ADVOCACY FOR PEOPLE'S POWER (APP) MODEL[1]

The Advocacy for People's Power (APP) Model recognizes the different outcomes that advocacy has. This model will guide the rest of the chapters in this Sourcebook. We will start out with introducing the APP Model as we will keep coming back to it throughout the Sourcebook.

Advocacy goes far beyond changing one policy into changing the power structure and how ordinary people perceive of their own ability to influence the decision making processes. This model puts the anticipated advocacy outcomes in a framework that helps advocacy and social justice workers turn advocacy into a life changing empowering process, especially for the marginalized and disadvantaged.

Generally speaking, advocacy has three major anticipated outcomes.

1) **Policy Change:** This category of advocacy outcomes aims at dealing with a specific problem or issue through introducing or amending a piece of legislation or a policy. This is likely the easiest level of advocacy outcomes to achieve and the first thing that most people think of on the mention of the word "advocacy". However, focusing only on achieving this category of outcomes without considering the other two outcomes would likely lead to institutionalizing the powerlessness of the marginalized and disadvantaged even further. Imagine, for instance, that the sole goal of an advocacy campaign is to change a given policy. The shortest and best way of doing this is to convince a powerful person or group of elites to *adopt* our cause and talk on our behalf to the policy makers.

   In this model, advocacy is between elites and decision-makers. Applying this model, grassroots, marginalized and disadvantaged groups will always feel they have no power in themselves, and rather, their power is in the good people who sympathize with them and want to help out as part of doing good deeds in the best assumption. The more they depend on the sympathetic elites in addressing their problems, the more their feelings of inability to

   Focusing on Policy Advocacy as the only advocacy outcome could have a strong disempowering effect on grassroots, marginalized and disadvantaged groups.

be part of the decision making increase. In the end of the day, every time the elites extend a helping hand to the disadvantaged and marginalized groups, those elites will have more power, and the disadvantaged groups will feel more powerless, and their self-confidence further deteriorates.

2) **Systemic Change:** In this category of outcomes, the change goes beyond focusing on a single policy or a piece of legislation. It actually addresses the system in which institutions make public decisions and policies. The hassle that groups went through to communicate with decision makers and establish some legitimacy and recognition are now addressed. This category of advocacy outcome works on establishing a better involving and transparent decision making processes are streamlined. The decision making process is changed toward having effective means of achieving:

   a) Involvement of citizens' groups in the decision making processes;
   b) Transparency of how decisions are made; and
   c) Accountability of the decision-makers in front of citizens; and citizens' groups.

   This outcome may take one big campaign or a few campaigns to convince the decision makers to change the decision-making processes in such a way.

   This category of bringing about systemic changes to the decision making processes definitely brings about a more lasting change to people's lives, power and involvement. It provides established venues for people to participate and play a more effective role. This level, however, falls short of ensuring that the marginalized and disadvantaged actually break the long established feelings of inferiority to the elites and power holders. Even with these available venues, most of those from the disadvantaged groups are still shy to claim their seats at the table.

3) **Democratic Change:** in this category of outcomes, ordinary citizens, especially the marginalized and disadvantaged, are aware of their rights and their power to participate, and actually use this power to effectively participate in the decision making processes at all levels.

   This outcome goes deep in the set-up of our cultures and the socialization processes that affect people's self-worth and self confidence. It is the ultimate category of advocacy outcomes. More than the other two categories, this outcome takes time – and often more than a generation – to achieve. Attaining this outcome is rather difficult as it seeks to change cultural beliefs and attitudes created by a long and systemic process of alienation and socialization to push marginalized groups out of the decision making processes.

   Even though we recognize that this category of outcomes is the most important to achieve, we also know that it is likely the most elusive to capture. Measuring feelings of power, and the actual use of this power among disadvantaged groups, are very difficult things to do.

Furthermore, attributing the increasing feelings and usage of their realized power among disadvantaged and marginalized groups to your smaller advocacy efforts is hard to establish.

