In Whose Name, and to What Effect? Accountability and Impact in Advocacy

Duncan Green
Pushing Boundaries in Advocacy for Inclusion conference
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How does Oxfam do Advocacy?

- **Insider**
  - Lobbying
  - Research & ‘killer facts’
- **Outsider**
  - online; media; celebrities;
- **Critical Junctures**
  - Global Financial Crisis, Climate Events
- **Alliances**
  - Climate Action Network, Fight Inequality Alliance
Hang on, isn’t that all a bit 20th C?

- Who Elected Oxfam?
- Are we doing Advocacy
  - For
  - With or
  - By
- Each option has strengths and weaknesses
‘Advocacy For’: Make Poverty History: Yours is the Generation?
‘Advocacy With’: sure, but who chooses, beware monoculture, + who’s in charge?

Arnstein (1969) Ladder of citizen participation

- Citizen control
- Delegated power
- Partnership
- Placation
- Consultation
- Informing
- Therapy
- Manipulation
‘Advocacy By’: OK but it’s hard + downsides

- What happens when things go wrong?
- What if power lies outside the country?
- An example on Comms: #PowerShifts
  - Takes time and money
  - And accepting different ways of working (eg longer posts!)

- Slow progress on Research:
  - Not just racists, but systemic resistance:
    Why do white US researchers get more grant funding than black ones? (Akosua Adomako Ampofo)
Some thoughts on Research for Impact

WHAT DO WE WANT?
EVIDENCE-BASED CHANGE
WHEN DO WE WANT IT?
AFTER PEER REVIEW
YEAH, RIGHT......
8 Headlines from a recent Oxfam paper

- Using Evidence to Influence Policy: Oxfam’s Experience
  - Don’t write a paper and then ask ‘right, who do I send it to?’
  - Critical Junctures
  - Relationships
  - Research to fit stage of policy funnel
  - Power and context analysis => design
  - Targets and messengers
  - Big foundational piece; smaller follow ups
  - Wide range of comms tools
    - From World Bank blog summary
How to engage targets?

- **BEFORE** the research is published
  - Governance
  - Interviews and consultation
  - Review drafts
- Be accessible, adapt to their timetables; build relationships before you need them
- Who do they respect/listen to? Research partners and messengers as important as message
How not to engage targets

- Show off your knowledge
- Say/imply ‘everything is incredibly complex and context specific, so I spit on you and your generalizations’
- Treat all practitioners as idiots, thieves or both
- Reflex ‘Needs more Research’ tropes
But there are trade offs

- Pitfalls of ‘research for advocacy’
- What if you get the wrong answer?!
- Independence/credibility v taking sides
- Academic incentives v plain English
- Hostages to fortune
  - So go as far as is comfortable, and identify allies to take it from there
And (back to inclusion) Decolonizing Academia has barely even started
Any Questions?

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