step will be to conduct sessions on food policy advocacy for churches and ecumenical partners, particularly in the south, so that they can effectively participate in a food campaign and mobilize public support. Capacity strengthening in this area will include an overview of development actors, issues, and mechanisms at the global level. It will also include activities focusing on the local level such as researching and documenting food-related problems, analyzing the policy environment, and choosing, implementing and evaluating a local food-related campaign. It could also include basic advocacy concepts, as required. Important objectives would be to educate members on the need for EAA/ACT to access local information for use in advocacy at the global level and to create a mechanism to collect such information.

The ACT Forums are a natural target for food advocacy capacity strengthening activities as described above. One of the challenges that will need to be addressed is the fact that the forums are limited to ACT members. Alternative models exist, however. For example in Central Asia, the ACT Forum has only 2-3 members but they organize meetings for 50 local partners twice or three times a year.

Given comments that southern partners try to make northern partners happy by attending workshops, EAA and ACT have a special responsibility to ensure that there is concrete demand within a specific region or country for food advocacy capacity strengthening and that participants in any activities are (a) in a position to work on a food campaign, (b) hold decision-making authority in their organizations, and (c) have advocacy experience.

3. Create a mechanism to document member advocacy experiences and facilitate self-managed communication between members on advocacy issues. Document differences in advocacy experiences attributed to regional/country-specific characteristics.

Participants in this study cited sharing of information as their preferred way of learning about advocacy. However, with the severe budgetary cutbacks mentioned by many members during the interviews, it is unlikely that there will be funding available for meetings to bring members together to share information. For this reason it is important to think about alternative low-cost ways of sharing information. There currently exists insufficient documentation at the EAA/ACT central level on the

advocacy activities of members. Ultimately this represents a missed opportunity for advocates to connect and learn from each other's experiences. The loss is all the greater considering that it is difficult to imagine any other network comparable in scale to that represented by the EAA/ACT members when it comes to advocacy.

EAA/ACT and all members would benefit from an online system that allows members to showcase their activities and – when they feel comfortable enough – to share information about challenges encountered and tactics used that would inform the campaign design of other partners. Specific functions of the system could include:

- mapping resulting from a rapid survey of partner advocacy activities *by country*;
- ongoing posting of current/future advocacy strengthening activities (e.g. training calendars) to improve coordination;
- ongoing posting of advocacy experiences and lessons learned by members;
- online chat system that allows members working on similar issues to identify and communicate with each other;
- regular newsletter highlighting recent member activities or a weekly email indicating new postings to the website.

Self-management will be an important aspect to this system, that is to say that members can post the information themselves and EAA/ACT are not burdened with pulling the information from members. Also, that members should feel that they can directly reach out to others working on the same issues around the world, without a middle party connecting them. In essence, the question is whether EAA/ACT can become the Facebook of ecumenical advocacy.

Another useful activity is the compilation of information from members on their particular socio-political environment and what advocacy tactics have proved successful or unsuccessful. This exercise will have the dual purpose of helping those in a country to reflect on what works in their local context while helping those seeking to start advocacy in that context, or a similar one, learn from their wisdom.

4. Promote capacity to formulate policy by encouraging and providing technical support for members to participate in country and international reporting and practice negotiation.

Currently many northern members of EAA/ACT have staff capacity to conduct policy analysis and propose policy solutions. However, none of the respondents to this survey are assisting southern partners to acquire these skills, either through funding or direct technical assistance. Some argue that southern partners have limited capacity and they are already overwhelmed with demands on their human resources. Nevertheless, high-level skills related to policy formulation are necessary in order to engage with government on an equal footing and to participate in the global arena in a meaningful way.

Various examples of capacity strengthening in preparation for the climate change conference were cited as good examples of building such capacity. One specific activity is encouraging civil society organizations to write a country or shadow report (i.e. response to a government progress report on a UN convention). Examples of such reports include civil society input into the African Peer Review Mechanism (to improve democratic governance) and NGO shadow reports on the Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Examples of upcoming issues for which more than one respondent expressed an interest include progress in access to health on the MDGs.

EAA/ACT and its members can promote capacity strengthening of southern partners in these areas by:

- maintaining a calendar of upcoming reports by country;
- maintaining a roster of members willing to provide feedback by area of expertise;

- providing direct technical assistance in the form of feedback on reports drafted by members or coordinating feedback from a group of members willing to contribute their time;
- encouraging members to support policy capacity strengthening of their partners;
- organizing group policy analysis and formulation exercises on issues chosen by southern members;
- making all EAA, ACT and other policy documents on various issues easily identifiable and accessible to members.