WORKING ON THE THREE CATEGORIES

Working on the three categories of advocacy outcomes is often tricky and difficult to deal with. In any advocacy activity, we need to take into consideration the three categories of outcomes, otherwise, advocacy will be limited by changing one or two policies without addressing the decision making environment nor the most critical piece of boosting people's power and effective participation in the decision-making processes.

Although the three categories of outcomes are closely connected, it is critically important to recognize that the ultimate goal that we should seek while doing advocacy is to help people gain confidence in their power and use this power to effectively participate in the decision making processes. Having people's power and participation as the ultimate advocacy goal liberates advocacy from the narrow view that advocacy is primarily to change policies.
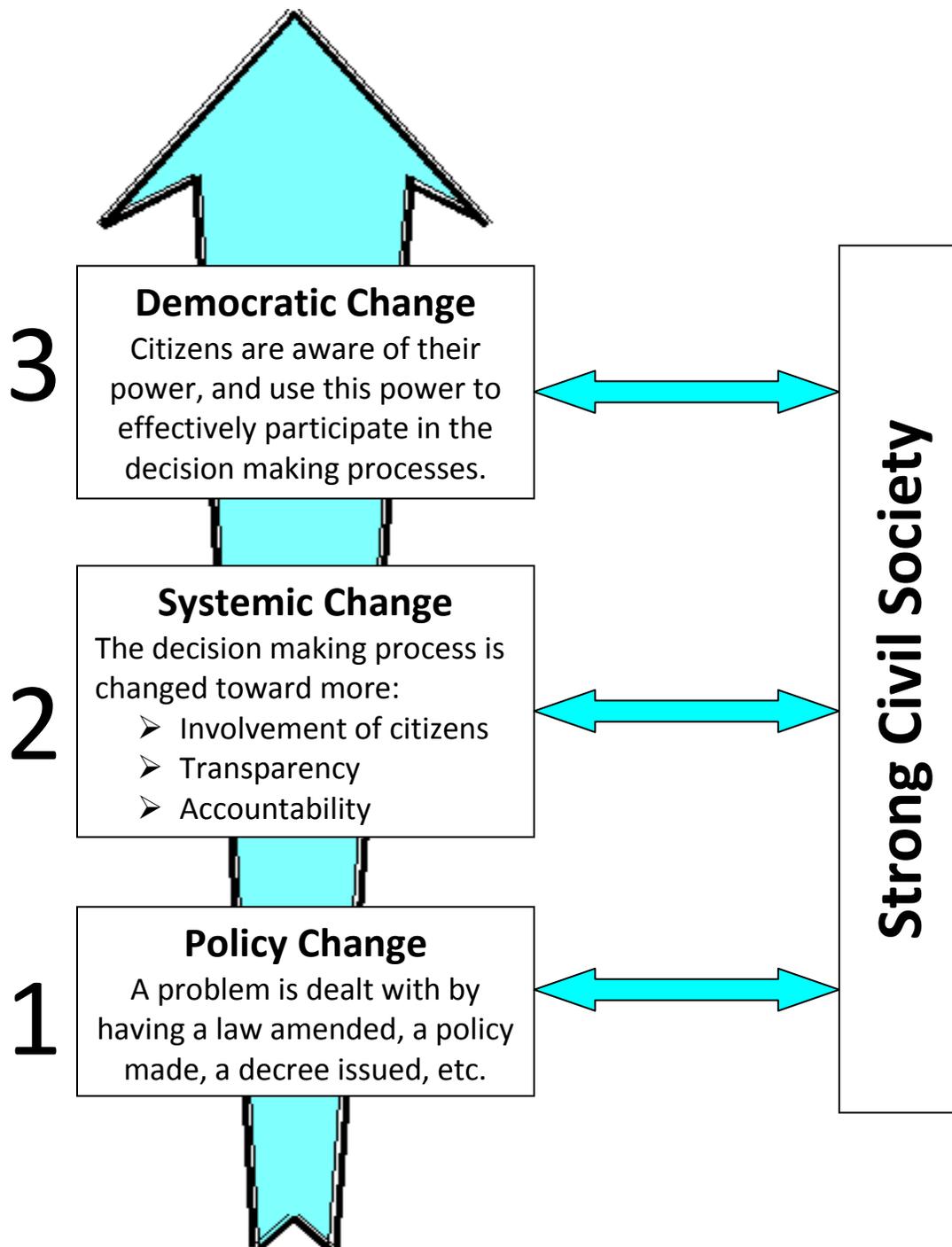
THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE APP MODEL

