The super duper impact planning guide

Partnership Initiative of the International Budget Partnership
By Albert van Zyl
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1 What is an Impact Plan, and why do you need one?

An Impact Plan (IP) is an explanation of how you expect your organization’s strategies or campaigns to work. It shows the chain of cause and effect between the strategies that your organization uses and the ultimate results that you hope to achieve.

Any advocacy strategy already assumes that such a chain of cause and effect exists. An IP is just an explicit statement or graphic representation of the sequence of changes that you hope to contribute to through your work. This guide will help you use IPs as a tool for formulating and implementing strategies for campaigns or projects. IPs can help you to unpack the assumptions implicit in these strategies. Understanding and improving these linkages can help you reach the objectives of your work.

1.1 Impact Plans should be specific

IPs work better when they are as specific as possible. The more specific the elements and underlying assumptions in the IP, the easier they are to evaluate and improve. General linkages hide some of the detailed assumptions that are critical to the success of civil society organizations’ (CSOs) budget advocacy. For this reason IPs are best used for issue-specific projects or campaigns that are designed to reach specific objectives rather than for broader programs or organizations. This is one of the key differences between IPs and Strategic Plans, which are generally drawn up for institutions or organizations as a whole.

Begin by working out an IP for one project or campaign that you are involved in. Once you are comfortable with IPs, you may want to work them out for other projects or campaigns. But don’t fall into the trap of starting off by trying to work out multiple IPs.
1.2 Impact Plans Change

Impact plans are “living” documents that are refined and improved continuously as assumptions about impact are tested. They should not be like so many static reports to donors that are done at the beginning of a grant cycle and then forgotten. If your actions are not bringing about the effects you expected, you can and should adjust your plans to ensure that you still reach your objectives.

We can’t predict the future, so when we design an advocacy strategy, we have to make assumptions about how change can be brought about. Advocacy strategies fail when these assumptions do not work out as we thought they would, or when we do not implement our strategies as intended. For these reasons it is good to formulate, discuss, examine, research, and refine IPs. The more explicit and conscious the assumptions in the IP, the better we can test and monitor them. The more tested the assumptions, the more likely the chance of impact.

1.3 Impact plans are working documents

IPs are only useful when they are used to guide your work, so ideally they should give you an outline of the activities that you will undertake from day to day. In other words, IPs really should go straight from the page to your project/campaign plans and to-do list.
Impact Plans are for your use only. They are meant to help you improve your advocacy plans and increase the impact that you achieve. They are NOT intended as an instrument for reporting to the IBP or any other donor.

So then why does the Partnership Initiative (PI) push for you to formulate and update IPs? The PI is dedicated to increasing CSO impact on government budgets. We are also committed to learning about how to do this more effectively. We have found that impact planning is a useful instrument for pursuing these commitments. A critical part of the PI’s own IP is that IPs can help CSOs achieve this goal! So the reason why we insist that our partners formulate these plans is not because IPs will be used to monitor what you do, but rather because we want you to achieve greater impact and to learn how to go about doing this.

As the PI made clear to all of their partners at the start of their relationships, the emphasis is not on IPs, but on learning for greater impact. If, therefore, you are already using another planning tool, this is in order as long as it shares some of the basic elements that are described below. These basic elements include specific statements of ultimate objectives, the necessary budget changes for realizing these objectives, policymakers who can make these changes, and the proposed activities to influence the latter to do so.
How to use this guide

What follows below is a guide to impact planning, not a guide to budget analysis or advocacy. It will, for example, provide guidance on how to connect your activities to policymakers, but it will not provide comprehensive guidance on how to choose the appropriate policymakers or activities, or how to find out what is wrong with the budget. For this reason the guide is best used together with advocacy training materials, such as those from the IBP’s General Intermediate Training or Health and Budgets courses.

Both this guide and IPs are best thought of as maps, not tunnels. A tunnel determines where you can go without any choice of route. A map gives a number of alternative routes from which you need to choose the one that is most appropriate for you.

For these reasons an IP should not be slavishly completed by filling in the required boxes. Leave parts of it out! Add parts to it! But make sure that it gives you a convincing map of how you can get from where you are now to where you want to be. However, even maps have mountains, lakes, and dead-ends that are best avoided. Without trying to force a specific route on anyone, this guide sets out to highlight some of obstacles that can be found in IPs.
How to formulate an IP

The formulation of IPs starts with the end, namely defining an ultimate objective. It works backward from there to establish activities that will influence policymakers and strategic partners to take action to contribute to the objective.

Each of the components of an IP is linked to the previous component by a set of assumptions. So, for example, if the ultimate objective of a campaign is to improve the quality of education, and in order to do so it proposes that government provides more teacher training, an assumption is being made that poor quality education is at least partly the result of teachers with poor or inappropriate qualifications.

These assumptions should be tested in two ways. At a minimum, the assumption must be reasonable. In our example the provision of teacher training appears to be a reasonable service delivery response to the problem of insufficient teacher training. Developing online learner support in a country with limited Internet access would be less reasonable.

Another assumption might be that the Department of Education could be convinced to allocate more funding for teacher training if it knew that it could increase the overall size of the education budget if it did so.

How to decide what is reasonable? One way is to base these assumptions in some preliminary analysis or your existing knowledge about the issue. Therefore, situation or problem analysis should be a first step in IP formulation. This could take the form of a deep discussion within your organization about what problem or ultimate objective you want to tackle, and why it exists.
However, even reasonable assumptions may turn out to be wrong. Teacher training won’t help if the reason for poor quality education is the lack of school buildings or school books, or if the reason why the Department of Education doesn’t provide more training for teachers is the lack of tertiary facilities for doing so. Therefore, the second test to which these assumptions should be submitted is a test against credible research.

We discuss how to review IPs below. For now, the important thing to bear in mind is that when an IP is first formulated, each link and assumption that it proposes should at least appear to be reasonable.

4.1 Organization’s objective

This is a description of the general goals of your organization. Your organization may, for example, pursue equal and quality education for all, or citizen participation in the budget and policy process. It is important to include your organization’s overall goals in your IP because it ensures alignment between the specific campaign and what your organization strives for in all its work. Such alignment will make sure that the campaign or project remains within the ambit of your organization, and this will ensure buy-in and support from colleagues not directly involved in your work.

Guiding questions

- What are your organization’s vision and mission as reflected in its Strategic Plan?
- Do the goals of the project or campaign contribute to the realization of your organization’s vision and mission? How? Do others in your organization understand and agree with the contribution that you see?
4.2 Ultimate objective

What is this specific campaign ultimately trying to achieve? While we work in the budget sector, our ultimate objective is not usually to see budget changes, but rather changes in people’s well being. Whose quality of life are you aiming to improve, and what will these improvements look like? The answer to this question usually forms the second block in your IP. Two examples of ultimate objectives are to improve numeracy and literacy, or to empower poor communities to oversee the distribution of HIV/AIDS drugs.

Apart from ensuring broad alignment with your organizational goals, this first component cannot be measured for reasonableness because it is simply what your project or campaign is trying to advance. It is, however, essential to apply a framework, such as SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time bound), to it.\(^2\) The harder you work on making your ultimate objective SMART, the easier it will be to formulate specific components in the rest of your IP. A vague ultimate objective will allow for more linkages to policymakers and activities than can be usefully pursued.

Guiding questions

- What is this campaign ultimately trying to change? If it succeeds, what would have happened by the time it ends?
- Whose quality of life do you aim to have an impact on? Think about target beneficiaries or sectors of the population.
- Where do you aim to have an impact? Think about a geographical area and/or levels of government.
- What will the form of the impact be? Think about an observable benefit, service, facility, process, or structure that will change for the people you identified in your answer to the first question.

