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### Multi-level Advocacy for Nutrition

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## MULTI-LEVEL ADVOCACY FOR NUTRITION

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# Abbreviations

CSO	civil society organisation
HANCI	Hunger and Nutrition Commitment Index
IYCF	infant and young child feeding practices
MLA	multi-level advocacy
NGO	non-government organisation
TASAF	Tanzania Social Action Fund

# 1 Introduction

Over the past decade, nutrition has received strong global attention as a development problem. Concerted efforts by international donors, philanthropical foundations, national and international non-government organisations (NGOs) and civil society have pushed nutrition further up global and national policy agendas. This has led to growing convergence on goals, strategies and interventions to tackle undernutrition, seeking to support country-owned, country-led strategies for addressing undernutrition (Pelletier *et al.* 2013). Policy advocacy has played a critical role in getting to this stage; it has raised awareness among key stakeholders of the underlying and immediate causes (direct and indirect) of malnutrition and its human, economic and other consequences. Advocacy is hence seen as essential for strengthening and supporting actions towards sustained political commitment, and effective multi-stakeholder and multi-level governance for nutrition (Pelletier *et al.* 2013).

Domestic advocacy initiatives – including those related to international campaigns such as Scaling Up Nutrition (<http://scalingupnutrition.org>) and the 1,000 Days Partnership ([www.thousanddays.org/](http://www.thousanddays.org/)) – have tended to focus on policymaking at international and national levels. This has also characterised many studies of nutrition and health advocacy<sup>1</sup> (Abdulmalik *et al.* 2014; Hann *et al.* 2015; Pelletier *et al.* 2013; Shiffman 2016).<sup>2</sup> Pelletier *et al.* (2013) study national-level nutrition advocacy to present a useful set of ‘principles and practices of nutrition advocacy’. However, they do not set out to discuss advocacy or the potential catalytic role of civil society at the subnational level.

Indeed, few studies have looked at nutrition advocacy beyond the international and national levels. This sharply contrasts with parallel nutrition debates, which underline that policy implementation dynamics mediate the outcomes of nutrition policy initiatives, and thus require greater analysis (Menon *et al.* 2014; Gillespie, Menon and Kennedy 2015). This demands an analytical shift away from capital cities and the hubbub of central government administrations, donors, international and domestic pressure groups and national media to the realities, practices and political economies at subnational level. It is here that ambitions set out in policy documents are (or are not) translated into concrete policy actions. Policy scholars have long argued that policies are not simply translated one-on-one, in a rational and linear top-down manner from paper to reality. A combination of local administrative capacities, proclivities, bureaucratic discretion and practices, negotiations with clients, and political pressures effectively reshape national policy in a ‘bottom-up’ manner (Hjern and Porter 1981; Lipsky 1983; Sabatier 2008).

There are several reasons why advocacy groups should engage with policymakers and political leaders at subnational level. First, while political-administrative systems and bureaucratic cultures and levels of discretion differ between countries, ‘savvy policy advocates may recognize the opportunity to influence bureaucrats’ implementation activities by holding them accountable to the advocates’ preferences in the adopted policies’ (Riley and Brophy-Baermann 2006, in Gen and Wright 2013: 180). Second, it is critical for advocacy groups to understand that a policy gain at the national level ‘can be overturned and needs vigilant monitoring and advocacy for implementation’ at the subnational level (Klugman 2011: 146). Yet, though advocacy groups and coalitions may operate effectively at national levels, from the empirical base it appears that their presence at subnational level and between the agenda-setting and implementation stages of the policy cycle is often much

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, the Global Health Advocacy and Policy Project (GHAPP) investigates networks that have mobilised to address six global health problems: tuberculosis, pneumonia, tobacco use, alcohol harm, neonatal mortality and maternal mortality. All focus on policy consequences in terms of global and national policy processes (Shiffman 2016: 161).

<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, just as it is difficult to link any complex policy decision back to a specific research study (deLeon and Weible 2010: 25), establishing causality between policy advocacy and policy change is generally understood to be difficult (Nathan, Rotem and Ritchie 2002).

less pronounced. Accordingly, multi-level advocacy (MLA) – which we define here as advocacy that is pursued across multiple administrative levels and throughout the policy cycle to connect policymaking and implementation – is often limited.

## 2 Objectives and methodology

This report draws on a review of the literature on policy science, policy advocacy and social movements to identify opportunities and constraints as well as key factors either fostering MLA or explaining its absence. We conducted key word searches<sup>3</sup> in major academic search engines, including ScienceDirect and Google Scholar. The report focuses on connections between national and subnational advocacy, but we recognise that lessons may also be learnt from MLA between global, regional and national levels. We find that there is a well-established literature on the numerous social movements in Latin America (see, for example, Coe 2009), Asia and Africa, with recent analyses of the latter substantially invigorated by analyses of the Arab Spring (e.g. Larmer 2010; Lodge 2013). Given that such MLA needs to focus as much on effective implementation as on policy design, we also consider the contributions of related literature on implementation science and accountability. This report accordingly contributes to debates about how to build both momentum and action for nutrition through advocacy and other means (Gillespie *et al.* 2013), and, more generally, to the literature on policy advocacy in developing countries.

We first set out a brief overview of the objectives and methodology of the study, followed by a discussion of the nature and objectives of policy advocacy, introducing a 'whole of policy process' approach and its relation to accountability. We then discuss key characteristics of advocacy actors, contexts and strategies, followed by a synthesis of the findings from the review and a conclusion.

Throughout, we draw as much as possible on materials for Africa (and, in particular, Tanzania, where nutrition advocacy is becoming more important), while drawing on insights from other continents and countries that provide salient examples.

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<sup>3</sup> Key words combined in searches included 'policy', 'advocacy', 'nutrition', 'Africa', 'implementation', 'accountability' and 'social movement'.

### 3 The nature and objectives of policy advocacy

The potential of advocacy for influencing policy is well-recognised. Studies have documented how advocacy can be linked to policy change, in the shape of new policies, programmes and institutional architectures – as, for instance, in Uganda, Bangladesh and Vietnam (Pelletier *et al.* 2013) and Peru (Mejía Acosta and Haddad 2014).

Yet, policy advocacy is ‘an understudied field, with limited theory and empirical research’ (Gen and Wright 2013: 187). It lacks a common definition, and there is limited shared understanding of its forms, elements, dynamics and markers (Gen and Wright 2013; Mellinger 2014). However, there are some common characteristics: for instance, advocacy is generally posited as something active, and is associated with verbs such as ‘identifying’, ‘influencing’, ‘pleading’, ‘supporting’, ‘recommending’, ‘representing’, ‘defending’, ‘intervening’, and ‘changing’ (Mellinger 2014).

One can identify narrow and broad approaches to advocacy. Narrow definitions focus on changes in policy and the policy process, on decision makers and political leaders. For instance, Young and Quinn (2012: 26) define policy advocacy as ‘the process of negotiating and mediating a dialogue through which influential networks, opinion leaders and ultimately decision makers take ownership of your ideas, evidence and proposals and subsequently act on them’. Such advocacy is typically aimed at influencing policymakers and lawmakers. Broader definitions incorporate these narrower definitions but also actively identify the objective of civic change and social justice, or change in cultural values, and the role of communities as targets as well as change agents (Coe 2009; Mellinger 2014). Gen and Wright (2013: 165) thus propose a broader definition of policy advocacy: ‘intentional activities initiated by the public to affect the policy making process’. Here, citizens – acting individually or collectively – use deliberation and dialogue to influence to decision makers and policy processes at large, to build political will around action, and to define a social or civic agenda.

The social movement literature emphasises an empirical and normative case for including community mobilisation as part of policy advocacy. NGOs commonly represent the voices of marginalised groups in dealings with the state (Greenspan 2014) and empirical evidence shows that social mobilisation can foster community participation in policymaking processes, to change the policy environment (Klugman 2011: 146, 152). In particular, it can get specific problems and preferred solutions onto public and policy agendas, and change the public discourse.

There is some evidence that community participation, in turn, can strengthen the legitimacy, quality and relevance of the policy process by enhancing its responsiveness and adaptation to changing environments, to produce better policy outcomes (Gen and Wright 2013). From a social justice perspective, building the advocacy capacity of affected communities has normative value because it empowers. Transforming oppressive value systems into more socially just ones requires advocacy to go beyond influencing public policy to the larger arena of societal attitudes and practices (Samuel 2007). Moreover, such mobilisation can help to sustain policy wins and ensure their effective implementation (Klugman 2011).



## 4 A ‘whole of policy process’ approach to advocacy

A broad perspective on advocacy highlights the need to engage decision makers at diverse levels of administration and at various stages in the policy process. Accordingly, we propose that multi-level advocacy adopts a ‘whole of policy process’ approach – i.e. to look for advocacy opportunities throughout all stages of the policy process, from agenda setting to debating policy alternatives, to formulation of policies, laws and guidelines, to implementation, to evaluation, and to future policy design. Such an approach can fruitfully draw insights from the literature on ‘implementation science’, on social accountability between service providers and communities, and on the policy processes between agenda setting and implementation.

Literature on the latter notes how agenda setting is frequently assumed to occupy the dominant part of the policy process, from which policy formulation and then implementation naturally follow, as intended by those victorious in achieving their agendas. But pulling apart the processes through which agendas are further enacted into law and government programmes leads to the identification of several interim stages (Berlan *et al.* 2014). These may involve some or all of the key actors who have been involved in agenda setting, will be involved in implementation, or have an interest in optimal implementation and its accountability. The stages include:

- generation of policy alternatives
- deliberation and/or consultation
- advocacy for specific alternatives
- lobbying for specific alternatives
- negotiation on policy alternatives
- drafting or enactment of policy
- guidance/influence on implementation.

Negotiation between actors and/or influence placed on decision makers is a key part of this ‘bit in the middle’ of the policy process. The range of actors involved in these stages extends beyond bureaucrats, politicians and legislators to include locally elected officials, donors, civil society and the clergy (Berlan *et al.* 2014). Further examination of the literature makes clear that even seemingly innocuous tasks such as the drafting and enactment of policy or drafting of guidance on implementation are equally open to external influence – indeed, this is where the most sophisticated advocates may invest additional energies; others may be unaware they are able to exert any influence following the agenda-setting stage. In some cases, advocacy actors lacking clear capacity and understanding of the importance of these stages may lose sight of the process entirely until they are faced, ultimately, with a toothless or perverse piece of legislation/policy – which completely subverts some of the advocacy gains made in earlier stages.