In achieving all these three categories of outcomes, a strong civil society plays a critical role in providing a medium for people to analyze their collective situation, express their opinions, come up with appropriate advocacy strategies, and get themselves organized to address issues of their concern.

HOW DOES THE APP MODEL WORK IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS?

The APP Model does not work well in case of emergency situations where you have to move fast to stop disasters from capturing the lives of more people. In case of emergencies and natural disasters, advocates should use their discretion on the policies and decisions they need to influence to contain the impact of the emergency. In other words, their focus should be on the "Policy Change" category. Advocates, nonetheless, should be cautious about policies that might damage the future chances of involving people in the process while containing the damage. For instance, in case of fighting against an outbreak of rebel or terrorist attacks, some governments might introduce repressive policies that have a long term effect on discouraging people from effectively participating in the decision making processes. Advocates need to push back against such policies that might be introduced in emergency times. One other caution is that, in reality, societies encounter such emergencies. Most of the time, the APP model can be valid and applied with different paces depending on the socio-political environment of the society you are working in.

ADVOCACY FOR PEOPLE'S POWER (APP) MODEL

3

Democratic Change
Citizens are aware of their power, and use this power to effectively participate in the decision making processes.

2

Systemic Change
The decision making process is changed toward more:
➢ Involvement of citizens
➢ Transparency
➢ Accountability

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Policy Change
A problem is dealt with by having a law amended, a policy made, a decree issued, etc.

Strong Civil Society

Comparison between the Advocacy for People's Power (APP) Model and the Traditional Advocacy Model[2]

APP Model	Traditional Advocacy Model
People's capacity and ability to participate in the decision making processes is the goal.	Changing one situation or solving one problem is the goal.
Brings together groups of people affected by an issue to decide on a course of action.	Small group of people assume the community need and work on behalf of the rest of the community.
Allows people to act collectively in order to build and maximize the experience of collective power.	Allows few to assume all leadership and decision-making roles.
People do their own lobbying.	Requires the use of professional lobbyists.
Actions are based on achieving goals consistent with a larger vision of social change.	Actions are based solely on the potential for victory or short-term gains.
Involves ongoing efforts to broaden the base of community support and develop new leadership.	Allows for little reaching out to new members; only a few people work on the effort or maintain leadership roles now and forever.
Allows people to develop a sense of power and control over their lives; the experience of shared power coupled with vision, create the sense the "We have a right to...."	Involves just changing people's minds about a situation or condition, with limited or no sense of additional "capability" or "capacity."
May be a long, involved process requiring patience, perseverance, and respect for individuals and the process itself.	A magical solution leading to quick victories or immediate resolution of problems.
Changes the power balance in favor of ordinary, and even marginalized, citizens.	Increases the power of the powerholders, and further decreases the power of ordinary and marginalized citizens.
Helps in addressing many other issues as people build their own capacity and turn into agents for positive change.	The few people who take the lead are overwhelmed by the amount of issues and are very selective of what issues to address.

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[2] Adapted by Nader Tadros from "Characteristics of Community Mobilization", Transforming Communities; www.transformingcommunities.org.

Exercise

With your circle of advocacy colleagues, identify the objective of your campaign in the three categories of advocacy outcomes:

- *Policy Outcomes:*

- *Systemic Outcomes:*

- *Democratic Outcomes:*

- *What role has civil society been playing in each of the above outcomes?*