\(^2\) A guide to using the SMART framework is available here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMART_criteria.
Your campaign’s ultimate objective

4.3 Changes in government behavior

If you are pursuing an improvement in social development status as an ultimate objective, then this component of the IP would typically identify an area of government service delivery that could realistically bring about a change that leads toward your objective. If, for example, your objective is to reduce maternal mortality, then your service delivery change may be that sufficient midwives should be available for women in specific regions.

But not all campaigns pursue an ultimate objective of improving the social development status of their target population. Some try to empower people to play a bigger role in the government decisions that affect them. To do this, some campaigns want to ensure that certain kinds of government information are made publicly available. Or that certain government decisions are made in a more participatory manner.

Reality is complex, and it is unlikely that a change in a single area of government behavior would bring about the ultimate objective that you want. It is more likely that a whole web of actions combined with other factors, such as human behavior and environment, would be required. For example, getting more midwives employed and deployed will not have any impact on maternal mortality if more equipment and facilities are not also provided. Or, as another example, even if a legislature takes recommendations formulated in community hearings seriously, the voice of the relevant community would still effectively be ignored if the Department of Finance ignores the recommendations.

If you come across such complexity, it doesn’t necessarily mean that you should also address this further issue. Is another organization already working on the issue? Or would another organization be better placed to
pursue it? Only if the answer to both these questions is “no” should you start planning to address it yourself.

While it is important to be as specific as possible about the desired change in government behavior, you will sometimes have no choice but to pursue more than one change in behavior simultaneously – be it with other organizations or on your own. In such cases your IP must include all of these changes. But beware! Planning for such complexity should not be equated with not prioritizing or strategically sequencing. Pursuing two integrally linked changes in government behavior is not the same as pursuing two different changes.

For this component it also would be beneficial to apply the SMART framework. How much of which government service would need to be provided by when? Which government department would need to implement which recommendation from which community by when?

**Guiding questions**

- Which area of government service delivery are you trying to influence?
- How much of which government service would need to be provided to whom and by when?
- Which government department would need to implement which recommendation from which community by when?
- Which piece of information about which government activity would need to be released in what form and by when?
- Would you need to influence more than one area of government behavior simultaneously to have an impact on your ultimate objective?

**Changes in government behavior required by your campaign**
4.4 Budget changes

To achieve change in government behavior, it is often necessary to bring about some changes to the budget process (participation, budget transparency) and/or to budget policy (increased allocations, improved implementation, reduced corruption). And remember that you should be looking for a reasonable link between these budget changes and the change in government behavior that you seek. Again the SMART framework could be used.

If you want more midwives, for example, then an increase in the personnel budget of the primary health care budget of the Ministry of Health may help; whereas a reduction in corruption in the procurement of medicines may not help directly (but it may free up money that could be reallocated in this way). Or if citizens want to play a role in the formulation of the budget and discover that their preferred channel for doing so, the legislature, does not have the technical capacity necessary, then citizens may campaign for the creation of a parliamentary budget office.

As we indicated in the previous section, you will sometimes have no choice but to pursue two linked budget changes at the same time.

Guiding questions

- Which parts of the government budget should be made publicly available by whom and by when?
- Who should be involved in which parts of the budget process and by when?
- Which budget allocations from which department or programs should be increased by how much and by when?
- Which parts of the procurement process should be reformed and how?
4.5 Policymakers

To bring about these budget changes, action will be required from one or more specific policymakers. Who needs to make a decision, change her mind, or act differently before your desired budget changes can take place? Which specific policymakers (for example, head of the Budget Office, or chair of the Finance Committee in parliament) are you trying to influence? In some cases these policymakers may include donors or international financial institutions. The policymaker could be an individual (e.g., Minister of Finance) or an institution (e.g., Finance Committee of parliament).

Often the person or institution that is formally responsible for the issue at hand is not the right person to target with your IP. For example, sometimes another strong ministry or the President has more influence on budget allocations than the Ministry of Finance. In these cases your IP should target the real power brokers.

The choice of policymaker also should be as specific as possible. Targeting the Ministry of Health is too general if the key policymaker who decides the number of midwives and the budget for it is the program head of the primary health care program.

It is also important to prioritize the choice of policymakers. Of course the President, Prime Minister, Minister of Health, head of the Department of Health, program head of the primary health care program, parliament, donors, etc. may all have some say in deciding the number of health workers and the budget for them, but in our quest for specificity, we should strive to choose the one key actor who is most likely to give us what we want.
As indicated above, it is sometimes not possible to choose only one budget change. In such cases you may also end up targeting more than one policymaker. For example, the head of the primary health program may have the final decision on the budget for health worker salaries, but the Ministry of Public Works may hold the purse strings for the construction of health facilities.

It is often important to target a few policymakers to get a critical mass to agree that your issue is important. So, for example, if you are trying to get the head of a primary health care program to spend more money on clinic buildings, it would be helpful to have the head of the Department of Health, the health minister, and the health portfolio committee in the legislature on your side already. It is important to distinguish, however, between the policymaker who will make the decision that you are trying to influence and others who can influence that decision. For this component you need to state who the “decision maker” is. The “influencers” will be identified and planned for under the section dealing with strategic partners below. (See 4.7)

Above all, remember that the biggest risk in this component is not to choose the wrong policymaker; the biggest risk is to choose too many.

If you find it hard to prioritize policymakers because you are not sure who the appropriate policymaker would be for this issue, you should consider doing some preliminary research. Speaking to sector experts or colleagues who work in the same area could give you enough information to make a good provisional choice of the policymaker who will make the decision.

**Guiding questions**

- Who needs to make a decision, change their mind, or act differently before your desired budget changes can take place?
- Which specific policymakers (for example, head of the Budget Office, or chair of the Finance Committee in parliament) are you trying to influence?
- Do the policymakers whom you have identified hold the real power of decision? Or is their decision strongly influenced by someone else?
4.6 Activities to influence policymakers

This component should explain what you are planning to do (research, media briefings, protest marches, and so forth) to influence your chosen policymakers.

For this component it is particularly important to have a reasonable theory about what will influence the relevant policymaker in the way that you desire. If all that is missing to bring about change is information, then doing research and presenting it to the right people may be enough to spark change. But if this is not the case, you may need to think about what the pressure points of this specific policymaker are. Is it a bureaucrat who will respond to political pressure from the minister? Is it a Member of Parliament from a party that is particularly sensitive to adverse media coverage or a show of public force, such as a protest march? Is it a rational official who has a sympathetic ear for quality research?

A good technique for answering this question is to ask: why isn’t change happening already? What are the blockages? Who would oppose the change that you want? Asking these questions will help you identify what additional intervention would be needed to shift the positions of policymakers. If you plan to produce research and give it to policymakers, ask yourself: is the lack of such research the real reason why change is not happening? Or, if you plan to mobilize Members of Parliament, ask: is a lack of pressure from parliament the main reason why change is not happening?

The political landscape, its actors, and their incentives can and do change very rapidly. As a result this may be the component where assumptions are most precarious and will need to be revisited most often.
Guiding questions

• What motivates this specific policymaker? How could you motivate them to do what you want?
• Why isn’t change happening already? What are the blockages to it?
• Who is likely to oppose the change that you want? How can you avoid, discredit, or convince them?