Not all these stages of the ‘bit in the middle’ may exist in any one policy context; in the same review, it was found that empirical work on this topic usually makes reference to only two or three of these stages (*ibid.*: iii32). But knowledge of the full range of potential stages that may be involved in a policy process opens up the space for consideration of advocacy strategies that may be available to advocacy actors.

In Peru, some of the successful advocates for women’s reproductive rights documented in studies by Coe (2012: 159–62) highlight the importance of this ‘whole of policy process’ approach. They describe agenda setting and decision-making as simply the *piso mínimo* (ground floor) (*ibid.*: 160) for advocacy, upon which further action must be built to ensure that services are delivered adequately and that policy is not co-opted by other interests.

In another sophisticated piece of analysis around the enactment of social protection legislation in India, the role that civil society and other actors were able to play in the drafting and enactment of policy was laid bare, as were the porous borders between seemingly rigid categories of civil society and state actors (Chopra 2011a, 2011b). But in most advocacy contexts, the role played by interests external to government in these stages is not often explicit or by any means easy to discern – including, for example, the lobbying of legislators by external private interests (documented in the case of tobacco companies lobbying against tobacco control – Mackenzie *et al.* 2004, cited in Berlan *et al.* 2014: iii30).

Related to this approach, the idea of implementation science or a ‘science of delivery’ has recently come to the fore in nutrition because of an acknowledgement that despite some successes in global and national advocacy efforts for nutrition agenda setting, a huge task remains in terms of ensuring effective implementation on the ground. It also reflects wider thinking in health and development, popularised by World Bank President Jim Yong Kim, which purports that an imbalance has opened up when comparing knowledge of what to do vs how it should be done effectively. The two *Lancet* series on nutrition (Black *et al.* 2008; Black *et al.* 2013) are good examples of the former; of how knowledge has been built around a set of interventions known to work at scale – but with little of the operational knowledge needed to deliver them effectively via appropriate organisational structures conveyed to the wider audience. As one recent review noted:

In the current context, where implementation systems for nutrition interventions are currently sub-optimal and the use of existing services and recommended behaviours is low, especially among the poor, a more systematic and complete understanding of program delivery, including quality of implementation, service delivery, and coverage, can greatly strengthen the ability to successfully scale-up and sustain prioritized nutrition interventions.

(Menon *et al.* 2014: 56)

While this is defined as a research agenda, it should apply equally to an advocacy actor wanting to take a more systematic look at the constraints to translating hard-won policy and legislative gains into effective services that reach intended beneficiaries.

While the ‘science of delivery’ is an important research and advocacy agenda, some of the works in this field also take a classic, rational, top-down view of public policy. In this respect, ‘bottom-up’ policy implementation studies in the 1980s are instructional in noting how resource-constrained delivery environments and substantial client–service provider interactions shape actual policy outcomes. They also showed that bureaucratic discretion is often legitimate as it enables catering to clients’ legitimate needs, even if this means deviating from the ideal of rational policy delivery (e.g. Lipsky 1983).

## 5 Linking advocacy and accountability

Additionally, a large literature already considers advocacy under the wider rubric of transparency and accountability initiatives, which is not always clearly referenced in some of the advocacy-specific literature. Transparency and accountability initiatives have been defined as “demand-side” initiatives [which] are led by citizens and social actors who engage with more powerful actors... across a range of interfaces...’ (Gaventa and McGee 2013: s4). Social accountability in particular – ‘the ongoing and collective effort to hold public officials to account for the provision of public goods which are existing state obligations’ (Joshi and Houtzager 2012: 152) – needs to be considered as the flip side of the coin to policy-focused advocacy for delivering effective nutrition services.

Transparency initiatives work by making visible to beneficiary communities their entitlements to particular government programmes; some use approaches such as budget tracing, social auditing and ‘freedom of information’ requests to make data on service provision available; others work by advocating further to realise entitlements. A related set of activities captured under the heading of ‘legal advocacy’ (Feruglio, forthcoming) – which involve work by paralegals and others to help realise rights through the justice system and other related means – might also be considered within this context.

Work on social and community accountability in nutrition is still at a nascent stage (Nisbett and te Lintelo 2014), but can draw on much broader work on accountability in health and related sectors such as education or social protection. Recent reviews in health (Ahmed, Feruglio and Nisbett forthcoming), for example, document a broad set of activities and approaches ranging from participatory budgeting to community scorecards for services. Broader trends in the accountability literature (Fox 2015) also argue for: (a) the importance of linking community-level activity to wider collective action and movements focused on structural change; and (b) the importance of understanding state capacity and responsiveness to accountability demands.

## 6 Key characteristics of advocacy actors, contexts and strategies

The studies synthesised in this review typically covered different aspects of advocacy, drawing on distinct analytical traditions. Some authors seek to identify empirical characteristics of NGOs that engage in policy advocacy (e.g. Mosley 2010); others propose frameworks that reflect on the characteristics required for advocacy organisations (and the networks or coalitions they join) to conduct effective advocacy (Coe 2009; Lutabingwa, Gray and Skinner 1997; Nathan, Rotem and Ritchie 2002; Shiffman 2016). Some focus on the nature of the policy and social environment (Coe 2009; Gen and Wright 2013; Shiffman 2016), while others pay attention to the nature of the policy issue itself (Coe 2009; Shiffman 2016).

Given this diversity, it is helpful to organise the literature around one or more well-established frameworks. Most of these cover the various stages of the policy cycle,<sup>4</sup> particularly the agenda-setting stage. Most influential in public health over the past decade has been the work of Jeremy Shiffman and colleagues (Shiffman and Smith 2007; Shiffman 2010, 2016). Their work has been adapted by several authors (see, for example, Tomlinson and Lund 2012) as well as retrospectively tested (Walt and Gilson 2014) as a useful tool for understanding how neglected global health issues attract policy attention.

Here, we follow the version employed in Shiffman (2016), which underlines the process of moving from groups of technically oriented actors who may first recognise a social problem to the creation of broader political coalitions. Shiffman argues that policy traction occurs due to interaction between three factors: network and actor features; the nature of the policy environment; and issue characteristics. Shiffman's framework<sup>5</sup> can usefully organise the arguments offered by the literature on agenda setting and advocacy more generally. We supplement this in two ways via a wider consideration of the literature. First, we add and embellish on particular areas within the original framework, selecting elements likely to be pertinent to MLA. These include a discussion on: organisational and financial capacities; research and evidence; the importance of relationships; advocacy strategies; the media; social factors; and the strengthening of grass-roots organisations. Second, we consider important areas of the policy cycle previously neglected in the national and international focus on policy agenda setting, but which are again of particular relevance to MLA. These include the stages between agenda setting and implementation, the actual practice of implementation, and the room for closer engagement between advocacy and accountability actions and strategies. We then use this to inform a subsequent discussion on MLA.

### 6.1 Network and actor characteristics

Shiffman and colleagues point to four factors of 'network and actor features': network composition, network governance, leadership, and framing strategies (Shiffman *et al.* 2016).

#### 6.1.1 Composition of the network

Not many NGOs engage in policy advocacy. Reviews of 'human service non-profits' in North America also find that these infrequently engage in advocacy (Mellinger 2014; Mosley

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<sup>4</sup> The 'stages' or 'policy cycle' approach has been criticised for its linear and non-empirical approach (Sabatier 2007) to steps in the policy process. However, it remains widely used because of its instructive heuristic value (deLeon 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Note that Shiffman's 2016 framework differs from the original 2007 framework, but not substantially. The 2007 framework includes an additional category of 'ideas' – i.e. 'the ways in which those involved with the issue understand and portray it' (Shiffman and Smith 2007: 137). This is captured within our extension of the 2016 framework to include wider advocacy strategies and tactics – Section 6.4, below.

2010).<sup>6</sup> Limited figures are also available within the African context. For instance, in Tanzania, a 2005 survey of 81 organisations found that most were engaged in service delivery, but that advocacy was becoming increasingly important (Research on Poverty Alleviation 2007).

Given the potentially limited numbers involved, the literature considers how the composition of network membership is important, not just in terms of reach and influence of its individual members. Diverse networks that link researchers, campaigners, policymakers and others from high- and low-income countries can draw on their respective strengths to improve problem solving (Shiffman 2016). The diverse membership of social movements also allows for adoption of different tactics, adjusted in accordance to the political contexts, such as party systems, bureaucratic structures, policy frameworks and political regimes. Andrews (2001, in Coe 2009) argues that effective social movements require a mix of formal and informal organisations. In the African context, for instance, this points to the value of including traditional leaders and chiefs in advocacy networks. Moreover, working in coalitions may actually enable individual organisations to take a stronger position than their dependency on (e.g. government) funding allows them. One study quotes an interviewee who commented on 'the ability to distance [itself] from the coalition a little bit if necessary to maintain relationships. It gives coalitions like ours the potential to take stronger positions than our individual members might be comfortable with' (Fyall and McGuire 2015: 1,283).

However, there is an inherent tension between diversity of membership and cohesion. Diversity can also make it harder to build cohesion and agree on objectives within advocacy groups (Shiffman 2016). Epistemic communities comprising people with similar disciplinary backgrounds and knowledge traditions are often highly influential in policymaking and a known stabilising factor, explaining the often slow and incremental nature of policy change (Haas 1992).

### **6.1.2 Governance of the network or coalition**

The literature on policy advocacy broadly agrees on the importance of collectives of individuals and organisations in the shape of networks, coalitions and alliances as key to effective policy advocacy. They commonly facilitate the sharing of expertise and allow members to draw on each other's credibility base. To achieve collective goals, networks or coalitions need organising and operating logics to self-govern and function effectively (Shiffman 2016).

The influential Advocacy Coalition Framework (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993) has sought to posit the key role of advocacy coalitions in driving policy change. In terms of exploring the motivations for members to be part of a network or coalition, one useful distinction is between 'advocacy coalitions', which are based on shared values and are likely to endure, as compared to 'coalitions of the willing', which are merely based on shared interests (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993). The latter are less stable over time, and thus less likely to follow through policy change to implementation.<sup>7</sup>

Values may be an especially important glue to hold together organisations, as advocacy groups operate in the same funding ecology, which incentivises competition, whereas

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<sup>6</sup> Based on a large sample within the Los Angeles area, Mosley (2010) estimated that only 18–28 per cent of such organisations engage in advocacy, especially among more professionalised organisations, notably those that have already achieved some success, as evidenced by managing large budgets, having professional leadership, strong collaborative ties, use of email, and high levels of government funding (Mosley 2010).

