



Campaigning for the rights of indigenous peoples

A new generation of strategies for government accountability is needed, one that fully considers entrenched, institutional obstacles to change. Vertical integration of coordinated civil society policy monitoring and advocacy is one such strategy. Engaging each stage and level of public sector actions in an integrated way can locate the causes of accountability failures, show their interconnected nature, and leverage the local, national and transnational power shifts necessary to produce sustainable institutional change (Fox 2001). This case study summary is one of seven that reflect on civil society monitoring and advocacy initiatives in the Philippines – all of which aim to improve government accountability in different sectors – through the lens of vertical integration.



Campaigning for the rights of indigenous peoples

The campaign for indigenous peoples' rights in the Philippines is both pioneering and long-standing. The Philippines was one of the first countries to adopt a law protecting indigenous peoples' rights; the country's highest court recognised their rights over their land more than a century ago. Indigenous peoples' claims for self-governance and the use of their ancestral lands has been the driving force of their continuing struggle, which has overlapped with other rights-based campaigns on themes such as the environment, participation in governance, gender equality and peace.

Some of the country's indigenous peoples' groups focus on specific issues. One example is the Teduray Lambangian Women's Organisation, Inc. (TLWOI), an indigenous people's organisation led by women. TLWOI operates in Maguindanao province, the regional centre of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and a stronghold of the Muslim struggle for autonomy.

In this context, TLWOI faces substantial, multi-layered challenges in mainstreaming indigenous women's rights in governance. One layer is the challenge of fulfilling the day-to-day concerns – such as access to livelihoods, education and other basic services – faced by indigenous peoples. Another layer of struggle is for women's rights, traditionally disregarded in highly patriarchal indigenous communities. TLWOI engaged with different levels of government, through varying means, in order to advocate for these rights.

TLWOI worked for indigenous peoples' rights in general, and indigenous women's rights

in particular. It made its demands for basic social services through claiming spaces for representation at the local through to the national level. It represented indigenous peoples' interests in key decision-making bodies by taking advantage of spaces shared with government. It has succeeded in lobbying for the passage of local ordinances advancing indigenous peoples' rights – like the roll-out of early marriage counselling, and the allocation of funds for gender and development programmes – and allotting resources for basic services for indigenous peoples at the *barangay* and municipal levels.

TLWOI was successful in lobbying for the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights in the ARMM regional assembly. At the national level, the group's most significant contribution was the inclusion of indigenous women's rights in the Magna Carta of Women, enacted in 2009. It also represented indigenous people's interests in national talks about the establishment of a Bangsamoro regional entity.

Campaigning and organising strategies

TLWOI conducted public education as an organising strategy and tool for building the consciousness of indigenous peoples' and indigenous women's rights. Community organising was strongest at the local level, and was strengthened by the constant constituency visits made by the organisation's village point person. The use of modern communication technology, television appearances and radio programmes further bolstered community organising. TLWOI also took advantage of community organising as a way of getting feedback from the ground.

TWLOI has a broad base of active support groups. It federated into 35 community-based Téduray and Lambangian women's organisations in six municipalities in Maguindanao province, highlighting the important role of women in community development. To better serve its constituents, there is also a functioning secretariat based at the organisation's headquarters in Cotabato City.

TWLOI is able to navigate policy spaces at different levels with ease by collaborating with established organisations with more resources. These include other indigenous peoples' organisations that take advantage of available spaces at all levels of the government. TWLOI has collaborated with a wide spectrum of academic, civil society, development and religious organisations, including the National Federation of Rural Women, the Asia Foundation, the United Nations Human Rights Commission, the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, the European Union and Notre Dame University. It works with these partner organisations on policy advocacy, community development, capacity-building and education. Partners also provide technical and financial assistance.

Through continuing engagement from the local level up to the national level, TWLOI has established its reputation as one of the most reliable sources for policy proposals regarding indigenous peoples. In engaging with the government, TWLOI has claimed space for representation where it can voice the issues and concerns of its members. At the local level, from the municipal up to the regional level, officers conduct dialogues with local officials through the local development councils and poverty response action teams. At the national level, they represent

the interest of indigenous peoples at the National Anti-Poverty Commission and the Bangsamoro Transition Commission.

TWLOI lobbies for line agency support for the social services that they need to sustain their day-to-day living. To strengthen their participation in governance, it also participates in the electoral process by campaigning for candidates from its communities.

Lessons for vertically integrated advocacy

- TWLOI recognises that engagement with the government is not limited by the size of an organisation, and that creativity in building vertically integrated networks and identifying strategic partnerships is key to effective campaigning.
- Identifying and engaging with the right political power at each level of government is important in achieving results.

Reference

Fox, J. (2001) 'Vertically Integrated Policy Monitoring: A Tool for Civil Society Policy Advocacy', *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 30.3: 616–627

Background to this summary

This summary is based on a case study by Benedict G. Nisperos and Romeo Saliga. Further reflections on this material will be published later in 2016 as part of a report on the theory and practice of vertically integrated civil society activism, edited by Joy Acheron, and including a contribution by Jonathan Fox. Please visit the Making All Voices Count website (www.makingallvoicescount.org) for the latest information about the publication of this report, and to find the other six case study summaries in this series.

About Making All Voices Count

Making All Voices Count is a programme working towards a world in which open, effective and participatory governance is the norm and not the exception. It focuses global attention on creative and cutting-edge solutions to transform the relationship between citizens and their governments. The programme is inspired by and supports the goals of the Open Government Partnership.

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Research, Evidence and Learning component

The programme's research, evidence and learning component, managed by IDS, contributes to improving performance and practice, and builds an evidence base in the field of citizen voice, government responsiveness, transparency and accountability (T&A) and technology for T&A (Tech4T&A).

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