Activities to influence your chosen policymakers

4.7 Strategic partners

Research shows that CSOs seldom achieve impact on government budgets on their own. Successful campaigns are almost always driven by large networks of CSOs, media, legislatures, audit institutions, grassroots organizations, academics, and even sympathetic officials. In this component you should identify the strategic partners that are most likely to help you influence the policymakers identified above. What are your strengths and weaknesses? And theirs? What can they do that you can’t?

Guiding questions

• Which outsiders to the budget and policy process (CSOs, media, trade unions, and religious groups) can help you influence policymakers? What could they do to help you convince policymakers?
• Which insiders to the budget and policy process (legislators, auditors, and officials) could help you influence policymakers? What could they do to help you convince policymakers?
• What are the strengths and weaknesses of each of the above? And how could they augment your strengths and weaknesses?
Your campaign’s strategic partners

4.8 Activities to influence and support strategic partners

In this component you should state what you are planning to do (training, coalition building, research briefings, and so forth) to inform, influence, or support the strategic partners you’ve identified.

For this component it is also very important to have a reasonable theory about what the interests of the relevant strategic partner are, and how you can appeal to those interests. Simply explaining the importance of your ultimate objective may not always be enough. What are the concerns of this specific strategic partner? Is it an auditor who is frustrated by an executive that ignores her recommendations? Is it a CSO that shares your ultimate objective? Or is it a journalist who is interested in the research that your campaign will produce?

Guiding questions

- What are the concerns or interests of this specific strategic partner?
- How can you appeal to their concerns or interests?
- How can you present your campaign in order to show the connections with theirs?
- Do they share objectives with you? Or could this campaign somehow help them reach their own goals? Are there connections between your work and theirs that they may not be aware of?
Activities to influence and support your strategic partners

4.9 Even more changes?

Sometimes a series of intermediate goals creeps in between ultimate and immediate goals. This is not a problem; in fact, it is strength of the process in that it makes you aware of what is actually required. For example, it may be that the ultimate objective is to reduce mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) of HIV/AIDS through improved supply of antiretroviral drugs (ARVs). In this example the change in government behavior would be to increase the supply of ARVs. In formulating an IP, it could emerge that there is something in between: an increase in the supply of ARVs doesn’t necessarily mean that they will be given to pregnant women. We may need to examine the assumption that pregnant women will get the ARVs just because the supply increases (maybe that is a reasonable assumption, maybe we need to have another objective like targeting the neediest primary health care clinics, maybe we just need to specify our objective further, etc.).

Sometimes there are also institutional, legal, or policy changes that need to be made before the relevant budget change can be made. For example, government may only be prepared to increase the budget for maternal mortality if there is a change in their health policy that prioritizes primary health care over tertiary care. Or government may only be prepared to consider direct civil society input into the formulation of the budget process if such participation is regulated by policy or legislation dealing with timing, representativeness, etc. In this component of your IP, you should formulate and strategize for such changes. And if there are none, you can leave it blank.

Understanding and planning for such complexity is a positive result of the IP exercise and should be reflected in your IP. Once you have understood this complexity, it would still be necessary to go through the prioritization described in the steps above and below.
Guiding questions

- Are there any service delivery or budget changes that precede the change that you are advocating for?
- Which institutional, legal, or policy changes need to be made before the relevant budget policy or process change can be made?

4.10 Timing and control

The steps discussed above should also be looked at sequentially to get clarity about what can be achieved in the immediate or short term (one to two years), intermediate (three to five years), and long term (five years and beyond). The short-term steps may include the formation of alliances and an advocacy agenda with strong, well-informed messages; the intermediate phase may include getting the attention of targeted policymakers or having those messages reach an intended audience; long-term goals may include changes in budget or the creation of new participatory mechanisms to include the affected population; and then, eventually, the ultimate objective.

It is not necessary for impact to take as long as is indicated above. The number of years for each stage could be shorter if the project is very focused. But it is essential to be realistic in your planning. What looks like a failed campaign can simply be a campaign that hasn't been given enough time or a campaign with overly ambitious goals.

It should also be noted that the further you get along the links of your IP, the less control you have over whether or not the change happens. You can be fairly certain, for example, of being able to mobilize your civil society colleagues. However, it is harder to be sure of bringing about the changes in budgets or service delivery that you target. These changes may take longer and involve more actors and more changes in tactics.
4.11 Example one: Reducing MTCT

Using the ideas generated by the steps above, you can create a simple flow diagram to express your IP.

By way of example, imagine a CSO dedicated to improving the health status of poor people (Organizational objective). They want to reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS. Existing research and prior experience shows that this can be done by reducing MTCT through improved availability of ARVs (Ultimate objective). Most women are willing to use ARVs, but current supplies only meet half the need, and short supply seems to result from inadequate resources to pay for ARVs. For these reasons the campaign seeks a doubling of the amount of ARVs available at primary health care clinics (Change in government behavior). To finance this increase, the budget allocation to drugs in the primary health care program would need to increase by $150 million (Budget change). The current strategic plan for the Department of Health emphasizes prevention and does not pay sufficient attention to MTCT. The strategic plan would need to change to prioritize MTCT before government is likely to make this change to the budget (Policy change).

To advocate for this change, the organization draws together a coalition of university researchers, who are working on the issue, and community groups and other CSOs, which share a concern for the issue but do not have enough influence to make government address the issue (Strategic partners). The parliament in this country is powerful and has the ability to make significant changes in the budget. For this reason the coalition decides to target Members of Parliament (MPs) in their campaign (Policymakers). Their plan is to show MPs that death from HIV/AIDS has become a large enough problem to impact on future elections. Thus they hope to convince MPs to vote for the above budget changes. They undertake the relevant research on MTCT incidence and the provision of ARVs, as well as on the impact of HIV/AIDS deaths on electoral patterns (all activities to convince policymakers). They then brief the coalition members on the results of the costing and train them on how to use the findings to lobby local MPs on the issue (Activities to influence and support strategic partners). The IP that underpins this strategy can be presented as follows:
**Organizational objective:**
Improving the health of the poor

**Ultimate objective of campaign:**
Reduce HIV/AIDS incidence by reducing MTCT

**Budget changes:**
Increase budget allocation by $150 million

**Change in government behavior:**
Increase delivery of ARVs

**Institutional, legal or policy changes:**
Amendments in the HIV/AIDS policy to emphasize MTCT, not just prevention

**Policymakers:**
Members of Parliament from the most affected constituencies

**Activities to influence policymakers:**
Research and lobbying of MPs

**Activities to influence and support strategic partners:**
Commission and guide research, briefing on research, advocacy training

**Strategic partners:**
Academics, community groups, CSOs

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**Assumptions**

The components of this IP are connected by a series of assumptions. We list some of them below. Have a close look at these assumptions and think about how they could be wrong. It is possible that MPs can’t or won’t amend the budget tabled by the Minister of Finance. The latter may be a senior party member and more junior party members may not want to stand up to him or her. Or bigger allocation may not translate into more drugs being available because drugs are not distributed to clinics on the basis of need.
**Ultimate Objective**

**Assumption 1**
Better access to HIV/AIDS drugs will reduce MTCT and thus HIV/AIDS incidence.

**Assumption 2**
Bigger allocations for HIV/AIDS drugs mean that more pregnant women will be able to get these drugs at clinics.

**Assumption 3**
If enough key MPs believe that the drugs are needed and affordable, they will convince the executive to allocate more funds for drugs in the budget.

**Assumption 4**
MPs can and will amend the budget tabled by the executive.

**Assumption 5**
MPs will be convinced by reliable research and lobbying by CSOs.

**Assumption 6**
With greater budget advocacy capacity, CSOs will be able to convince local MPs that more spending on HIV/AIDS drugs is both needed and affordable. The CSOs could also remind MPs that people who might vote for them are dying because of drug shortages.