<sup>7</sup> The Advocacy Coalition Framework has been developed and much applied in developed country contexts. It has also been applied in developing countries, with mixed results. Beverwijk, Goedegebuure and Huisman (2008) argue that the framework is unable to explain new education policy change in Mozambique; however, others show how advocacy coalition analysis offers new insights into policy change in areas ranging from food safety and street vending in India (te Lintelo 2009) to environmental protection in Indonesia (Elliott and Schlaepfer 2001).

effective advocacy demands that learning and working together is put above competition (Klugman 2011). However, tensions within coalitions can also be relieved by particular advocacy practices. The possibility of ‘venue shopping’ (Baumgartner and Jones 1993) enables members of coalitions or social movements to tactically engage particular bureaucratic sites and organisations and develop partnerships with selected state bodies. It offers important flexibility for individual members of coalitions to continue collaborating, without being suffocated by collective rules of practice.

### 6.1.3 Leadership

Effective leadership can be exercised by individuals and networks of individuals (formal or informal). For instance, the rise of neonatal mortality on global health agendas was inspired by an enduring informal network of respected health professionals, in positions where they were able to influence global donors, international NGOs and philanthropic foundations (Shiffman 2016). Efforts at national-level nutrition advocacy by donors and governments in Uganda, Bangladesh and Vietnam also required strong leadership (Pelletier *et al.* 2013: 91).

Effective leadership involves developing productive relationships and contacts within and outside government, including with like-minded groups (Nathan *et al.* 2002). Effective leaders within nutrition are highly adaptive in their social and political strategies and able to span boundaries between disciplines and sectors, while bringing others along with them (Nisbett *et al.* 2015). Within coalitions, leadership entails directing the planning and consultation with members to identify a strategic vision of key issues and desired outcomes, but also to build credibility and internal consensus (Nathan *et al.* 2002; Pelletier *et al.* 2013).

### 6.1.4 Organisational/network/coalition resources and capacities

Within the social movement literature, resource mobilisation theory has underlined the importance for advocacy of organisational resources, and entrepreneurial leaders that succeed in mobilising these (Greenspan 2014; Mosley 2010).

Empirical analysis of US human service non-profits by Mosley (2010) has shown that organisational resources – such as managed budget size, professional leadership, inter-organisational collaborations, and use of email – together with dependence on government funds explain why some non-profit organisations are more likely than others to be involved in policy advocacy. Nathan *et al.* (2002) note that many community organisations are overwhelmed with requests for support, making it difficult to also engage in advocacy to challenge the system that generates the problem. Managing multiple roles, as service providers and as advocates, in fast-changing environments is an important challenge. In this respect, organisations with larger budgets are likely to have discretionary resources that can support advocacy work. This is important because advocacy is considered expensive, but not directly linked to generation of increased revenue. Moreover, larger organisations tend to be more professionalised and recipients of more government funding. Hence, in the US, ‘policy advocacy is conducted primarily by those organizations that have a surplus of organizational resources, not by those that are struggling’ (Mosley 2010: 72).

Organisational resources span financial, human (e.g. professionalisation of staff) and physical resources (e.g. access to email)<sup>8</sup> (Mosley 2010; Nathan *et al.* 2002). Actual inter-organisational collaborations on non-advocacy issues also constitute a social resource for advocacy (Mosley 2010), as might other forms of cultural, symbolic or linguistic capital (Greenspan 2014).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The use of email enables advocacy activity, due to its low cost and wide reach, and enables quick access to a range of community, professional and government stakeholders (Mosley 2010). With the now widespread access to smartphones in Africa, advocacy organisations have email at their fingertips.

<sup>9</sup> Inspired by Bourdieu’s sociology, Greenspan (2014) extends this approach in going beyond narrowly defined material resources to consider how advocacy groups can employ wider combinations of cultural, symbolic, linguistic and social capitals

This also points to the importance of building and maintaining effective relationships for advocacy. In particular, relationships with politicians and government staff are ‘among the most effective strategies for influencing policy’ (Fyall and McGuire 2015: 1,284). Accordingly, Lutabingwa *et al.* (1997: 42–3) highlight the need to build alliances with powerful individuals within African political systems (‘one of the best predictors of major and sustainable impact’ – Bratton 1990: 109, in Lutabingwa *et al.* 1997) and to construct coalitions that can survive the circulation of elites. However, effective working relations with governments require officials to recognise coalition members as legitimate policy actors. This legitimacy can draw on various sources, including members’ expertise, electoral promises made to coalition members, pressure from public opinion, or decentralisation processes that mandate civil society participation in the construction of new policy frameworks (Coe 2009).

Relationships also enable coalitions to have critical political intelligence and media access. Advocacy groups need to understand the general policymaking and political processes (Klugman 2011; Lutabingwa *et al.* 1997; Shiffman 2016) and research capacities can play an important role in this respect, particularly if directed towards more ‘strategic’ rather than purely technical capacity (Pelletier *et al.* 2011). Advocacy organisations need to continually adapt to and learn from changes in political, policy and public opinion context, and accordingly need agility in terms of organisational capacity, messages, strategies and tactics (e.g. Klugman 2011; Pelletier *et al.* 2013). Sudden changes in social and policy environments may constitute windows of opportunity for influencing policy change. These may occur through external events (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993), such as a drought that puts the spotlight on acute hunger; activism itself may also generate such windows – for example, through litigation or public mobilisation around an issue (Gen and Wright 2013). Policy advocates hence need to always watch the political process, as policies can not only fail through lack of implementation but also be overturned at any time. As a corollary, aid funding that aims to influence policy has to assume long-term planning and commitment (Klugman 2011).<sup>10</sup>

Research capacity can also inform the strategic direction of advocacy by sharpening understanding of the policy problem and possible solutions proposed by coalitions. However, better evidence may not lead to more influence, however well it is conveyed<sup>11</sup> – and may simply act to obscure political gridlock under the discourse of scientific dialogue.<sup>12</sup> Research can, however, also support an internal learning objective, through monitoring and evaluating advocacy activities (Klugman 2011; Pelletier *et al.* 2013) and be important for making news.

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(or resources) to drive policy change. He notes that differences in the distribution of such resources underline the relational nature of and power differences between individuals in, and organisational members of, advocacy coalitions. For instance, a Palestinian-Arab Bedouin organisation fighting for a social cause may lack the linguistic capital (fluency in Hebrew) and cultural capital (the intricacies of the ideological nature of the Jewish-Zionist state) needed to effectively engage the Israeli state (Greenspan 2014). Or, for instance, professional qualifications (e.g. a law degree) may facilitate entry to judicial forums (as a lawyer) in which to pursue litigation; however, community organisations and their leadership may lack such forms of institutionalised cultural capital. For our purposes, this gives a useful reminder that expanding advocacy across scales involves dealing with diversely endowed/capitalised organisations as well as individuals within them, who may compete for influence.

<sup>10</sup> Klugman (2011) shows why this is so important, through a cautionary example of a sexual and reproductive rights (SRH) coalition in South Africa. Following the achievement of major policy wins, the coalition failed to adapt to the subsequently changing policy environment that reoriented towards combating HIV/AIDS. As the coalition failed to effectively show to new donors how central SRH was for preventing HIV/AIDS, it lost its momentum and relevance.

<sup>11</sup> In this respect, in the early 1990s Tanzanian NGOs were found to simply disseminate research evidence to policymakers, without following up, to little effect (Lutabingwa *et al.* 1997).

<sup>12</sup> deLeon and Weible (2010: 27–8) argue that in some policy processes, ‘scientific’ information can exacerbate political conflicts. The Advocacy Coalition Framework (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993) argues that during intense political conflicts, actors will mobilise into coalitions sympathetic to their policy goals; and that these coalitions will selectively choose and interpret scientific and technical information to bolster their beliefs while at the same time ignore and discount information incongruent to their beliefs. This results in a ‘dialogue of the deaf’ among opponents, constraints on learning among opponents, and long-prolonged political conflicts. In such circumstances, the political use of scientific and technical information can shadow the real source of political gridlock – underlying differences in values and interests (deLeon and Weible 2010: 28).

## 6.2 Issue characteristics

Shiffman's framework (2016) follows others in the literature in stressing that the characteristics of the policy problem or issue being advocated for are significant in understanding why some issues receive more political attention than others. He notes three important factors: first, the severity of a social problem; second, its tractability (i.e. its amenability to policy solutions); and third, the nature of affected groups, in that mobilisation is more likely to occur for some groups (e.g. children) than others (e.g. adults).

Within the social movement literature such issue characteristics have also been characterised as 'non-structural factors', which include 'cultural factors that deal with the moral visions, cognitive understandings, and emotions that exist prior to a movement but which are also transformed by it' (Goodwin and Jasper 1999: 27–54, 29, cited in Shawki 2010). This borrows from theory in problem resolution and regime theory in international relations, which also stress that issue characteristics play a part in the relative consensual nature of a conflict and its openness to resolution. Conflicts over absolute goods are seen as more amenable to consensual resolution than those over relative goods (Shawki 2010: 389). Power and wealth are provided as examples of relative values while clean water and food are presented as examples of absolute values.

On the surface, therefore, nutrition has many strengths in terms of these issue characteristics. It is a severe problem which is tractable (in that there is strong evidence for particular policy solutions); children as affected groups should evoke wide public sympathy; and the indicators – i.e. child stunting or wasting or micronutrient deficiencies – also demonstrate the scale of the problem and can be used to track progress. Nutrition is most commonly associated with food intake – an absolute rather than a relative value. Such associations have been useful in advocacy campaigns that have focused on 'zero hunger' to promote action on nutrition in countries such as Brazil (Keefe 2016). (This tactic of 'transcendence' – i.e. using advocacy momentum on one issue to lead to related advocacy gains – is also recognised elsewhere in the literature (e.g. Coe 2012: 159)).