5. Compile information on electronic advocacy and information technology and make it available to members.

Although evaluation is still scarce, electronic advocacy – i.e., using the internet, email, mobile texting and even webcams as advocacy tools – appears to be gaining in importance, although the trends vary by country. In some countries the internet plays an important. In others, mobile phones are being used to connect grassroots together, mobilize audiences and even fundraise for advocacy. However, small organizations that do not have technical staff are not in a position to remain current on IT issues.

While a few groups such as MobileActive.org are producing publications, in general there is very little that ecumenical groups from around the world can access to answer their questions. With this in mind, EAA/ACT would render an important service to members by:

- preparing a list of best practices of sharing information electronically via email and websites – including collection of information from the grassroots level to be used in global campaigns;
- compiling a list of member questions about electronic advocacy;
- conducting a study and producing a simple publication or online website with information on all forms of electronic advocacy, their pros and cons, costs and technical requirements;
- asking members to contribute their stories about electronic advocacy to a central depository;
- identifying ways members are using electronic media at the grassroots level.

The purpose of this report is to provoke reflection within EAA, ACT International and ACT Development on the best ways to strengthen the advocacy capacity of their members. There are many gaps in advocacy capacity among members and resources are increasingly scarcer. The best strategy will include activities that increase advocacy capacity, facilitate direct exchange between members, and require as few inputs as possible.

It will be important too for EAA/ACT members to develop a vision of global advocacy that reflects the complexity of the world we live in today with the amazing possibilities afforded to us by the internet and other electronic means of communication. The potential of the ecumenical networks represented by EAA and the ACT Alliance is enormous. It is up to members and staff not to let the opportunity slip away by limiting themselves to conventional thinking.

Recommendations from the online survey:

- support capacity building activities (5 responses) and/or training (6)
- help share information (7)
- come together at regional level through ACT Forums/ other networks (2)
- prepare good background material and in-depth arguments (2)
- organize regular meetings of advocacy desks, like APRODEV (1)
- organize thematic meetings (1)
- focus more on methodologies rather than issues (1)
- regularly distributing information about campaigns (1)
- produce a regular newsletter for members to share resources (1)

12. Steps Forward

Following the drafting of the above report, EAA/ACT organized a meeting to discuss the above findings and recommendations with a group of members. In addition to ten EAA and ACT Alliance staff, 23 participants from 22 member organizations attended the two-day event. As the meeting was in Geneva, it was easier for European organizations to attend. Nevertheless all regions of the world were represented at the meeting.

The workshop validated the main findings of the survey as presented in the above report, with a few requests for minor changes. Participants expressed considerable interest in the report recommendations regarding placing resources on a website, developing evaluation tools for advocacy, and learning about electronic advocacy techniques. There was less overall enthusiasm among those present for advocacy capacity strengthening specifically for the food sector. However participants recognized that the survey results demonstrated a clear mandate for this type of capacity strengthening from EAA/ACT members. Additionally, some of the EAA/ACT Alliance members present at the meeting expressed a *strong* interest in developing this type of advocacy capacity.

Taking into consideration the report recommendations and participant input at the meeting, the following next steps have been articulated for EAA/ACT consideration:

Website/Electronic Advocacy

In order to move forward, EAA and ACT will need to develop Terms of Reference for a working group on the website. In turn the working group will likely need to identify:

- a) an expert on electronic libraries / social networks to review other websites and provide technical advice on what the website should look like. Globethics may know of such an expert.
- b) a website designer who is capable of addressing all the technical issues and
- c) an advocacy moderator to collect resources from members, review other available manuals and present a short list of manuals with a description or critique of each to the working group members for their review.
- d) an intern who can research electronic advocacy (Note: although this is a nascent field some information on this topic is starting to become available and there are a few pages on the topic on DCA's upcoming *ABCs of Advocacy*).

Note that one participant at the meeting (ICC) has already volunteered for this group.