**Assumption 7**
Doing the above research, training CSOs, and providing them with reliable facts on the issue will build their capacity to undertake budget advocacy work.

**Assumption 8**
Drawing together a coalition of CSOs will create a strong platform to advocate for better access to HIV/AIDS drugs.
But then the campaign gets more complicated

While implementing their IP, the organization realizes that the availability of ARVs is not the only blockage to improved treatment of MTCT. Primary health care clinics also don’t have enough staff trained to administer ARVs. As a result of this, the organization commissions further research and finds that an additional $50 million a year is needed to employ another 1,000 primary health care workers (Change in government behavior and Budget change). Their research also shows that if this extra $50 million were spent, government could save over the medium term more money in treatment than it would spend on prevention (Activities to influence policymakers). These financial arguments are likely to convince officials in the Department of Finance to permit this increase in personnel expenditure (Policymakers). The Department of Finance has set 40 percent of total government spending as a limit for personnel spending. In order to allow this allocation for health workers, they would need to let personnel spending increase to 43 percent (Policy change). After commissioning the above research from their academic partners (Strategic partners), the CSO organizes a meeting between the academics and the relevant Department of Finance officials in order for the research to be presented (Activities to influence and support strategic partners).
After these developments, their IP now looks like this:

**Organizational objective:** Improving the health of the poor

**Ultimate objective:** Reduce HIV/AIDS incidence by reducing MTCT

**Change in government behavior:** Increase delivery of ARVs

**Change in government behavior:** Increase primary health care workers

**Budget changes:** Increase budget allocation by $150 million

**Budget changes:** Increase personnel spending on primary health care workers by $50 million

**Institutional, legal, or policy changes:** Amendments in the HIV/AIDS policy to emphasize MTCT, not just prevention

**Institutional, legal, or policy changes:** Increase the maximum ceiling on personnel spending from 40 percent to 43 percent

**Policymakers:** Members of Parliament from the most affected constituencies

**Policymakers:** Head of the Directorate of Expenditure Control and the Minister of Finance

**Activities to influence policymakers:** Research and lobbying of MPs

**Activities to influence policymakers:** Research and presentation to the Ministry of Finance

**Strategic partners:** Academics, community groups, CSOs

**Strategic partners:** Academics

**Activities to influence and support strategic partners:** Briefing on research, advocacy training

**Activities to influence and support strategic partners:** Commission research and organize meeting with government officials
As is the case with all IPs, this second leg of their IP is also full of assumptions. Here are two of them:

- Employing more health workers will translate into more appropriately trained health workers being employed at the clinics with the greatest need.
- The technical arguments that convince finance officials will also convince the politicians.

Can you think of any more assumptions that are being made? Which of these could turn out to be wrong?

4.12 Example two: Delivery of school infrastructure

Imagine a CSO that is dedicated to citizen oversight of governance (Organizational objective). In their daily work they realize that many citizens are unhappy with poor delivery of school infrastructure and want to monitor these projects (Ultimate objective). Citizens can’t monitor the infrastructure provision because no information is released publicly on the delivery of school buildings or how they are financed. For this reason they start a campaign to advocate for such information to be released publicly (Change in government behavior and Budget change). Local government officials say that the reason for slow delivery is that they don’t get money transferred to them on time from national government. The CSO, therefore, decides to advocate for the public release of the monthly actual expenditure reports of both the national and local government Departments of Education. This would allow them to monitor the transfer of funds from national to local governments. To advocate for this change, they draw together an informal coalition of prominent CSOs and NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) and donors that finance the education sector (Strategic partners). Donors are concerned about how efficiently their investment in the sector is being spent, as well as in building domestic accountability. The CSO coalition believes that if it presents a united front to the donors, the latter would regard the coalition as an example of domestic accountability and, therefore, would be more inclined to take the coalition seriously and support its demand for the public release of monthly actual expenditure reports. The coalition also thinks that donors can convince finance officials from the departments of education and finance to release this information during the annual donor aid review processes.
The IP that underpins this strategy can be presented as follows:

**Organizational objective:** Citizen oversight of governance

**Ultimate objective of campaign:** Citizen monitoring of school infrastructure delivery

**Policymakers:** Finance officials in the Departments of Education and Finance

**Change in government behavior/budget change:**
- Public release of monthly information on school infrastructure delivery and actual expenditure of national and provincial Departments of Education

**Activities to influence policymakers:**
- Pressure from donors that finance the education sector

**Strategic partners:** Donors and CSOs

**Activities to influence and support strategic partners:**
- Mobilize CSOs and meet with donors in the education sector

**Assumptions**
As was the case with the previous example, this IP is full of assumptions. See if you can name some of them. Which ones could be wrong?
**But then the campaign gets more complicated (again)**

This campaign is won surprisingly quickly and government releases monthly reports as asked. But nothing changes. Poor delivery, under-spending, and late transfers are dutifully recorded, but the situation stays the same. The CSO realizes that while citizens now have access to this information, they don’t have any way of influencing the government behavior that causes the problem of underspending. What they need is for the Department of Education (Policymaker) to engage with them on these issues (Change in government behavior). They discover that the Department of Finance is equally frustrated by the poor use of funds by the Department of Education and the erratic transfers to local governments. With the tacit support of the Department of Finance (now a Strategic partner), the CSO organizes local government project hearings where citizens and interested organizations will have the opportunity to review monthly spending and service delivery reports, and to ask questions of the relevant education and finance officials. They think that the ready participation of the Department of Finance, along with growing public discontent, will convince the Department of Education to participate in these events (Activity to influence policymakers). They hold a series of training events to prepare citizens to read the relevant documents. At the same events they explain the flow of funds from national government right down to individual school infrastructure projects.

This IP is also full of assumptions. See if you can identify and question some of them.
Organizational objective: Citizen oversight of governance

Ultimate objective of campaign: Citizen monitoring of school infrastructure processes

Change in government behavior/budget change: Public release of monthly information on school infrastructure delivery and actual expenditure of national and provincial Departments of Education

Change in government behavior/budget change: Public engagement with the Department of Education on monthly expenditure and service delivery reports

Policymakers: Finance officials in the Departments of Education and Finance

Policymakers: Department of Education

Activities to influence policymakers: Pressure from donors

Activities to influence policymakers: Mobilizing the public and organizing public hearings with the blessing of the Department of Finance

Strategic partners: Donors and CSOs

Strategic partners: Department of Finance, public, CSOs

Activities to influence and support strategic partners: Mobilize CSOs and meet with donors in the education sector

Activities to influence and support strategic partners: Consulting with the Department of Finance and training members of the public

Organizational objective: Citizen oversight of governance

Ultimate objective of campaign: Citizen monitoring of school infrastructure processes

Change in government behavior/budget change: Public release of monthly information on school infrastructure delivery and actual expenditure of national and provincial Departments of Education

Change in government behavior/budget change: Public engagement with the Department of Education on monthly expenditure and service delivery reports

Policymakers: Finance officials in the Departments of Education and Finance

Policymakers: Department of Education

Activities to influence policymakers: Pressure from donors

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Strategic partners: Donors and CSOs

Strategic partners: Department of Finance, public, CSOs

Activities to influence and support strategic partners: Mobilize CSOs and meet with donors in the education sector

Activities to influence and support strategic partners: Consulting with the Department of Finance and training members of the public
How to review your IP

The environment within which you formulated your IP can change very dramatically in a short period of time. For instance, a new President may be elected, who appoints new ministers who are more sympathetic to your work. This is what happened to the Centre for Social Accountability (CSA) in South Africa. Changes in the leadership and health policy of the ruling African National Congress meant that the Eastern Cape provincial Department of Health was suddenly happier to cooperate with the CSA than before. Such a change calls for new assumptions to be made about cooperation and conflict with key decision makers. Sometimes organizations also get distracted from their IPs and end up not performing the activities that were planned. For all of these reasons, it is a good idea to review your IP regularly.