Others have noted similarly that 'a great advantage of stunting or nutrition in general is its tremendous malleability or versatility with which it can be framed or constructed'. Its 'multidimensional causality and consequences... offers an unusual opportunity to align it with many other issues rather than compete with them in a zero-sum fashion' (Pelletier *et al.* 2013: 94). This means that nutrition has tractability across a wide sectoral range. As such, 'stunting' may be framed narrowly or broadly: as an issue of infant and young child feeding practices (IYCF); as an issue of access to health services or water, sanitation and hygiene; or, most broadly, in relation to poverty, equity and/or food security.

However, while the causal multidimensionality of nutrition enables a diverse framing of the issue, this also makes it harder to arrive at a common coherent framing of nutrition as a specific problem with particular solutions, given the range of sectors and different actors at governance levels involved in both policy development and implementation. Accordingly, there are differing views as to what needs to be done (driven by particular perspectives, norms and interests), what works, and what should be the priorities (Pelletier *et al.* 2013: 85). This suggests that one reason for MLA not to occur is its tendency to lead to greater complexity, and to difficulties of framing a commonly shared understanding of the nature of the policy problem and its solutions. Pelletier *et al.* (2013: 94), however, argue there is an urgent need to address this 'fragmentation' and that this has to be underpinned by a deepening and widening of societal engagement on nutrition, through 'building broad awareness, norms, social commitment and political accountability'.

Importantly, this requires tackling one of nutrition's fundamental issues at a community level – its invisibility to those suffering from it (Berg 1973; Gillespie *et al.* 2013; Heaver 2005). The fact that the morbidity, mortality and long-term consequences of malnutrition manifest



themselves in other illnesses probably explains why community-based movements focused on nutrition have not emerged in any of the advocacy contexts studied. Some have argued that building such ground-level advocacy will require changing the ethos of common nutrition advocacy initiatives, as communities are primarily viewed as targets or objects of behaviour change communication (BCC) campaigns, rather than as change agents in their own right (Pelletier *et al.* 2013: 91; see also Gillespie and Hodge (2016) on the importance of community-led action and voice in nutrition). Embracing a broader view of advocacy to build 'awareness, norms, social commitment and political accountability' will also be critical for sustaining the current political momentum for advancing nutrition (Pelletier *et al.* 2013: 91).

### **6.3 'Enabling' policy environments**

Shiffman sets out three factors that shape the policy environment for advocacy: the presence of allies and opponents; funding; and norms that encourage support for an issue within state bodies.

Allies are here identified as groups whose interests align with an advocacy network's goals and can expand its influence and effectiveness, whereas opponents may hinder and seek to discredit the network, but may also inspire mobilisation (Shiffman 2016). Having potential allies and champions within government, who demonstrably and publicly support a coalition, can be invaluable for its long-term credibility (Fyall and McGuire 2015). For some, a network's policy success hinges primarily on its ability to mobilise pre-existing constituencies and allies – most importantly, elites in governmental and intergovernmental posts (Bob 2013).

It is particularly important to have such allies in places that are relatively immune to the routine turnover and circulation of bureaucratic staff. For instance, within months of the Tanzanian President, John Pombe Joseph Magufuli, taking office at the end of 2015, a large number of district executive directors had been replaced. Advocacy networks invest considerable time and resources in cultivating relations with local officials, first to establish their legitimacy and then to raise awareness and persuade these of their advocacy position; circulation and turnover of bureaucratic staff thus challenge the continuity of advocacy. One lesson for advocacy groups is to build broad bases of local bureaucratic and political support, and not solely invest energy in building allies among the local 'top-brass' bureaucrats and elected leaders. In this respect, Pelletier *et al.* (2013: 98) note that 'efforts should be made to strengthen the advocacy capacity of government departments and other national organisations. This is essential if the goal of country-owned, country-led approaches is to become realised.' Such intra-government advocacy needs to be embedded at all levels of government, including the subnational, and needs to take place as part of a wider societal dialogue on nutrition.

Advocacy activities tend to be under-financed, even though 'the return of investment from a well-implemented advocacy effort can be substantial and the resources required are quite small compared to the resources invested in large-scale intervention programmes' (Pelletier *et al.* 2013: 97). From the perspective of advocacy actors, funding may enable a network to flourish; however, donor-organised networks can be perceived as less legitimate than those that emerge from grassroots activism (Shiffman 2016: i62). In this respect, Lutabingwa *et al.* (1997) point to enduring concerns that NGOs involved in policy advocacy must be careful not to be accused and discredited by governments on populist charges that they are 'dancing to the tune of a foreign piper', and are not representative of local interests. The state may even become concerned about foreign interference in national matters, leading to de-registration of local NGOs.

Related debates consider whether civil society dependence on government resources (more of a practice in Western contexts) constrains and co-opts critical advocacy voices, offers opportunities for influencing, or affects both (see, for example, Mosley 2010). Lutabingwa *et*

*al.* (1997) propose that as the proportion of domestically generated financial resources increases, the level of an NGO's effectiveness in influencing public policy also increases. However, the same study found that 8 out of 10 Tanzanian NGOs depended on donor funding. In a different context, Mosley (2010), however, notes that even in contexts of resource dependency, engagement with funders opens up advocacy opportunities.

Co-option is only partially a story of funding dependency though. A shift from social mobilisation to advocating through institutional routes with policymakers – as seen in Latin America and Africa in the early 1990s – often also imposed professional norms on social movements. However, the push for professionalisation and formal organisational structures – also associated with the subcontracting of service delivery – risked defanging the oppositional and social mobilisation potential of social movements: 'government and donor institutions need well-behaved organizations to include in policy processes, and attempt to exclude activist-oriented organizations or push them into becoming NGOs' (Coe 2009: 429).

As for norms, Shiffman notes how the Millennium Development Goals, which set common global standards, effectively inspired state action in the area of health in many countries. A similar role can be played by international agreements and, to a lesser extent, covenants. Where coalitions are operating at subnational level, national policies themselves can provide valuable anchoring points for advocates to persuade local government officials to support the coalitions' position (Coe 2009). Additionally, broader framings and narratives (see Section 6.4 below) can draw on other societal norms such as human or child rights, or rights-based movements applied to food or health.

Overall, Shiffman (2016) gives less attention to the structural institutional features of polities and political economies that determine the nature and potential for policy advocacy. These can, however, critically shape the choice of advocacy tactics and activities – for instance, where democratic institutions are weak (Coe 2009) and where autocratic governments are hostile to civil society engagement (Nathan *et al.* 2002). It is hence instructive to briefly consider state–civil society relations in Africa in this context.

Post-colonial African states often deliberately constrained civil society advocacy. For instance, after independence was gained in 1964, the Tanzanian state used suppression and co-option of opposition groups or other power centres as strategies to effectively eliminate any competition for power within the country. Organisations viewed as strong,<sup>13</sup> and thus posing a threat to the state, were either co-opted by the state and its party or banned altogether (Lutabingwa *et al.* 1997: 66).

The early 1990s was a time of transformation towards democratic political systems across the continent. It was accompanied by tremendous growth in the number of NGOs and the financial resources available to them, all on the back of a period of structural adjustments (which continue in many forms of neoliberal state reform) that had seriously eroded state capacities to provide essential services and reduced many people's quality of life. This democratic transition in many African countries offered new opportunities to engage policymakers, and debates considered the need for NGOs to move from a role as service providers to engaging in policy advocacy. NGOs were deemed able not only to represent a segment of the population with little voice in policy matters but also to actively contribute to establishing and rooting a democratic process (Lutabingwa *et al.* 1997). The wave of democratisation was also often followed by attempts at decentralisation and devolution of budget and policymaking powers (e.g. Kenya's 2010 Constitution). Yet, while decentralisation agendas have opened up new spaces and opportunities for policy advocacy,

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<sup>13</sup> Of course, social movements often do not merely seek inclusion in established political systems, but rather seek to build new democratic frameworks and institutions by expanding the political arena, infusing their own meanings into key political notions, and challenging dominant political practices (Coe 2009: 431).

they have also been accompanied by contradictory laws and policies that re-centralise powers. For example, in Tanzania, Hoffman (2013) notes how official decentralisation policies have been eroded by presidential decrees for greater political control over appointments of civil servants at the district level.

In this respect, some authors have commented on the administrative levels at which advocacy can suitably be conducted. For example, in Australia, Nathan *et al.* (2002) found that federated health organisations and those bodies working at state and national levels were better placed to take on advocacy roles than groups working at the local level, who were often constrained by limited resources and networks. While this was also found to be the case in Tanzania, a recent evaluation noted that at subnational levels, opportunities for strengthening accountability are pronounced (Itad 2015).

## **6.4 Advocacy strategies, tactics and activities**

### **6.4.1 Framing strategies and narratives**

Shiffman (2016) observes that networks have different capacities to develop framing strategies: the public positioning of a policy issue to attract attention and resources. Decisions concerning the framing and inclusiveness of the problem have strong strategic importance. To convince policymakers and international audiences to adopt new norms or change old policies, NGOs and networks develop appealing frames for the problems they have identified and the solutions they propose. Such frames use logics of arguing and appropriateness that resonate with but also subtly expand dominant cultural values, stirring governments into changing their positions. Often, NGOs graft emerging new norms onto already agreed ones to enhance their chances of adoption (Bob 2013: 82) and thus need to ensure that frames are tailored to political and cultural contexts (Coe 2009).

Discussions of framing are closely allied to wider discussions of narratives within the literature on health and policy, and several frameworks have been developed to focus on how policy advocacy actors deploy and can use narratives to further their goals, most notably the *narrative policy framework* (Jones and McBeth 2010; McBeth *et al.* 2007; Shanahan *et al.* 2013). Narratives (i.e. effective and widely resonating stories of malnutrition's determinants or how nutrition can be improved) are also now starting to receive attention as ways of both conveying and shaping complex policy and country level 'stories of change' in nutrition (Gillespie *et al.* 2016; Nisbett 2017).

Nutrition advocates, likewise, have begun to invest time and resources in developing simple and effective narratives designed to resonate with both policymakers and the public in diverse contexts.<sup>14</sup> Framing strategies and narratives can both have a large bearing on the overall advocacy agenda, including scope, scale, institutional architecture and issue focus. However, these can be very difficult for nutrition communities to agree on (Pelletier *et al.* 2013; Nisbett 2016). Network or coalition members need to develop consensus around a common definition of the problem and possible policy options, first internally and then externally, 'by an ever-widening constituency of people' (Klugman 2011: 148). Enhancing the visibility of the social problem and solution they have identified is thus key. Once such visibility is achieved, maintaining policy wins requires monitoring of policy implementation.