Monitoring/Evaluation Tool

This component will also require a working group to review evaluation tools and provide input into a new tool, should it be necessary to develop a new one. Thus the first step will be to develop Terms of Reference for the group. Then EAA/ACT Alliance will need to assign responsibility to an individual to contact members and request they share existing evaluation tools. That person will also need to do a search of available tools online and conduct an initial review/triage of the tools to submit to the working group. (Note: DCA has conducted a brief review of evaluation tools and drafted a section in the upcoming *ABCs of Advocacy*, which should become available online in February 2010.)

Advocacy Capacity Strengthening for Food Campaign

Activities for EAA to introduce the food campaign in Africa are already scheduled. However, the EAA food campaign coordinator should move ahead with a scoping exercise (in conjunction with ACT Alliance, in order to survey ACT Alliance members) as soon as possible.

Appendix A – Terms of Reference

Advocacy Capacity Strengthening: Mapping, shared learning and planning for the future

This initiative is taken under the leadership of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA), and in partnership with ACT Development and ACT International. These three organizations have a clear commitment to engage in advocacy, but different experiences and different methods. They also share a commitment to work collaboratively and to avoid duplication. The member churches and organizations of the EAA, ACT International and ACT Development (with many members shared between the three) have significant experience in advocacy but very different capacities. All three organizations, through member feedback, external evaluation, or program planning, have identified the need to embark on strengthening our members' capacity to carry out advocacy.

ACT International has significant experience through its Capacity Development Initiative in working with its members to strengthen capacity around humanitarian response.

Aim

The primary aim of this activity is to **better understand the experience and needs** of our members **with regard to advocacy and particularly with regard to capacity strengthening** – so as to develop a more robust and comprehensive plan of action for 2010. **Secondary aims include mapping and collection of information and resources.**

The work

A consultant will be engaged to carry out this work from October – December 2009, and will be accountable to the Executive Director of the EAA. The consultant and Executive Director will develop a timeline with specific deadlines for the items to be delivered.

The work to be carried out includes:

1. Interview EAA, ACT International, ACT Development and WCC staff based in Geneva about their: experience, needs, commitment, plans, and approach to strengthening advocacy capacity for their members.
2. Design and conduct a survey (written questionnaire followed with telephone/Skype interviews) of all EAA members and selected ACT International and ACT Development members to find out:
 - Current, planned and previous advocacy efforts (awareness raising, campaigns/mobilizing, lobbying); successes and failures
 - Issues of interest, priority of issues
 - Experience with advocacy capacity strengthening
 - Feedback on their advocacy capacity strengthening needs
 - Institutional strengths and limitations for advocacy
 - Collect relevant documents (e.g. evaluations, workshop reports) and resources (electronic preferred)
 - Their interest and plans to engage with the EAA campaigns (Food; HIV and AIDS)/ACT Alliance advocacy
 - Are the ACT members aware of or have they used the ACT Alliance Advocacy Policy?

3. Synthesize member information to identify:
 - Priorities of the members
 - Areas of intersection, common priorities
 - Experience with advocacy capacity strengthening
 - Institutional strengths and limitations of members with regard to advocacy
 - Resources
4. Prepare reflection paper (no more than 20 pages) and presentation synthesizing experience, needs, lessons learned, and priorities for advocacy in preparation for a strategic workshop.
5. Plan and facilitate a strategic workshop in Geneva for 1-2 days (with invited staff, members and partners) where the findings are presented and agreement is sought on follow-up in 2010.
6. Draft a report of outcomes from the strategic workshop (no more than 15 pages) with a plan for next steps.
7. Draft an EAA newsletter (2000-4000 words) that features a summary of the outcomes, some examples of members' advocacy work and learnings, experiences with advocacy capacity strengthening, and a list of some key resources.
8. Provide input to ACT International on indicators for needs assessment around advocacy capacity and other ways to integrate advocacy in to their Capacity Development Initiative.
9. Provide the electronic files of relevant advocacy tools collected from members. These will be loaded in to the EAA online resource library by EAA personnel.
10. Liaise with the consultant who is developing and piloting a simple web-based tool through which members can post the areas/topics on which they are engaged in advocacy and view the same for others along with key contact persons.