As we mentioned earlier, IPs are not cast in stone. If you realize that your IP is not working out as planned, you need to find out why and make the necessary adjustments, as we demonstrated in the two examples above.

There are four steps in the impact planning cycle:

**STEP 1:** Formulate an IP.

**STEP 2:** Implement your IP.

**STEP 3:** Review and adjust your IP.

**STEP 4:** Continue with implementation.
Reviewing your IP can take many forms. It could simply mean that you meet as an organization to review your IP and to draw on the knowledge that you have of the field. This is not a bad idea given that you probably have a good understanding of how well things are working out. However, you may also wish to use more systematic processes to review the assumptions in your IP.

5.1 Unpacking the assumptions in your IP

In the introduction we mentioned that the elements of an IP are based on a series of assumptions. The graphic on the opposite page shows some of the assumptions embedded in the MTCT example.

While these assumptions may appear to be reasonable at face value, improvements in IPs can be made only if we make these assumptions explicit and test them.

Now, let us assume that assumption four turns out to be wrong. Despite all the lobbying and information sharing carried out during the campaign, MPs still did not even propose the amendments demanded by the campaign. Initially this was bad news because the whole IP depended on this assumption. After a bit of investigation, however, the coalition discovers that the reason why MPs did not want to propose the amendment was that the Department of Finance was not convinced by the quality of the costing research on which the campaign was based. In response, the coalition plans to organize a workshop with the relevant MPs, as well as with officials from the Department of Finance in order to explain the costing exercise in greater detail. In this way the team has learnt that in order for assumption four to work out, it would not just need to convince the MPs but would also need to help the MPs convince the Department of Finance.
Ultimate Objective

Assumption 1
Better access to HIV/AIDS drugs will reduce MTCT and thus HIV/AIDS incidence.

Assumption 2
Bigger allocations for HIV/AIDS drugs mean that more pregnant women will be able to get these drugs at clinics.

Assumption 3
If enough key MPs believe that the drugs are needed and affordable, they will convince the executive to allocate more funds for drugs in the budget.

Assumption 4
MPs can and will amend the budget tabled by the executive.

Assumption 5
MPs will be convinced by reliable research and lobbying by CSOs.

Assumption 6
With greater budget advocacy capacity, CSOs will be able to convince local MPs that more spending on HIV/AIDS drugs is both needed and affordable. The CSOs could also remind MPs that people who might vote for them are dying because of drug shortages.

Assumption 7
Doing the above research, training CSOs, and providing them with reliable facts on the issue will build their capacity to undertake budget advocacy work.

Assumption 8
Drawing together a coalition of CSOs will create a strong platform to advocate for better access to HIV/AIDS drugs.
Here are some ways in which you can test the assumptions in your IP further.

- When you do research/analysis in support of your campaign, you may not always know what this research or analysis will find. Once you have findings, it is a good time to check those against your IP and see whether you still want to argue for the same things in the same ways, or whether you have learned something new that will change your approach.

- You could use primary or secondary research to test the assumptions in your IP. Will reduced MTCT really make a significant impact on the incidence of HIV/AIDS? What is the experience in other countries? Is the lack of opportunity really the most important reason why communities are not involved in budget formulation? Or do they also lack the skills and organizing structures needed to do so? These and similar assumptions common to IPs can and have been tested by researchers.

- We also make assumptions about what motivates policymakers and strategic partners. Is it true that MPs will be convinced by research showing the likely impact of HIV/AIDS on election results? Is it true that community groups will make MPs the target of their advocacy if they have the information and skills? Apart from doing research, we could also test these and other assumptions by asking policymakers and strategic partners if these assumptions about their behavior are true. You could also ask colleagues in your own or in other organizations to give their opinion.

- Your IBP mentor or program officer could help you review your IP. This can be done by means of a workshop or electronically/telephonically.

- Is there another organization in your network that does similar work to you? Could you partner with them and schedule quarterly or six-monthly phone calls to discuss your respective IPs?
5.2 Here are some questions to consider when you review your IP

Which organizational factors have influenced the implementation of your IP? How have they influenced it? And how can you adjust your IP accordingly?

- Knowledge and skills: do you have the knowledge and skills to implement the IP? For example, if your IP depends on community mobilization or budget analyses or both, do you have the corresponding skills? PI partners can ask their mentors to help them identify these needs and access the necessary training and technical assistance.
- Organizational politics: do your colleagues elsewhere in the organization and the coalition understand and support the campaign? Can and should you draw them closer?

Which contextual factors have influenced the implementation of your IP? Do you need to adjust any part of your IP in response?

- Changes in the political context: have some of the policymakers whom you targeted become more or less influential? Have the incentives of your policymakers changed?
- Have the permutations of budget and service delivery changes shifted? For example, have overall balances of revenue, expenditure, and budget shortfalls changed, and what does this mean for your budget objective?
- Changes in the socioeconomic conditions: how do shifts in the socioeconomic environment impact on your ultimate objective? Increases or decreases in disposable income and burden of disease can have a major impact on the extent to which people need government health services. The initial increases in budget that you campaigned for could have become too big or too small.

How has your project developed?

- Did you undertake the activities that you initially planned to undertake?
- Did these activities bring about the results you expected? If not, reflect on why this is so.
- What impact have you achieved? Do you know which of your activities had the greatest influence on policymakers and your strategic partners?
How does this influence your IP?

- Are you still pursuing the same ultimate objective? If not, how has your objective shifted?
- Are you still convinced that the changes in government behavior that you identified are the most strategic ones?
- Did you identify all the necessary institutional, legal, or policy changes? And did you identify the required budget changes or have other, more important, budget changes become known to you?
- Have you identified and targeted the most strategically important policymakers?
- Have any of your activities so far been effective in influencing policymakers? Are they responding in the way that you assumed they would?
- Are the strategic partners in your IP still relevant? Which strategic partners have you added or removed, and why?
- Have any of your activities so far been effective in influencing your strategic partners? Are they responding in the way that you hoped they would? Have you influenced any strategic partners you didn’t plan to influence?

5.3 Another tool to help you state and test your assumptions

The tool below can be used to surface the assumptions implicit in an Impact Plan. If you try this with your organization or network, you may find that the process of articulating assumptions brings unexpected and even inconsistent assumptions to the fore. Even if everyone is in agreement about the Impact Plan itself, it may turn out that people are operating from divergent assumptions about why you are doing what you plan to do. This is, in itself, a useful exercise to build alignment within a project or campaign team.

Step 1: Articulate them. Working individually or in small groups, ask the project or campaign team to write down what assumptions they hold about each of the eight blocks in the Impact Plan. You could use a table, such as the one on the next page, photocopied onto paper or drawn on flipchart paper.
Encourage participants to write down all the assumptions they can think of, even those that seem very obvious to them. Quite often something that sounds like a fact is actually an assumption.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMPACT PLAN</th>
<th>ASSUMPTIONS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In Block</td>
<td>Think about...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>What have you assumed is needed in your society or community?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>How have you assumed that improvements will flow from changes in a government program, service, or practice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>What assumptions have you made about what budget changes need to happen?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>What assumptions have you made about policy and institutional changes?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Who have you assumed really has the power to decide about the changes you want?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>What have you assumed will influence the behavior of key decision makers?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>What assumptions have you made about alliances and partnerships?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>What have you assumed will bring about alignment and cooperation with other stakeholders?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gather together to report back and compare your assumptions. Create a collective list of shared assumptions by discarding duplicates and resolving contradictory ones, where possible.