### **6.4.2 Wider advocacy strategies**

The wider literature on policy advocacy extends Shiffman's focus on the framing strategies employed in agenda setting to a wider set of strategies used at various stages of the policy process.

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<sup>14</sup> See [www.nutrition-space.org](http://www.nutrition-space.org).

Gen and Wright (2013) identify five distinct advocacy strategies, which may be pursued by groups or separately: enhancing a democratic environment; applying public pressure; influencing decision makers; direct reform; and implementation change. For these strategies to be effective, they must be underpinned by organisational capacities and resources, and need to be aligned with tactics and activities, without rigidity. Thus, flexibility and opportunism in the choice of tactics were found to be central to effective advocacy in Australian health advocacy, anchored to a clear long-term strategic vision and goals (Nathan *et al.* 2002). Accordingly, these advocacy groups employ a range of activities, including use of the media, monitoring external environments, lobbying, building community support and engaging in alliance building were key advocacy activities. Common advocacy activities by US-based non-profits include: issue advocacy; lobbying of legislators; political campaigning to support or oppose political candidates; demonstrations and boycotts; rallying public support around an issue or policy; litigation and grassroots advocacy (Gen and Wright 2013). In India, many of the more effective advocacy campaigns strategically and simultaneously use mass mobilisation, improvised forms of non-violent protest and persuasion, public interest litigation, pressure for legislative change, lobbying of public officials, and media work to build up an effective public argument (Samuel 2007: 617).

Lutabingwa *et al.* (1997) noted that African NGOs need to strengthen grass-roots communities in order to sustain long-run policy advocacy, and to strengthen pluralistic democracies. In particular, supporting them to participate effectively in the political process will help make elected and non-elected government officials accountable to the electorate. In this respect, subnational-level policy advocacy offers specific opportunities for connecting grass-roots communities with local decision-making processes.

Strategic use of the media is also an important part of a policy advocate's arsenal of skills and tactics. Cultivating effective relations in the media involves persuading opinion leaders, catalysing public opinion and influencing policymakers (Fyall and McGuire 2015; Lutabingwa *et al.* 1997; Nathan *et al.* 2002). However, Klugman (2011) nuances this by noting that gaining visibility can also come at the cost of mobilising opposition (e.g. in the case of women's abortion rights). She also notes that policy victories can be won without support from the majority of the public, and that there is no causal predictability between opening public debate and winning policy change, let alone implementation. She thus proposes that where dominant social norms are not in support of an issue, policy activists may decide not to engage the public at large.

As a counterpoint, however, recent advocacy and social movement literature has noted the growing engagement of the (literate) public via the widespread use of social media such as online networking and blogging forums. These played a key role in social movements during the Arab Spring, circumventing constraints for organising rapid, far-reaching and creative protest. Some commentators consider that the rise of social media constitutes a structural change in the balance of power between governments and civil society (Lodge 2013).

### **6.4.3 Protest vs cooperation vs co-provision**

Social movement scholars have debated the policy influencing potential of (disruptive or persuasive) protest tactics compared to tactics based on collaboration with government institutions. In practice, however, Coe (2009) finds that social movements use both protest and collaboration tactics, depending on the context and issue at stake. Similar findings are reported for human service non-profits in the US (Fyall and McGuire 2015; Mosley 2010) and Australian health advocacy groups (Nathan *et al.* 2002). This is illustrated by the testimony from a non-profit leader: 'I think a lot of our power at the local level comes from our ability on the big issues, once in a while, to turn a lot of people out to city council meetings' (Fyall and McGuire 2015: 1,284). Klugman (2011: 148) also finds that South African reproductive rights coalitions operate 'sometimes quietly within the corridors of power and sometimes from the

out-side, through the mobilization of constituencies, public actions, and the engagement of the media' (see also Fyall and McGuire (2015: 1,284) for an example from the US).

Advantages of partnership approaches and insider strategies include the opportunity for advocacy groups to provide valuable inputs to government policy and practice, and offer governments a short-cut to receive community-derived knowledge. Partnership approaches were also valuable in protecting funding bases and access to government at times when health advocacy groups took on activities that brought them in conflict with government (Nathan *et al.* 2002: 73). Collaborations may also advance state–civil society accountability relations, as social movements can transmit their position to officials and negotiate claims with them, and monitor government actions. For this to happen, the quality of participation needs to be strong enough to gain recognition (Klugman 2011).

Advocacy groups also use a range of tactics to minimise fall-out when they are publicly critical of government. They work through high-level state networks to be heard on issues or to talk to government about their findings and comments before going public (Fyall and McGuire 2015; Nathan *et al.* 2002). This has been practised, for instance, by the CSO-SUN Alliance in Zambia, where consultations are held with the government prior to publicly launching data on the Hunger and Nutrition Commitment Index (HANCI) rankings (te Lintelo *et al.* 2016).

## **7 Discussion: implications for multi-level advocacy for nutrition**

Having set out key findings from the literature review, in this section we discuss their implications. We consider what these findings tell us about the opportunities and constraints for MLA, focusing on the linkages between national and subnational levels of administration.

Having reviewed strands of literature on policy science, accountability, policy advocacy and social movements, we first find that MLA is rarely the subject of analysis. The focus has been on networks and alliances and how they function, and their roles in influencing policy agenda setting, and on accountability tools and dynamics at specific administrative levels. Thus, in the case of nutrition, advocacy analyses have predominantly focused on global and national levels. The accountability literature focuses primarily on subnational dynamics, while policy literature tends to focus on either implementation studies or on advocacy at the national level. Within the social movement literature, insider vs outsider debates have been prominent, while sometimes neglecting actual practices that combine community mobilisation with institutionalised policy influencing. As such, the connections between advocacy efforts across varied levels of administration, simultaneously and over time, are receiving limited attention. Hence, while we were able to identify some (apparent) cases of MLA, these were rarely explicitly documented. We thus suggest the need for additional in-depth analysis of empirical cases of MLA.

Nevertheless, the synthesis of the literature presented in previous sections provides important pointers in terms of how greater sensibility to the constraints and opportunities for MLA can inform strengthened advocacy on nutrition. In this section, we apply and deepen the analysis offered by Shiffman (Shiffman and Smith 2007; Shiffman 2010, 2016) to show how attention to network and actor features, enabling environments and issue characteristics can provide insights into MLA for nutrition (Tables 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4). We further amend and add to the framework by proposing a ‘whole of policy process’ approach to advocacy and by highlighting advocacy capacities, strategies, tactics and activities.

### **7.1 A ‘whole of policy process’ approach to multi-level advocacy**

As noted above, much of the policy advocacy literature is focused on agenda setting, but there are prolonged periods during which policy agendas are formulated and translated into actual policies and laws. During these times, contestation among a range of actors continues, and policy advocates must, therefore, engage with this process.

Drawing on the available literature, the spaces for advocacy might include, first, charting the processes for deliberation and consultation available (formally or informally) as the result of a government pursuing an ‘adopted’ policy agenda. Second, specifically formulating policy alternatives to the adopted position or shoring up/refining/further detailing the adopted policy option might then depend on whether the position adopted was that which the organisation was initially pursuing. Advocacy and lobbying then follow for those stages which fill out important details of policies, including those not covered in simplified public debates on the issue. Again, this requires good knowledge of the decision-making landscape – including the functioning of various committees, task forces, working groups, bureaucratic structures within departments and ministries and any cross-departmental decision-making (Berlan *et al.* 2014: iii29).

Here, party political structures may play an informal role not easily captured within government processes, but can also play an influential role on final decision makers such as ministers. Such processes may be brokered by quasi-governmental employees and special advisors that bridge the gap between parties and the executive. ‘Lobbying’ in the traditional

sense of specific activities aimed at legislators is likely to take place in several fora, many of which will be away from the actual physical legislature and may include other events and networks that might be completely separate from the issue in question – including social networks and events in the capital or in the legislators’ constituencies. Actual drafts of legislation may or may not be available publicly as part of the legislative process, but in some cases there may be an opportunity to significantly influence legislation at this stage via access to those on a drafting committee, to bureaucrats and lawyers charged with the drafting or via a parliamentary committee process designed to review and amend legislation. In this respect, the CSO-SUN Alliance in Zambia (a nutrition civil society grouping) regularly advises a caucus of parliamentarians championing nutrition, and their advice is, in some instances, carried into parliamentary debates (Chilufya pers. comm. 2015).

Furthermore, depending on the features of the polity, policymaking processes can happen at multiple levels, simultaneously, or at different pace. This complicates MLA. Thus, in highly federal systems such as Nigeria or India, states have substantial powers to make nutrition policy that complements or adjusts national policy, and all stages of the post-agenda setting policy cycle are of relevance to MLA, including state-level policy formulation (and generation/debate/advocacy/lobbying of alternatives), drafting and enactment, and the drawing up of implementation guidance or the design of state-level structures (adapting Berlan *et al.* 2014).

Where such policy processes only take place at a federal or national level, then there may be fewer opportunities for advocacy at the local/subnational level. Here, MLA that draws on international connections may provide strong opportunities for further advocacy around the consideration of policy alternatives, particularly where international evidence and experience can be translated into local contexts. Policy solutions that draw on local or regional pilots and innovations within country may also be a very powerful advocacy tool at this stage. Even without these examples, local and national-level advocacy actors may be able to strengthen their claims for legitimacy during the national-level policymaking/enactment/guidance formation periods by drawing on local-level issues and discussing likely local-level impacts or challenges of the policy or programmatic features. They may also be able to draw on local networks to reach parliamentarians or other political leaders involved in the formulation or drafting process for particular pieces of legislation or policy. Table 7.1 sets out the opportunities for MLA beyond the agenda-setting stage.

**Table 7.1 Opportunities for MLA beyond the ‘agenda-setting’ stage**

Process	Opportunities for MLA	Example
Generation of policy alternatives	International or local evidence and examples, pilots or innovation underline the value of policy alternatives	Indian state of Maharashtra – state nutrition mission scaled up local innovations but also drew on international evidence
Deliberation and/or consultation Advocacy and lobbying for specific alternatives Negotiation on policy alternatives	International or local evidence and examples, pilots or innovation underline the value of policy alternatives International and/or local actors can offer viable policy alternatives to policy fora	The Partnership for Nutrition in Tanzania (PANITA) hosted a group of parliamentarians at the Global Nutrition Report launch in Dar es Salaam to exchange learning on good practices from around the world
Drafting or enactment of policy Guidance/influence on implementation	Local or international networks can influence those drafting legislation or guidance Specific local examples can demonstrate how implementation will play out in practice	PANITA investigates district nutrition budgets to seek stronger national budget guidelines for districts (Ward and Goulden 2015)

## 7.2 Adopting and adjusting Shiffman’s model to throw light on MLA

In this section, we adopt and adjust Shiffman’s model to throw light on opportunities and constraints for MLA.

