

EVIDENCE-BASED INFLUENCE: GETTING COMPELLING ACTUAL EVIDENCE INTO THE RIGHT HANDS

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The question of good governance in Africa has become key to development and structural change. Although sometimes illusive in Africa especially where governance is highly connected to political motivations (for example, the manner a president is elected can determine how well systems are governed), governance is very important in protecting the wellbeing of persons.

It is precisely for this reason (governance that is heavily dependent on partisan politics and individual selfishness) that advocacy is very necessary for two reasons, (i) commend and perpetuation of best practices in governance, and (ii) mobilise for change where there is bad governance or where standards are not met.

For advocacy to be successful, it has to be based on facts. This helps in proving your case. Basing arguments on pity, emotions, sentiments, misconstrued information is never helpful for effective advocacy. Facts demand that one does good and broad (inclusive) research, involve the concerned communities. I give four examples of successful advocacy strategies in Zambia that resulted in change of governance, (i) Jubilee 2000 debt cancellation campaign, (ii) JCTR Basic Needs Basket, (iii) campaign for inclusion of Economic Social and Cultural Rights in the Zambian Bill of Rights, and (iv) stopping the third term bid by former President Frederick Chiluba.

These three experiences have shown that evidence based research can change structures at local and international levels like (i) Zambia's debt was cancelled from about US\$7.1 Billion in 2004 to only US\$0.5 Billion in 2005, (ii) wage threshold increased in Zambia from about 400, 000 to 600, 000; and many workers have managed to negotiate their wages and conditions of service for the better using the BNB, (iii) following massive advocacy by Civil Society in Zambia spearheaded by JCTR on importance of a fuller protection of human rights led to consideration of inclusion of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the new constitution through recommendations in the CRC report and in the Mung'omba Draft Constitution that is under consideration in Zambia for adoption by the National Constitutional Conference (NCC), and (iv) President Chiluba did not stand for the third term. In all these success was mainly because of facts derived from good research and consultation with other groups, collaboration with other civil society organisations, engaging and involving citizens in the advocacy, and presenting advocacy to policy makers and correct departments of government.

There are few instances where change has not come after our advocacy and these include (i) abolition of the death penalty in Zambia, (ii) having an African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) that is transparent and inclusive, (iii) having better debt management laws that involve parliament and citizens. Problems in all these areas have been domination by government structures and ignorance on the issues.

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