It may be necessary to “park” any assumptions that are extremely different from the rest or where there is a high degree of disagreement. It could also be that the latter assumptions provide the most fruitful material for discussion, as they might mirror hidden tensions or marginalized views within the group.
Whichever way you choose to facilitate this part of the process, the group needs to arrive at a list of more-or-less shared assumptions in order to proceed to Step 2. For ease of reference, give each assumption a number and, if appropriate, a keyword for quick association.

**Step 2: Score them.** The next step is to give each of your assumptions two scores from 1 to 10:

- One score should reflect how certain you feel that this assumption is accurate. Give a score of 9 or 10 to any assumption you are almost entirely certain is true. For example, you might assume that the Auditor-General’s office is independent in its audit opinions, and also believe that this assumption is very likely to be accurate. Give a score of 1 or 2 to any assumption you have very little certainty about; for example, whether a given official will buckle under public pressure to change a policy. Give a medium score of 5 or 6 to assumptions you are moderately certain about. Score all your assumptions on this certainty scale.

- The other score should reflect how important the accuracy of that assumption is for your impact. Give a score of 9 or 10 to any assumption that is absolutely critical to your impact plan working. For example, if you have assumed that the Minister of Education will be swayed by a sound argument and budget figures about teacher deployment, how much difference will it make to your impact if this assumption turns out to be false? If the answer is “a huge difference,” give that assumption a high score. Give a score of 1 or 2 to any assumption that may or may not be true but, either way, does not have a critical influence over your impact. Score all your assumptions on the importance scale.

Use a chart, such as the one on the following page, photocopied onto paper, for each individual or small group to use to record their scores. Alternatively, you could draw a similar chart onto flipchart paper and undertake the scoring exercise collectively. If you choose the first route, you may choose to combine and divide the scores from all the individuals or small groups to arrive at a single, collective score for each assumption before you proceed to Step 3.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Keyword or written in short: We have assumed that…</th>
<th>SCORE IN TERMS OF CERTAINTY</th>
<th>SCORE IN TERMS OF IMPORTANCE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>For example: The Portfolio Committee on Health will call for disciplinary action if it has proof of corruption in the procurement of medicines.</td>
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**Step 3: Map them.** It is now possible and useful to map your assumptions in terms of certainty and importance. This step can be undertaken individually, in small groups, or collectively. The advantage of working collectively is that you will identify an agreed upon set of assumptions to focus on as you monitor your campaign’s or project’s progress. The advantage of generating multiple maps by individuals or small groups is that doing so may highlight different plausible interpretations of your Impact Plan, or draw people’s attention and interest to monitoring different assumptions. In principle, the most desirable outcome is for the project team to become aware of its assumptions and be open to questioning and revising them. A secondary benefit could be building consensus around which assumptions are most in need of monitoring. It is up to you to decide where to place the emphasis.

- Draw a large chart, such as the one below, on flipchart paper. If participants are working individually or in small groups, they will each need a chart of their own.
- Place each of your assumptions somewhere on the chart, using their two scores to position them. For instance, the assumption used as an example on the previous page had a certainty score of 4 and an importance score of 8, placing it in the quadrant marked B.
Once you have positioned all the assumptions on the chart, pay attention to the following clusters:

- **Priority wild cards (low certainty, high importance):** it is essential to monitor, question, test, and revise the assumptions in the quadrant marked B on a regular basis. These are the assumptions you are least sure about and that have the biggest influence over your impact. Therefore, they have the greatest power to make or break the success of your budget advocacy efforts.

- **Critical blind spots (high certainty, high importance):** the assumptions in the quadrant marked A could include important beliefs that you are not questioning, but which have a high degree of influence on your impact. Because you feel certain about them, you may be less inclined to pick up the clues if they turn out to be inaccurate. Because they are so important, monitor these assumptions with deliberate scrutiny. Treat them as less predictable than you believe them to be.

- **Unpredictable triggers (low certainty, low importance):** keep an eye on the assumptions in quadrant D because you don’t know whether they’ll turn out to be true. Even if only one turns out to be completely inaccurate, you probably can’t predict all the implications that would follow. As circumstances shift, you may find that unexpected results from this quadrant trigger unforeseen events or perceptions, some of which may have more influence over your work than you thought.

- **Relatively harmless variables (high certainty, low importance):** the assumptions in quadrant C require the least monitoring. Due to their relative predictability, they also may be the easiest to track with little effort, and it could be tempting to dedicate too much valuable monitoring time to them. Rather concentrate on a few difficult wild-card or blind-spot assumptions than a host of relatively predictable ones.

- Record all the assumptions that were identified and articulated with the help of this tool in a document, grouping them into the four categories above. Circulate a copy of the document to all the participants in this exercise, so that everyone has a complete list of all the assumptions you are putting to the test through your budget advocacy project or campaign.
A simple (but more difficult) alternative to Impact Plans: “So that” chains and risk factors

This tool is simpler in its structure but provides less systematic guidance in the development of critical components of your plan. Like IPs, this alternative can be applied to any work activity or intervention you are currently busy with or about to embark on. It is a means to become and remain conscious of the assumptions you are making during project implementation and adjust your actions accordingly.

- Start by identifying a specific work activity or intervention and write it in a block at the top of a page or sheet of flipchart paper. For example:

Send out invitations to a community meeting.

- Under the block, write the words “SO THAT” and draw a down arrow. Then specify what results you assume will follow from that action.
- After every result, again write the words “SO THAT” and keep going until you have reached a desirable outcome.

3 Note: This tool has been adapted from a related exercise in Theory of Change: A Practical Tool for Action, Results and Learning (2004), prepared by Organizational Research Services for the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Seattle, Washington, U.S.
Example: Initial links in a “SO THAT” chain for mobilizing public interest in budget monitoring

1. Send out invitations to a community meeting.
2. People are aware of the public meeting on budgets next Tuesday.
3. At least 300 people attend the public meeting.
4. More people know why it is important to monitor the municipal budget.
5. At least 10 people are motivated to volunteer as community budget monitors.
6. When community members see the budget monitors at work, they don’t get suspicious.
7. They are trained and equipped to monitor the municipal budget.
8. The public feels involved and is interested in the findings.
In the example on the previous page, the “SO THAT” chain is clearly incomplete. The task is to carry on with the chain until you reach one or more blocks that reflect a significant outcome you want to achieve. In principle, all “SO THAT” chains from any of your project or campaign activities should eventually lead to the ultimate objective you set in Block 2 of your Impact Plan. If this is not the case, then you might question why you are undertaking that particular activity.

The chain can also be useful for bringing critical risks to the fore. In the example on the previous page, if the invitation is sent to the wrong people or is worded in such a way that it doesn’t elicit any interest, then the rest of the chain is unlikely to happen without some additional intervention. Looking at all the links in your “SO THAT” chain, it is possible to identify critical risk factors that can serve as alarm bells for project implementation. For example:

**Critical risk factors**

**WHAT IF:**

- Too few people attend the public meeting?
- The meeting is hijacked by a faction?
- The speakers at the public meeting don’t present the information in an accessible or exciting way?
- Too few people volunteer as community monitors?
- People who are not trustworthy volunteer as community monitors?
- The public disapproves of the idea of budget monitoring?
- The volunteers don’t attend all the sessions of the training on budget monitoring?