### 7.2.1 Actor and network characteristics

In terms of actor and network characteristics (Table 7.2), effective leaders recognise that implementation arenas offer a domain for influencing and accountability for nutrition. Local officials are often ignored by policy advocacy. However, they play an important role in delivering national (and sometimes local) programmes and policies. There are well-documented capacity deficits at this level (Heaver 2005). Accordingly, advocacy leadership that is able to persuade local officials (and support champions) about the need for addressing nutrition and can cater to their needs, knowledge and capacity requirements, can benefit from a first-mover advantage and influence policy implementers. Local-level networks for nutrition are likely to be composed of different kinds of actors from those that operate at national level. Actors that are more prominent include community-based organisations, (municipal/district) councillors, street-level bureaucrats and service providers, whereas donors and (foreign) academics are likely to have less presence.

**Table 7.2 Actor and network characteristics relevant to MLA**

Factor	Opportunities for MLA	Example
Leadership	Implementation arenas offer a domain for influencing and accountability. First-mover advantages for those catering to knowledge, capacity, other needs of local officials. However, advocacy NGOs often operate in capital cities	PANITA, the SUN Civil Society secretariat in Dar es Salaam, is developing stronger links to regions and district administrations. The Tanzania Food and Nutrition Council is considering decentralised offices
Network composition	A different ecology of stakeholders at subnational level: e.g. community-based organisations, (municipal/district) councillors, street-level bureaucrats and service providers are more prominent	In Tanzania, districts with greater numbers of nutrition programmes have greater awareness among government officials about the causes and consequences of undernutrition. There are tensions around how responsive civil society can be to grass-roots needs when aligning activities and objectives to donor agendas (Hearn and Mapundo 2012)
Network governance	Local networks are more likely to operate in informal platforms, with closer social connections forged by more regular interactions and proximity	The Accountability in Tanzania programme was more successful in achieving outcome-level results at the local level rather than the national level, as NGOs understood the political space well and were able to adopt strategies in a responsive and iterative way
	Local coalitions are more likely to be organised around shared interests than shared values. A thin subnational CSO landscape means that organisations are more results-oriented than value-based	In Tanzania, the 2012 landscaping analysis of the country’s readiness to scale up nutrition interventions also found interest by all stakeholders to implement programmes jointly at the subnational level but the lack of a coordinating mechanism is a limiting factor

Regarding network governance, unlike the often more formalised arrangements through which networks operate at national level, at the subnational level, informal platforms and informal social connections could be more prominent, as they are forged by more regular interactions and proximity of living. Subnational civil society organisation (CSO) landscapes are often more thinly populated, and dominated by service delivery organisations that are



results-oriented rather than value-oriented. Local coalitions are therefore more likely to be organised around shared interests than shared values. However, MLA raises the prospect of dilution of policy demands (and values) as it entails a process of seeking consensus among ever-wider sectors (Klugman 2011). In this respect, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith's work has highlighted that where coalitions are organised around interests rather than values, they are more likely to fragment over time. Endurance may thus be a challenge for MLA; however, given the uncertainty of policy success (achieving change) on the one hand and the vicissitudes of policy implementation dynamics on the other, 'funding and organising advocacy should seldom be undertaken as a short-term proposition' (Klugman 2011: 146).

### 7.2.2 Issue characteristics of nutrition

When we assess the issue characteristics of nutrition (Table 7.3), we note that in terms of the severity of the problem, there is often an absence of reliable disaggregated data on the nature and extent of the nutrition problem.

**Table 7.3 Issue characteristics of nutrition relevant to MLA**

Factor	Opportunities for MLA	Example
Severity	Absence of reliable disaggregated data on nature and extent of the problem	Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) in Tanzania disaggregate to regional but not district level; nutrition is addressed by district authorities
	Budget tracing, social auditing and freedom of information requests can make data on service provision available, and make community entitlements to government programmes more visible	India Right to Food movement
Tractability	Multidimensionality of nutrition offers potential to engage with and piggyback on a range of causes that already receive attention from local decision makers	In Tanzania, there are plans linking the Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF) social protection scheme with nutrition counselling services
	Local officials may harbour predispositions on the nature of the problem and solutions that are not in line with expert assessments	The persistent conflation of nutrition with food
Affected groups	Opportunities of intersectionality. Self-assertion and social mobilisation may take place locally already, offering opportunities with which advocacy may connect	Indigenous community rights mobilisations can be linked to nutrition outcomes for these groups (e.g. tribal groups in India)

As argued above, nutrition is a complex issue; it has a range of distinct features (from exclusive breastfeeding to hygienic practices, to access to health, to food-based causes) and thus has multiple causal drivers. This complexity may not be fully appreciated at subnational levels of administration. For instance, a 2009 study found that Tanzanian district council staff and officials in council management teams did not understand how strategies in council management plans might lead to improved nutritional outcomes (Leach and Kilama 2009). Moreover, the translation of expert knowledge to local practitioners may need to overcome local practices and knowledge that privilege particular aspects of nutrition, particularly food intake (for example). However, as argued earlier, the multi-causality of nutrition also offers opportunities for policy advocates. It offers potential to engage with and piggyback on a range of causes that already receive attention from local decision makers or social mobilisation efforts.

Finally, in terms of the nature of affected groups, subnational-level interventions have the advantage of being closer to beneficiary communities, which means that bonds of solidarity between communities and policy advocates and officials may be more easily forged.

Moreover, the intersectionality of nutrition with other social issues offers opportunities. For instance, where there are already instances of local mobilisation on women’s equality issues, these could be linked with nutrition issues, such as facilitating breastfeeding in the workplace, or in terms of gender inequalities in nutritional status and intervention. In a Zambian study, Harris and Drimie (2012) note how interdepartmental coordination is easier at the local level.

### 7.2.3 ‘Enabling’ environments

The third framework category suggested by Shiffman (2016) highlights an enabling environment (Table 7.4), and three factors: allies and opponents, funding and norms. We add a fourth factor: the structural nature of the polity.

**Table 7.4 Enabling environment characteristics relevant to MLA**

Factor	Opportunities for MLA	Example
Allies and opponents	Some political leaders span local and national levels of advocacy and have incentives to make these connections	Parliamentarians have incentives to connect local constituency issues with national-level issues
	Allies that are likely to survive typical bureaucratic transfers offer sustainability	E.g. in Tanzania, subnational presidential appointees outlast heads of district administrations
	Attention to the capacities, incentives, needs, inclinations and scope for administrative discretion of local-level frontline bureaucrats and workers	Understanding of nutrition causes, effects, implications, and ability to analyse data are often limited at local level
	Comparisons can harness local pride and shame – demonstrate strong performance <i>vis-à-vis</i> other local authorities	Tanzania National Nutrition Scorecard, and HANCI scorecards for Morogoro and Kigoma districts
	Physical proximity facilitates coordination and cross-sector linkages between local officials	Clusters of key departments for nutrition (e.g. agriculture, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and health) are all located in the same district headquarters in Tanzania
	Social media enables drawing in new allies	In the Arab Spring protests in Egypt, social media mobilised people who had no previous experience of activism
Funding	Local fundraising bodies and individuals volunteering could offer valuable allies and sources of funding for advocacy	E.g. service clubs can comprise business people and individuals that are influential locally
	‘Service provision as advocacy’	NGO nutrition provisioning combines with community awareness-raising on entitlements, severity of problem and equity aspects
Norms	National policies and strategies present important anchoring norms to hook advocacy on, to persuade local government actors	District officials in Tanzania are often not aware of national policy, strategy or targets. Clarifying how advocacy claims relate to and can reinforce such national-level priorities can facilitate coalition building
Structural features of the polity	Devolved and decentralised administrations offer opportunities for influencing and accountability	Kenya’s 2010 Constitution devolves powers and development responsibilities to county governments

In terms of allies and opponents, there are opportunities for pursuing MLA through political leaders that span local and national levels of decision-making. For instance, parliamentarians can engage on nutrition issues within their constituencies (and overlapping local authorities), and are often already part of the advocacy targets of national-level policy advocates. Another consideration is the frequency of bureaucratic transfers. Where key allies are suddenly transferred, advocacy that is narrowly focused on these actors risks having to start from scratch, which means having to rebuild legitimacy and awareness, and persuade incoming bureaucrats. Accordingly, policy advocates that seek to span the local with supra-local advocacy do well to cultivate broad sets of allies within local administrations. The multi-causality of nutrition lends itself to this.

Building these networks requires paying attention to the capacities, incentives, needs, inclinations and scope for administrative discretion of all those local-level frontline bureaucrats and workers with responsibility for implementation (Kok *et al.* 2015; Menon *et al.* 2016). Similarly, local political leaders and party cadres may be considered as potential allies. As cross-departmental (horizontal) coordination is often a challenge in nutrition, the physical proximity of people and departments at the subnational level facilitates coordination, and this constitutes an opportunity for policy advocates operating at this level.

Moreover, policy advocates can foster subnational-level comparisons of performance on nutrition. Here, one can harness competitive spirit and local community pride (and shame) to show where effective leadership for nutrition is located, and where there is a lack of progress. For instance, new tools are being developed in Tanzania: HANCI scorecards compare political commitment to address hunger and nutrition in Morogoro and Kigoma districts, while the Tanzania Food and Nutrition Council is devising a National Nutrition Scorecard allowing for district-level comparisons. Where MLA connects such district-level comparisons and analyses with national-level assessment that incentivises good performance, this may lead to faster and effective learning on best nutrition practices and encourage their proliferation.