Appendix B – List of Persons Interviewed

The individuals interviewed were suggested by the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, ACT International and ACT Development and spoke in their own capacity and not on behalf of their institutions. *Occasionally, written communication took the place of an interview.*

AACC	Catherine Ouma	Program Officer HIV/AIDS (correspondence)
ACT Development	Jill Hawkey	Director
ACT International	Barbara Wetsig	Capacity Development Officer
ACT International	Marian Casey	Policy Officer
ACT International	Josef Pfattner	Acting Africa officer
APRODEV	Rob van Drimmelen	General Secretary
Brot für Alle	Miges Baumann	Deputy General Secretary and Head of Policy Unit
Brot für die Welt	Thorsten Goebel	Head of Policy Unit
CARD	Melton Luhanga	Executive Director
Caritas Internationalis	Robert Vitillo	Head of Geneva Delegation (correspondence)
CHAZ	Yorum Siame	Senior Program Officer
Christian Aid	Sally Golding	Advocacy Manager
Christian Aid	William Bell	Advocacy Officer, Middle East
CIDSE	Cliona Sharkey	Policy and Advocacy Officer
CLAI	Nilton Giese	Internal General Secretariat
CWS	Ann Walle	Director of Communications
CWS, NZ	Pauline McKay	Director
CWS, NZ	Gillian Southey	Campaigns Coordinator
DCA	Malene Haakansson	Media/Advocacy Officer
EAA	Jenny Borden	Interim Director
EAA	Thabo Sephuma	HIV and AIDS Campaign Officer
EAA	Angeline Munzara	Food Campaign Coordinator
EAA	Linda Hartke	Former Director
ELCIC	Paul Gehrs	Assistant to the Bishop
FCA	Suvi Virkkunen	Head of Humanitarian Aid
FELM	Maria Immonen	Director of Development Cooperation
ICCO	Pepijn Trapman	Regional Manager, Central Asia
IOCC	Mark O'Hanian	Regional Director
LWF	Peter Prove	Assistant to the General Secretary for International Affairs and Human Rights
LWF	Karen Bloomquist	Director, Department for Theology and Studies
LWF	Sophie Gebreyes	Program Officer for Latin America and the Caribbean, Department of World Service
LWF	Jaap Schep	Acting Director, Department for Mission and Development
LWF	Musa Filibus	Area Secretary for Africa, Department for Mission and Development
LWF	Veikko Munyika	HIV AIDS Desk

LWF	David Mueller	Country Representative, Cambodia (correspondence)
LWF	Lennart Hernander	Country Representative, Uganda (correspondence)
LWF	Marceline Rozarioa	Country Representative, Nepal (correspondence)
LWR	Annalise Romoser	Acting Director for Public Policy and Advocacy
MAP International	Luz Stella Losada	Community Health Specialist
MECC	Bernard Sabella	Executive Director, Dept of Service to Palestinian Refugees
NCA	Wenche Fone	Head, Department Development Policy (correspondence)
NCCP	Mervin Toquero	Assistant Program Secretary, Faith, Witness and Service
Pact	Victoria Ayer	Chief of Party, Mainstreaming Anti-corruption for Equity, Cambodia. Also author of Pact's <i>Advocacy Expert Series</i> .
Progressio	Tim Aldred	Advocacy Program Officer
PWRDF	Beth Baskin	Manager, Public Engagement
SACC	Eddie Makue	General Secretariat
UCC	Barbara Lloyd	Program Coordinator, Public Witness, Justice, Global and Ecumenical Relations Unit
WACC	Lavinia Mohr	Director of Programs
WCC	Maike Gorsboth	Secretariat, Ecumenical Water Network
WCC	Jonathan Frerichs	Program Executive for Nuclear Disarmament and the Middle East
WCC	Ranjan Solomon	Communications Officer, Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum
YAKKUM	Sigit Wijayanta	Executive Director
YAKKUM	Syamsul Ardiansyah	Advocacy Staff
YMCA	Clarissa Balan	Executive Secretary, Advocacy Programs
YWCA	Sophie Dilmitis	HIV and AIDS Coordinator

Appendix C – Summary of Online Survey Questions

Online Survey Respondents

- name of organization
- geographic location
- position and contact information of person completing survey
- member or partner of EAA, ACT Int. ACT Development

Advocacy Issues & Priority Changes

currently working on campaigns

Aid effectiveness
Climate change and environment
Conflict (regional, national)
Disaster risk reduction
Economic justice.
Food issues
Global trade
HIV/AIDS
Human rights.
Humanitarian space/access
Water
Other

How priorities have changed in last two years and how financial crisis has affected priorities.

whose advocacy priorities have changed in last two years

explanation of why priorities have changed

that indicate global financial crisis has affected their advocacy priorities

explanation

How organizations define and approach advocacy

organizational approach to advocacy

Currently no regular advocacy activities.