Identifying critical risk factors, such as the ones above, provides a project or campaign team with a running list of important variables that they need to give attention to. This highlights practical things that can easily go wrong and undermine the success of the intervention. By taking appropriate action, in time, to ensure that the things on the list don’t happen, the team can keep the causal chain moving toward its ultimate objective.
7 Working with indicators

7.1 Why use indicators?

You may wish to identify indicators that can help you get feedback on how your IP is working. In this context, indicators are really just well chosen pieces of information that you collect to provide you with feedback on how well your campaign is doing. Here are some of the potential advantages of using indicators:

- They can yield information to help you think about whether the project or campaign is achieving what it set out to achieve. In this way indicators can support internal learning and strategic decision making throughout project implementation by giving feedback on the IP.
- Indicators can illustrate incremental achievements before (or leading up to) the achievement of your ultimate objective.
- While indicators should not be primarily about accounting to donors, they can help demonstrate to external audiences (such as donors) how change really happens in this field of work.

Developing a robust set of indicators demands a set of technical skills that is beyond the ambit of this guide. If you do not have such skills in your organization, and you want to develop an indicator framework, you could discuss obtaining such support with your PI mentor. But bear in mind that an indicator framework will only become meaningful once you have developed a robust IP on which to base it. So it would be best to focus first on developing a strong IP process and integrating it into the daily work of your organization.
7.2 Guidelines for creating a system of indicators

As a starting point you could consider the following broad guidelines:

**Be realistic.** Start by collecting information on some, rather than all, of your key activities or campaigns. Start with three to five indicators, and rather track too few than too many. It would be best to choose indicators that are essential for making decisions about how to adjust your strategy. Once you have established your impact planning system, you can always add to your indicators.

**Go beyond what you already know.** Discard indicators that don’t reveal anything new or interesting about your IP. If you know you get many requests for information from government, counting such requests is unlikely to tell you anything of interest. Interviews with key members of the executive about how it uses such information may tell you more. Likewise, if you know you receive a lot of media coverage, simply counting media reports may not tell you anything new. Monitoring whether you get more coverage after important media briefings or reports will tell you more about the success of each of your activities. You might also want to monitor whether the coverage mentions your position or echoes your campaign messages.

**Formulate a baseline.** Indicators only help if you have something to compare them to. So service delivery and budget changes need to be compared to where they were before. Likewise, counting contact with policymakers only makes sense when compared against a previous level of contact. Getting 200 requests for information from the media tells us little or nothing if we don’t know how many requests were made in previous years.

Such baseline information can be time consuming and costly to formulate. Therefore, you may need additional financial and technical resources to formulate a baseline, particularly if your project didn’t establish one at the beginning. However, baselines can be reconstructed in less demanding ways using retrospective perceptions and analysis of secondary data.
Look for information that is cost effective to collect. You should pay attention to the cost and benefit of collecting various types of information. That is, you need to consider how much it will benefit you versus the difficulty or cost of collecting it. It is also important to note that information can be collected in a number of ways, which means that it is not just a question of what information you collect but also how you go about collecting it. It is best to decide which indicators you need first and then decide if and how you will collect information on them.

For example, it may be easier to ask a quarter of conference participants to complete a feedback questionnaire than getting the whole group to respond. Following up with four or five key participants a few months later could give you some idea of whether the impact lasted. Similarly, getting feedback from one or two carefully selected people in the executive or legislature may be more feasible than monitoring all contact with or reaction from these institutions.

Clarify who is responsible. Give one person in your organization overall responsibility for the collection of this information. This person may need to ask others for help, but he or she is responsible for ensuring that everyone is contributing as required.

Put systems in place. In most CSOs, people are very busy. They may not want another task added to their duties. If you are going to collect information for impact planning in an ongoing manner, you will need to find easy and regular ways of doing so. Some ideas might be to:

- place a sheet of paper next to every telephone for people to tick when they speak to the media or another partner or policymaker;
- create a central email address where members of your organization can send emails to record such information; or
- create a standard feedback form for your workshops and/or briefings.
7.3 Which indicators should you use?

Returning to the generic elements of an IP, there are generally five things organizations try to influence. This means that there are five kinds of things that indicators can give you information about:

- **Strategic Partners:** Are they responding to your action in the way that you hoped they would? Are they doing what you want them to do?
- **Policymakers:** Are they responding to your action in the way that you thought they would?
- **Budgets changes:** Have these policymakers changed budgets, and has the budget process changed in the way that you wanted it to?
- **Changes in government behavior:** Have these changes in budgets and the budget process brought about the changes in government behavior that you were working toward?
- **Ultimate Goals:** Have these changes led to improvements in social development indicators or on patterns of participation?

As you look through this list, you will notice that there is likely to be a sequence in how these changes occur. It is likely that you will first see changes in your strategic partners before you see changes in policymakers, and you may see changes in the opinions and positions taken by policymakers before they end up making the changes in budgets and government behavior that you seek. It is important to bear this sequencing and timing in mind because indicators of “first order” changes are likely to yield useful data before others. They, therefore, would be a good point of focus as you start out.

Both the links between CSO activities and budget and service delivery changes, and the link between the latter and development indicators are hard to test with any degree of certainty. But this is not what indicators are for. Indicators are meant to give an indication of impact, not to provide certainty. For example, moving trees are an indication of wind blowing. But someone could also be shaking the tree. Given all the actors involved, the best we can hope for is to contribute to change, not to drive it. Indicators, therefore, are best used in combination with commonsense and caution.

Putting the five kinds of changes together with the point about timing and sequencing can be summarized into a table that looks like this:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact Plan element</th>
<th>What you need to know about</th>
<th>Short term</th>
<th>Medium term</th>
<th>Long term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Partners</td>
<td>Are they responding to your action in the way that you thought they would?</td>
<td>Number of people attending your events (hearings, training, or briefings)</td>
<td>Number of members of the coalition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Number of times they invite you to briefings, hearings, or meetings</td>
<td>Strategic partners advocate or act as you wished they would</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Feedback on whether they find your work useful, and what they use it for</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Number of requests for information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact Plan element</td>
<td>What you need to know about</td>
<td>Short term</td>
<td>Medium term</td>
<td>Long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policymakers</td>
<td>Are they responding to your action in the way that you thought they would?</td>
<td>Number of people attending your events (hearings, training, or briefings)</td>
<td>Number of times they invite you to briefings, hearings or meetings</td>
<td>Feedback on whether they find your work useful and what they use it for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget change</td>
<td>Have these policymakers changed budgets, and have budget processes changed in the way that you wanted them to?</td>
<td>Increases in budget allocations</td>
<td>Reduction in corruption</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Working with indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact Plan element</th>
<th>What you need to know about</th>
<th>Short term</th>
<th>Medium term</th>
<th>Long term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Budget change continued</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Participation events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in government behavior</td>
<td>Have these changes in budgets and the budget process brought about the changes in government behavior that you were working toward?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Desired changes in service delivery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ultimate goal</td>
<td>Have these changes led to improvements in social development indicators or on patterns of participation that you were working toward?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Change in development indicators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8 Help for IP facilitators

This section is for PI mentors and program officers to use when they assist PI partners in the development of their IPs. We include it in this guide because it may also be of assistance to organizations that develop their IPs themselves, without the direct assistance of PI mentors and program officers.