In terms of the funding environment, many civil society groups remain heavily dependent on donor monies, as is the case in Tanzania (Itad 2015). This has led to critiques that donors all too often drive the intellectual agendas of civil society, and may be less responsive to grass-roots communities (Hearn and Mapundo 2012). Arguably, were donors to seriously invest in subnational-level nutrition advocacy, there may be some low-hanging fruits to be enjoyed. At the subnational level, local individuals and organisations often make small but significant fundraising efforts. For instance, service clubs (e.g. Rotary) can generate awareness and funds for nutrition. While the amounts collected through this means vary, such groups are significant because they constitute locally important stakeholders – sometimes with small armies of volunteers at their disposal – and policy advocates may thus wish to engage such organisations. In other cases, local NGOs work as service providers on nutrition. Where such groups integrate community awareness-raising on the nature of malnutrition, its causes and consequences, as well as community entitlements *vis-à-vis* the state, such NGOs may be considered ‘service provision as advocacy’ partners. Accordingly, in central and southern regions of Tanzania, which are well-served by NGO nutrition projects supported by more than 15 development partners, knowledge of nutrition among district officials is much greater (Dr Joyce Kinabo pers. comm.).

Furthermore, social media enables advocacy groups to draw in new allies. During the Arab Spring protests in Egypt, for instance, social movements managed to draw in people without previous activist or organisational experience, including large groups of politically inexperienced young people. This created new political opportunities to unite and build consciousness in a relatively egalitarian manner (Lodge 2013).

Shiffman finally points to the value of international norms in terms of directing development efforts by national governments, a parallel that may be considered here. At the subnational

level, it cannot be assumed that local officials are aware of national nutrition strategies, policies and guidelines. Documents may not be available online or in hard copy at subnational level. This was, for instance, noted in several districts of Tanzania visited by this report's authors in 2015 and 2016. In such instances, raising awareness of national targets that central government has already publicly committed to can be an obvious but valuable way of engaging local officials, particularly where the linkages to advocated issues are clarified.

Shiffman pays limited attention to some of the structural features of polities that will shape the potential for successful (multi-level) advocacy. Accordingly, we propose this as an additional factor, and have added it to Table 7.4. Without being exhaustive, it is clear that devolved and decentralised administrations may offer important opportunities for influencing and accountability, increasing the number of venues at which advocacy can take place. Conversely, highly centralised presidential systems may not offer substantive subnational-level mandates, making it less attractive and valuable to connect MLA. Moreover, such analysis may extend to budgeting processes and the revenue-raising and spending powers of local authorities. For instance, in Tanzania, most of the budget is set by the national government with little opportunity for those at district level to influence budget allocations. Public expenditure reviews in 2006 and 2014 showed that most spending on nutrition at district level came from central government – for example, only 7 per cent of local authority funding came from the local authority's own sources (Leach and Kilama 2009; United Republic of Tanzania 2014).

#### **7.2.4 Advocacy strategies, tactics and activities**

Advocacy actors working at multiple levels will need to incorporate many of the opportunities already listed in terms of the composition of networks, awareness of and use of issue characteristics and policy environments pertinent to subnational levels, and action on policy processes that go beyond agenda setting. In addition, there are other ways in which specific advocacy strategies, tactics and activities can be or ought to be further tailored to MLA opportunities (Table 7.5).

Framing strategies and narratives will need to draw directly on both local-level issue characteristics and policy environments. This means that issues will need to be framed in such a way that they resonate with local perceptions of the issue (including its relative severity, tractability to local solutions at the local level, etc.). This requires awareness of the local political reality to present workable solutions which resonate locally and draw support and funds – or are even presented as vote-winners to political decision makers. In Brazil, for example, 'the success of national poverty reduction schemes (such as Bolsa Familia) encouraged local mayors from the government and opposition parties to further support and sponsor these programmes in their own districts and benefit from the electoral rewards' (Mejía Acosta and Fanzo 2012: 21). In Peru, similar opportunities presented by the decentralised administration of a national poverty scheme were deliberately sought out by civil society actors wanting to ensure effective implementation (Mejía Acosta 2011).

Such action also speaks to a wider category of 'enhancing democratic environments', which has been discussed in the wider advocacy literature (Gen and Wright 2013) as part of the strengthening of the policy environment necessary to bring about change. In MLA terms, this might include specific advocacy to enhance decentralisation of policy and/or more local control over (or more of a say in) implementation (including via accountability structures, see below). Or it may require ensuring that existing democratic structures that involve decentralisation are both used as intended (i.e. by elected representatives or other stakeholders) and are effective sites for local groups to pursue advocacy goals.

Tactics of applying public pressure, influencing decision makers, and conducting protests are all areas that can have specific MLA manifestations and opportunities, some of which have been discussed already. Some of the most effective forms of public pressure on national policy are those that have developed a good grass-roots/local base. But local decision-making fora, or areas of policy implementation run locally, are also opportunities for specific local-level activities, which may include cooperation and participation in decision-making itself (by invitation or election); or these may be ‘claimed’ spaces that are achieved through protest and use of local media.

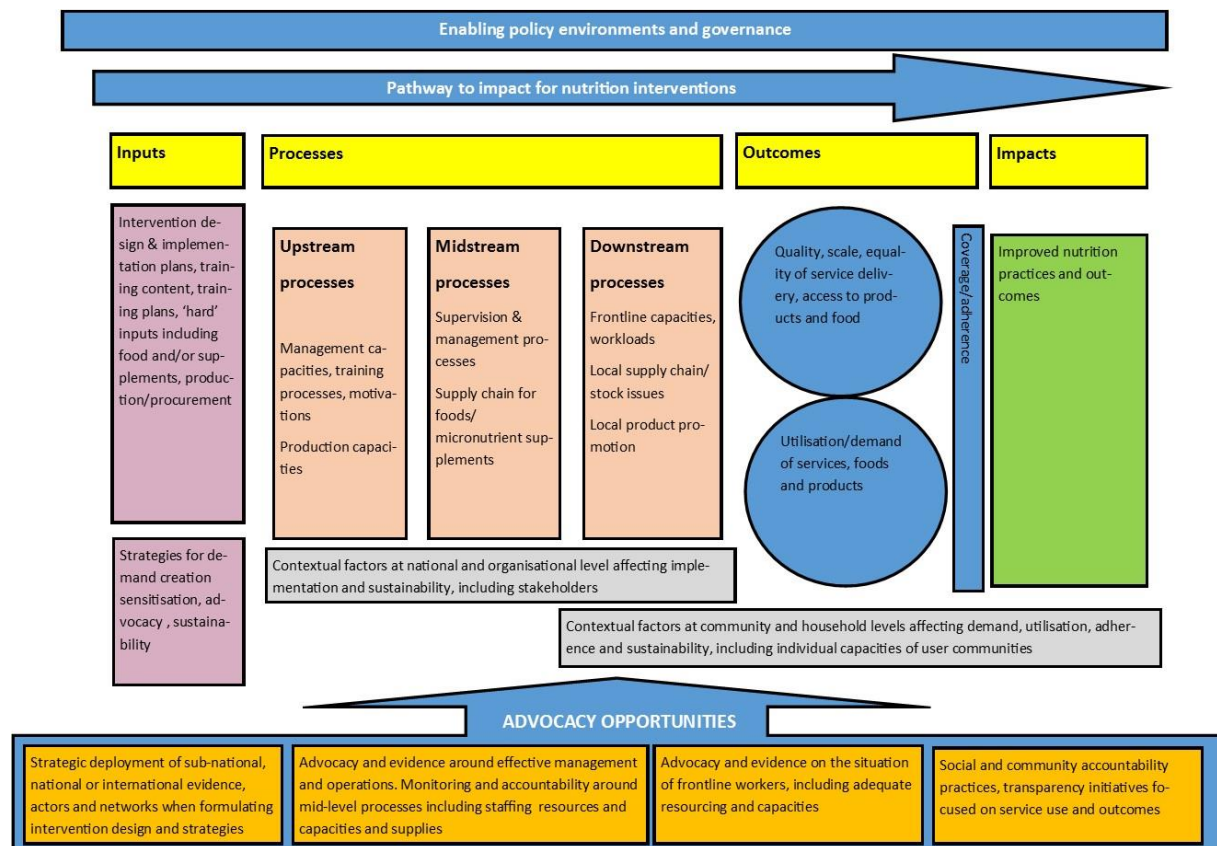
Finally, local-level activities centred around cooperation with local authorities responsible for service provision, and/or actual provision of services by advocates themselves (which, as noted earlier, can function as a form of protest in the absence of service provision by the state) are both forms of MLA that occur frequently, but are not always seen as sites of advocacy by the organisations involved (whether NGOs or community-based organisations). There may be further untapped opportunities for MLA here, either through such organisations explicitly advocating around these activities at a local level, by expanding their purview to other advocacy activities mentioned here, or by linking up with actors with a stronger advocacy purpose to represent collective interests (with roots in such service provision).

**Table 7.5 Tailoring advocacy strategies, tactics and activities to MLA**

<b>Process</b>	<b>Opportunities for MLA</b>	<b>Example</b>
Framing strategies and narratives	Framing around local issues, norms and opportunities based in local democratic/governance structures – including potential local ‘vote-winners’	Peru, Brazil (issues were locally adapted/framed and taken up by local political actors) – Mejía Acosta and Fanzo 2012
Enhancing democratic environments	Advocacy to strengthen functioning of local decentralised bodies; and to increase their purview (including to nutrition-sensitive/specific areas)	In Tanzania, the NGO Sikika tries to make districts more accountable regarding health spending and health workers
Applying public pressure	Local fora offer opportunities to raise awareness of an issue and/or local policy and implementation – including the media	E.g. training of local vernacular media on nutrition issues – PANITA, Tanzania
Influencing decision makers	Participation in governance fora enables advocates to build relationships with decision makers, including parliamentarians, regional and local council members and local party structures	E.g. Peru: Care’s support to regional implementation of national programmes (Mejía Acosta 2011). PANITA is member of the High Level Steering Committee on Nutrition, Tanzania
Protest	Village/community/municipality and regional forms of protest, focusing on local issues / delivery / prevalence and challenges	E.g. Tamil Nadu, India – populist protest on a range of issues at a village level leading to gradual but steady improvements (Vivek 2015)
Cooperation	Sympathetic local bureaucrats, politicians may wish to work together on shared advocacy and service delivery agendas	E.g. Odisha – competent bureaucracy innovating and responding positively to civil society pressure (Menon <i>et al.</i> 2016)
Co-provision	Provision of services in the absence of state provision – whether as co-provision, filling the gap or as a form of protest	E.g. Multiple contexts including e.g. UK (food bank provision)

## 7.3 Implementation and accountability

Figure 7.1 Advocacy in the nutrition implementation framework



Source: Adapted from Menon *et al.* (2014: 43).