Engagement in a particular project (project-by-project basis).

Every project has an advocacy component.

Planning for advocacy is included in the organization's regular strategic planning.

definition of advocacy

w/strategic plans

with plans that include advocacy

with monitoring for advocacy

with written advocacy plans

campaigns initiated in last year

of campaigns resulting in legal change

of government watchdog activities

of memberships in coalitions

of statements issued by organization

Capacity Building Activities

Capacity building activities **attended**

description of capacity building activities attended in the past year
type of activity
content
participation
level of difficulty
follow up activities
limitations
benefits

Capacity building activities **organized**

description of capacity building activities organized in the past year
type of activity
needs assessment?
content
participation
level of difficulty
follow up activities
challenges
benefits
cooperation
planned activities

Capacity building activities **sponsored**

description of capacity building activities sponsored in the past year
type of activity
content
participation
level of difficulty
follow up activities
limitations
benefits

Recent, Current and Planned Campaigns

Campaign topics
Problem being addressed
Campaign objective
Campaign structure
Activities
External Resources and materials used
Impact
Engagement with
 allies/coalitions
 people affected by problem
 other stakeholders (public)
 targets

Advocacy Capacity Building Needs (we will mention only the top answers)

Issues

 Aid effectiveness
 Climate change and environment
 Conflict (regional, national)
 Disaster risk reduction

Economic justice
Food
Global trade
HIV/AIDS
Human rights
Humanitarian space/access
Water
Other (specify):

Planning an advocacy campaign
Working with the media & message development
Coalition building & networking
Policy papers and research
Conflict resolution & negotiation
Fundraising for advocacy
Lobbying & legislative process
Identifying target audience
Public mobilization
Preparing advocacy materials
Monitoring & evaluating advocacy campaigns

Advocacy Assets/Resources

In-House training capacity
Manuals
On-line course
Campaign materials
Multi-media
Other

Cooperation

How organizations cooperate on advocacy issues
Challenges to cooperation
How EAA/ACT can support cooperation

Funding

Designated funds for advocacy?
Funds available for partners?

Additional Comments

Appendix D – Acronyms

AACC	All Africa Conference of Churches
ACT	Action by Churches Together
API	Advocacy and Policy Institute
APRODEV	Association of World Council of Churches related Development Organizations in Europe
BFA	Brot für Alle
BFW	Brot für die Welt
CARD	Churches Action in Relief and Development (Malawi)
CBO	Community-based organization
CC	National Christian Councils
CCA	Christian Conference of Asia
CCDB	Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh
CECG	Consejo Ecu­mé­ni­co Cri­stia­no de Gua­te­ma­la
CEDPA	Center for Development and Population Activities
CHAZ	Churches Health Association of Zambia
CIDSE	Coopéra­tion In­ter­na­tiona­le pour le Dé­vel­op­pe­ment et la So­li­da­ri­té
CLAI	Consejo Latinamericana de Iglesia
COP	Conference of Parties
CREAS	Centro Regional Ecu­mé­ni­co de Ase­so­ría y Ser­vi­cio
CWS	Church World Service
CWS, NZ	Christian World Service, Aotearoa New Zealand
DCA	DanChurchAid
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EAA	Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance
EED	Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst
EJN	Economic Justice Network
ELCIC	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
EU	European Union
FBO	Faith-based organization
FCA	FinnChurchAid
FELM	Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission
IAC	International AIDS Conference
ICCO	Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation
INTRAC	International NGO Training and Research Center
IOCC	International Orthodox Christian Charities
IT	Information Technology

LWF	Lutheran World Federation
LWR	Lutheran World Relief
MAP	Medical Assistance Programs International
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MECC	Middle East Council of Churches
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NCCP	National Council of Churches in the Philippines
NGO	Non-government organization
NZAID	New Zealand's International Aid and Development Agency
OCA	Organizational Capacity Assessment
PWRDF	Primate's World Relief and Development Fund
RDRS	Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service
RSS	Really Simple Syndication (web feed formats)
SACC	South African Council of Churches
TOT	Training of trainers
UCC	United Church of Canada
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCAT	UN Committee Against Torture
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
US	United States
USAID	US Agency for International Development
WACC	World Association for Christian Communication
WOLA	Washington Office on Latin America
YAKKUM	Yayasan Kristen untuk Kesehatan Umum (Christian Foundation for Public Health)
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association