8.1 What does the Partnership Initiative expect from program officers and mentors with regard to IPs?

As indicated above, impact planning is one of the central pillars of the PI. Each PI partner is asked to formulate an IP and to update it regularly. We use IPs to reinforce the advocacy planning of partners, identify their technical assistance and training needs, and facilitate learning across the PI network. For these reasons it is important to the PI that mentors and program officers (POs) facilitate the formulation of IPs with partners and assist in the regular revision and updating of IPs.

At the same time, the PI tries to be as flexible as possible in the application of the above. We are not committed to IPs for their own sake. Thus you should apply the IP scheme flexibly, but stick to the basic aim of making the assumptions of partners’ advocacy strategies explicit. Partners, mentors, and POs can use any other planning framework that shares similar elements.

8.2 In the IP workshop

In preparation for an IP workshop, you could share the Super Duper Guide (SDG) with the relevant partner and ask them to prepare a draft IP. In the workshop you could then work with them to review their draft IP. If
they do formulate an IP beforehand, it would be worth asking who in the organization wrote the IP, and what the process was for formulating it. (See participation discussion below.)

Alternatively, you could start with a blank slate and build up the IP with them in the workshop. This second strategy may be easier with organizations that have lower capacity or limited experience.

Mentors and POs report that in IP workshops partners have found a flow chart PowerPoint presentation of another organization’s IP particularly useful. It would be best to choose a well-structured IP that shows multiple levels of causality, not one that is overly linear. The discussion of the example would also need to point out the virtues and deficiencies in the example in order to maximize the learning potential. Using an example with the partner in this way allows you to show them how an IP works after you have told them how to do it.

IPs should represent the key advocacy strategy decisions of the relevant project or campaign. For this reason you should try to ensure that the right people participate in the workshop. The best situation would be that everybody involved in the work should be there. Next best is that all key decision makers participate in proceedings. In preparation for the workshop, you could ask them: “How will you ensure the buy in of those who must implement the project?” rather than insisting that certain people attend.

In your initial contact with the organization, you should pay attention to its reception of the IP discussion. Is there some resistance to it? If so, make sure you discuss the reasons for this resistance early on. (See 8.6.) Do they lack the skills to put together an IP? (See 8.3 and 8.4.)

As we indicated in the introduction to this guide, the PI does not set IPs as a condition for participation in PI, but we do insist on some form of planning for impact. Therefore, you do not need to insist on specific components of an IP being formulated. You should rather focus on the explicit formulation of a reasonably convincing plan for how impact will be attained. That being said, some components would be hard to avoid, such as:
• an ultimate objective;
• a budget change that will contribute to achieving that ultimate objective;
• a policymaker who can make that change; and
• activities designed to influence that policymaker.

8.3 Where do you start with an organization with less capacity or experience?

Sometimes the organization with which you are trying to develop an IP lacks the strategic or diagnostic skills needed for the task.

A minimum requirement for such situations is to start with a statement of the ultimate objective of the project or campaign that is as SMART as possible. This may be surprisingly difficult because many organizations start their planning processes by deciding on a series of activities.

A statement of the ultimate objective that is as specific as possible is pivotal because the rest of the IP will work toward this objective. As stated above, we plan backward from the ultimate objective through the various components of the IP to end up with the activities that will be undertaken. If the ultimate objective is poorly defined, it will be much more difficult to be specific about the “downstream” components of the IP. And this difficulty will be multiplied with each component of the IP.

Once you have identified an ultimate objective, you could also ask a series of questions about what changes are needed to achieve that objective, leading to changes involving various target audiences and strategic partners (such as those we identify in 8.4). Sometimes you can also work forward by questioning how the organization’s current activities will lead to ultimate results; thus providing another perspective. (See chapter 6)

Many organizations, not just those with less capacity, will be paralyzed by a perceived need for accuracy in the assumptions that are made in an IP. Therefore, it is important to keep emphasizing that an IP is a learning document that will evolve with the campaign or project. An IP can be full of untested assumptions, as long as each component is stated with as much
specificity as possible, which will allow one to refine and improve these assumptions over time. This is much harder without specificity.

Therefore, a large part of the challenge of working out an IP with a less skilled organization will lie in building their confidence to state their impact assumptions in an IP. They don’t need to be right; they just need to be specific. And the assumptions need to be written down. Once they have articulated these assumptions, they can examine them over time and improve on them.

8.4 What if they don’t know?
Once you have an ultimate objective identified, organizations may find it hard to identify:

- Which changes in government behavior; budgets; and institutional, legal or policy changes would be required to bring about their ultimate objective. In some cases research exists on the links between these elements. So, for example, research shows that teacher qualifications play an important role in improved educational outcomes. Therefore, increased teacher training could reasonably be expected to make a contribution to improved pass rates. Where such research does not exist, you should push the organization to make an assumption based on its best knowledge. In IPs bad assumptions are better than unstated assumptions.

- Which policymakers are responsible for these changes? In such cases it may be helpful to map the budget and policy process in the country to see who has responsibility for specific decisions. Or else you could bring together a focus group of experts to help. But the development of the IP should not be held up by this process. Starting off with specific assumptions is fine. You can always refine these assumptions later.

8.5 Following up on workshops
Many IP facilitators find the post-workshop follow up more difficult than the actual workshop! Organizations often find it difficult to continue the initial work that they did in the IP workshop and are not able to complete the formulation of the IP in a reasonable period of time. They also find it hard to respond to and incorporate written facilitator feedback into further
versions of their IP. We have not found any shortcuts to this to-and-fro process, but here are some practices that may help:

- Designate a scribe in the initial IP workshop. This ensures that everyone at least has a first version of the IP.
- Have a discussion before the end of the workshop on what the next steps are, who will be responsible for them, and by when. Make sure these are written down and use this schedule to guide the post-workshop follow up.
- You could also develop a more comprehensive action plan with the partner to describe follow up. It should encourage honesty about what approach the partner wants to use, how they will proceed, and why. The action plan could also describe what tools and support that you, the facilitator, could provide to help the partner work through specific steps along the way.
- If more than one IBP person is involved in commenting on drafts of the IP, make sure that you give consistent feedback. It is best to discuss and agree on one set of written feedback.
- Say why! When you give feedback on their IP, explain your feedback. Say why it is important. It is not, for example, enough to say that they have specified too many policymakers. You also have to explain why it is necessary to be more specific, and what the difficulties would be of having too many policymakers in your IP.
- How hard can you push back if the partner organization does not incorporate your feedback into the IP? Remember that the PI is a partnership. This means that partners may choose to do things differently to the way that you want them to. It also means that you can keep pushing on points that you think are important. Also, bear in mind that the IPs are living documents. If the partner is not ready to accept and incorporate something this time around, maybe you can find an opportunity to return to this issue at a later date.
- If you get stuck, ask one of your mentor/program officer colleagues to help you review the IP.
- The formulation and review of an IP is an ongoing conversation, not just a once-off document that you comment on or a once-off workshop. But beware of “IP fatigue.” If the conversation is seen to drag on, it may get less attention than it deserves. One way to avoid this is to agree on a timetable for the formulation and revision of the IP.
8.6 What about those who don’t think they need an IP?

Sometimes PI partners do not want to go through an IP process, or they go through it with limited enthusiasm. It is important to bear in mind that the PI is not committed to IPs as an absolute “must.” But we are fully committed to increasing CSO impact, and we also think that an explicit statement and examination of the logic of advocacy campaigns will lead to increased CSO learning and, therefore, to greater impact.

If a partner does not seem to want to participate in an IP exercise or does so half-heartedly, you could explain the above. It means that the PI can compromise on IPs, but not on learning for greater impact. This is something that we agreed to with all partners at the start of their relationships with the PI.