Our broader definition of MLA has also highlighted the need to go beyond the agenda-setting stages of the policy process to implementation, monitoring and accountability. Drawing from the implementation science literature, one framework within nutrition has identified a number of important domains for consideration, from design, planning and training, through the 'delivery core' of upstream, midstream and downstream processes detailing management, supervision and frontline delivery and the expected outcomes (Menon *et al.* 2014). Importantly, the review also identifies a number of contextual factors where various stakeholders may have a role in influencing outcomes. Again, each of these domains can be important for advocacy, particularly at subnational levels. Individuals within an implementation organisation, for example, at all scales of an operational hierarchy need to be strongly motivated to deliver an intended change in implementation or to put a new system into operation; they will need to have the right resources and skills available to them and may require further training to carry out tasks or implement new systems competently (*ibid.* and see the detailed discussion in Damschroder *et al.* 2009; see also Gillespie *et al.* 2015).

Advocacy strategies for those actors already engaged in agenda setting and wanting to pursue advocacy through to implementation may focus on ensuring fidelity to original policy advocacy/agenda-setting aims through each of these stages through to optimal delivery for intended beneficiary groups. Alternatively, advocacy may evolve into explicit capacity building, motivation research and partnership with government and others and involve specific delivery functions. In some cases, demonstrating models of effective delivery has represented one such advocacy strategy in the absence of effective government provision (Gen and Wright 2013: 180). A focus on the needs of frontline workers may also be a

necessary step in ensuring ‘last-mile’ delivery (Menon *et al.* 2014: 47). Again, this has more traditionally been thought outside of the purview of advocacy and more within the domain of accountability (below), capacity building or even NGO-led delivery. But at national and subnational levels, advocating for the needs and conditions of frontline workers may also be a critical next step in advocacy policy, particularly given the increasing demands likely to be placed on community workers and the ever-present trade-offs involved in the volunteer model (i.e. honorary and low-paid ‘volunteers’ in the place of regular government workers) pursued in most low-income settings.

Formal monitoring and evaluation (M&E) built into policy and implementation offers further avenues for MLA. But linking ‘traditional’ policy advocacy with activities focused more on service provision accountability is an important extension of MLA that has had considerable impacts where applied – most notably by India’s Right to Food movement (Krishnan and Subramaniam 2014). Approached from a base of national-level policy advocacy, this may seem to be an extension into quite new territory. However, traditional national-level advocacy actors wishing to develop their approaches further to encompass accountability activities have a natural benefit in addressing these issues. This is because they (a) may be linked to or sometimes actually be the source of these wider collective actions that have been associated with successful change; and (b) may be skilled operators at assessing, building and demanding state responsiveness.

While pursuing accountability approaches might be the natural flip-side of national-level policy advocacy, the strategies and tactics are different and require a broader grass-roots base than many capital-based advocacy organisations currently rely on. Depending on the political context, advocacy organisations may need to seek to form implementation alliances with existing national or community groups pursuing accountability strategies; or seek ways to build capacity of such groups. They may also complement existing accountability work or catalyse further work by using advocacy skills to ensure that appropriate levels of social accountability and transparency are either legislated for or are built into implementation standards and guidance at appropriate stages (see Sections 4 and 7.1).

The potential range of needs and uses for advocacy skills and strategies embedded in different accountability strategies are presented in further detail in Table 7.6.

**Table 7.6 Accountability approaches – what lessons for MLA?**

<b>Approach</b>	<b>Opportunities for MLA</b>	<b>Examples</b>
User-centred information access	Broad advocacy and campaigns around the 'right to information' Aggregation of information Upward communication and advocacy Incorporation into advocacy of policy options Incorporation into broader campaigns	Slum Dwellers International (SDI) federations in India, and sub-Saharan Africa adopt community enumeration of development services
Complaint/grievance redress	As above Plus highlighting of particular grievances and concerns Legal action	Right to information campaign/ Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), India
Participatory budgeting	Advocacy for participatory budgeting in new domains Encouraging participation Upward communication as above	Porte Allegra, Brazil – an alternative budgetary process where citizens can negotiate with officials regarding budgetary allocations and priorities (Gonçalves 2014)
<i>Citizens' oversight of public services – often termed as 'social audits'</i>		
Citizen report cards	Aggregation of information Upward communication and advocacy Highlighting local service issues; lobbying municipal/district service providers	Scorecards in community service delivery improvements, Maharashtra, India (Murty 2007)
Public hearings		Public hearings in maternal health, Odisha, India (Papp, Gogoi and Campbell 2013)
Community scorecards		Community scorecards for community health centres – Uganda (Björkman and Svensson 2009); Health services in Andhra Pradesh (Misra 2007)
Community monitoring	Enlisting media support and support of 'like-minded' organisations and activists in allied areas Incorporation into advocacy of policy options Incorporation into broader campaigns	Community monitoring of Tawana nutrition project in Pakistan (Khan, Rafique and Ali Bawani 2013)

Source: Adapted from Ahmed *et al.* (forthcoming).



## 8 Conclusions

In this report, we have drawn on the literature on policy science, non-profit, policy advocacy, implementation science, accountability, and social movements to identify opportunities and constraints, and key factors that foster or explain the absence of multi-level advocacy (MLA) for nutrition. We find that there are very few case studies that elaborate on this, and accordingly draw inferences for MLA based on broader discussions concerning the nature of advocacy in all of the literature. We have focused on connections between national and subnational-level advocacy.

The analysis is organised around an application of Shiffman's influential framework, which seeks to explain the emergence of effective advocacy. We have added to and amended the framework, and considered its implications for MLA. Overall, we argue that Shiffman (2016) gives less attention to the structural institutional features of polities and political economies that determine the nature and potential for policy advocacy.

We have also highlighted the importance of advocacy strategies, tactics and activities, and noted the need to pay attention to the policy process at large, moving beyond agenda-setting activities to consider implementation and local social accountability efforts.

Turning to Shiffman's typology, we note that in terms of actor and network characteristics:

- implementation arenas offer a domain for influencing and accountability. First-mover advantages exist for those catering to knowledge, capacity, and other needs of local officials. However, advocacy NGOs often operate chiefly in capital cities, and the subnational CSO landscape is thinly populated
- effective leaders recognise that implementation arenas are likely to be composed of different kinds of actors than prevalent in national advocacy environments
- coalitions operating at subnational level are more likely to be organised around shared interests than shared values, and at risk of fragmentation.

In terms of the issue characteristics of nutrition:

- the multidimensionality of nutrition offers potential to engage with and piggyback on a range of causes that already receive attention from local decision makers. However, there is often an absence of reliable and disaggregated data on the nature and extent of the problem at subnational level, and local officials may harbour predispositions on the nature of the problem and solutions that do not correspond with expert assessments
- opportunities of intersectionality may exist locally; where self-assertion and social mobilisation already take place around (for instance) ethnic identity or the position of other marginalised groups, which therefore offer opportunities with which advocacy may connect.

In terms of the nature of the 'enabling' environment, we find that:

- some political leaders stride local–national levels of advocacy and have incentives to make MLA connections
- advocacy groups need to find allies within government that can survive typical bureaucratic transfers, and should give attention to the capacities, incentives, needs, inclinations and scope for administrative discretion of local-level frontline bureaucrats and workers

- there are opportunities for nutrition advocates to make comparisons, harness local pride and shame – demonstrate strong performance *vis-à-vis* other local authorities. Social media further opens up opportunities to bring in new supporters in the community
- local allies' physical proximity facilitates opportunities for coordination with and cross-sector linkages between local officials
- local fundraising bodies and individuals volunteering could offer valuable allies and sources of funding for advocacy
- national policies and strategies offer important anchoring norms to hook advocacy on, to persuade local government actors about advocacy claims
- devolved and decentralised administrations offer distinct opportunities for MLA
- sustained and substantial resourcing for MLA will be critical to reach wider administrative scales extending into implementation.

In terms of framing, advocacy strategies, tactics and action (our extension of the Shiffman framework to encompass other literature), we note that:

- framing and narratives might be structured to focus specifically on local issues, norms and opportunities based in local democratic/governance structures – including potential local 'vote-winners'
- advocacy to strengthen functioning of local decentralised bodies and to increase their purview may include opportunities to include or broaden the focus on nutrition-sensitive/specific areas
- a range of local fora may be available to raise awareness of an issue and/or local policy and implementation – including the media
- local-level decision-making advocacy may involve participating in and targeting actors in local governance fora, implementation committees, etc. Building relationships with key local-level actors, including parliamentarians, regional and local council members, and local party structures, is key
- important venues of advocacy may include village/community/municipality and regional forms of protest, focusing on local issues/delivery/prevalence and challenges
- local-level implementation presents opportunities for working with sympathetic local bureaucrats and politicians on shared advocacy and service delivery agendas; while provision of services in the absence of state provision – whether as co-provision or filling the gap – can also work as an important form of advocacy and/or protest.

Finally, we summarise the wider 'whole of policy process' findings in terms of opportunities for MLA in policy/legislation/programme development, implementation, monitoring and accountability, and find that:

- as with agenda setting, opportunities in terms of policy/legislation/programme development depend on wider structural political characteristics, including levels of decentralisation – the latter providing substantial ground for further advocacy beyond the agenda-setting stage
- nevertheless, and regardless of the political environment, opportunities exist to draw in local (or international) experience, evidence, pilots and other 'frontline' implementation experience to help shape important policy dimensions decided at the policy formulation/legislation/programme development/guidelines stage; as do opportunities to bring in actors and networks from these multiple scales
- advocacy opportunities exist (and are often poorly exploited/neglected) around mid-level implementation management and operations processes; likewise around frontline delivery

- such opportunities may include specific advocacy and support for the position of (often under-resourced and poorly supplied) frontline workers
- multiple opportunities exist for advocacy and accountability activities to be better linked – for example, using accountability to identify gaps in service provision and broader advocacy around such cases to press for wider change
- accountability actors might therefore expand their advocacy activities, while advocacy actors might expand their accountability activities. Alternatively, broader coalitions might draw on the national-level and community skills of different types of organisations engaged in these spaces
- advocacy might focus on increasing participation, accountability and transparency as outcomes in their own right.

This report accordingly contributes to debates about how to build both momentum and action for nutrition via advocacy and other means (Gillespie *et al.* 2013), and more generally to the literature on policy advocacy in developing countries.

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