

**The Impact of Catalyzing Learning,
Sharing and Engagement among
Advocates in Africa**

Outcome Study Report

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



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TABLE OF CONTENTS



Acknowledgements	2
Executive Summary	4
CHAPTER ONE	6
1.1. About the Advocacy Accelerator.....	7
1.2. Purpose and Objective of the Study	8
1.3. Study Limitations.....	8
CHAPTER TWO	9
2.1. Study Theoretical Framework.....	9
2.2. Study Population and Sample.....	9
2.3. Study Instruments	10
2.4. Data gathering.....	11
2.5. Data Analysis	11
CHAPTER THREE	12
3.1. Demographics	12
3.2. Advocates understanding of AAC mandate.....	13
3.3. AAC online platform awareness, subscriptions, and access by Advocates	13
3.4. Trainings, webinars, and Linking and Learning events	16
3.5. Knowledge Acquisition, Adaptation and Application.....	17
3.6. Trainings Needs by Advocates	20
CHAPTER FOUR	22
4.1. Conclusion.....	22
4.2. Recommendations	22
REFERENCES	23

List of Tables

Table 1: Number of advocates in Sub-Sahara Africa.....	7
Table 2: Advocates engaged by AAC between 2017- 2019	10
Table 3: Sample size and Response Rate.....	10
Table 4: Knowledge Adaptation by Advocates.....	19

List of Figures

Figure 1: Study theoretical framework (Source: Author interpretation and analysis)	9
Figure 2: Respondent's age	12
Figure 3: Spread of study respondents in the continent	12
Figure 4: Respondent regional spread	13
Figure 5: Advocacy resources downloaded by Advocates	14
Figure 6: AAC total reach by platform	15
Figure 7: Advocates knowledge acquisition	18
Figure 8: Knowledge acquisition by thematic area	18
Figure 9: Advocates capacity building needs	21

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This report outlines the extent which advocates self-reported to have acquired, adapted, and applied new knowledge and skills based on their engagement with AAC advocacy learning platforms and events. The study is based on a hypothesis that if advocates understand AAC role towards advancing and promoting learning, sharing and engagement then they will interact and share their experiences. This will then lead to increased knowledge acquisition, sharing of advocacy practices and resources. If knowledge acquisition is achieved, advocates will adapt or apply it in their advocacy work within their respective organisations.

The study adopted a mixed-method approach where quantitative and qualitative data was drawn from both primary and secondary sources. Various sampling techniques were adopted where 267 advocates were sampled and an online outcome survey administered – only 254 advocates successfully completed the survey from 22 countries in Africa. Majority of the advocates were male (56.5%) as compared to female (43.5%). 78.2% were between the age of 25 and 35 years.

Overall, 78.4% reported to have either a good understanding of AAC mandate within the advocacy ecosystem. Of this number, they testified to have learnt about the AAC through referrals by friends, AAC Facebook page, AAC website, Amref, Y-ACT, among others. Further, 62.2% self-reported to be aware of AAC online advocacy resources and opportunities. Of this lot, 45.9% reported to have subscribed to AAC Facebook page, AAC website (42.9%) and AAC LinkedIn page (11.9%). Findings also suggest that AAC had engaged 6,036 advocates as at December 2019 of which majority (4,200) were from East Africa. Based on the study findings, 81.8% of the interviewed advocates testified to have accessed advocacy resources shared by AAC on its website platform. Out of this, 48.6% reported to have found the accessed information useful and relevant to their work.

Minimal requests from advocates to AAC was reported where only 24.3% testified to have made specific requests to AAC for support. These requests ranged from different issues such as M&E guidelines and TA support, models for training on media advocacy, among others. In addition, only 10.8% of the advocates reported to have shared an advocacy resource with AAC.

In regard to the trainings, webinars and linking and learning events, 14 trainings, 8 webinars and 2 linking and learning events had been conducted by AAC. 94.4% of the advocates reported to have found the trainings to be useful

and relevant to their work while 78.3% and 69.4% reported on the webinars and linking and learning events respectively. Overall, 43.5% reported to have acquired new knowledge and skills through trainings, webinars and the linking and learning events – online and in-person trainings (97.1%) were found to have had the highest impact towards imparting advocates with new knowledge and skills as compared to webinars and linking and learning events (<20.0%). Specific topics that advocates testified to have acquired new knowledge and skills include advocacy strategy formulation, advocacy messaging and communication, networking and coalition building among others.

In general, 94.6% of the advocates testified to have adapted or applied the gained knowledge from training as compared to Webinars (30.8%) and linking and learning (19.2%). Although when asked to provide specific examples, this information was found to be scanty and it varied from one individual to the other. Specific examples cited include applying the knowledge gained to design or review ToCs, improve data collection and reporting processes, drafting of new funding proposals, refining evaluations protocols, new ways of engaging policy makers, packaging of advocacy messages, among others. In regard to advocates training needs, resource mobilization (22.2%) was reported as an area they would like to receive more support on. Other topics include building networks and coalitions (20.0%), M&E for advocacy (20.0%) among others.

In conclusion, the AAC has made tremendous efforts towards increasing its visibility within the advocacy ecosystem, although this visibility was found to be skewed towards East Africa. The increase in visibility has somehow contributed to an increased awareness and subscription by advocates to AAC learning and sharing platforms. A section of the advocates reports the platform and events to be useful and relevant to their advocacy work.

Based on the study analysis of the findings key recommendations have been provided that AAC may adopt.

1. There is need for AAC to increase its visibility to other regions beyond East Africa, especially in the Francophone countries. The Anglophone dominance can be attributed to the fact that majority of the learning content are in English, which in most cases the content is not translated in other languages like French and Portuguese. AAC can also purposefully target and engage donors to reach out advocates in other regions – this will also mean pushing for more support from donors. Another approach would be to establish regional hubs and recruitment of regional representatives from these regions. Understanding of the region-specific needs will be a prerequisite towards addressing the specific needs of the advocates
2. While AAC is visible among advocates who have been engaging with it, there is still need to define, package, and share with advocates its vision, mission, and objectives towards strengthening advocacy in Africa. This in a way will help and guide advocates on what and how to engage with AAC hence managing expectations from them.
3. There is need for AAC to devise ways on how to engage grass-roots advocates who have no access to technology, which is the main source of engagement. One of such ways could be working with donors and grantees to cascade advocacy resources, materials, and information to their sub-grantees.
4. A quarterly calendar of events for trainings, webinars, linking and learning etc, will help advocates to plan their attendance in advance – including reaching out to more advocates.
5. AAC needs to strike a balance between conducting general trainings and more customized trainings. Of importance should be to continuously collect feedback from advocates on the important topics and issues they would like to be supported on. In regard to the AAC website, there is need for the “search for” element to be re-activated in order to track and package the most searched resources by advocates on the AAC website. This information would be useful in updating the online resources based on the need as expressed by advocates.
6. In order to conveniently foster cross learning among advocates, AAC can introduce a quarterly magazine that pulls together findings and best practices from advocacy evaluations conducted by different organisations or projects in the region – including case studies. This will help in consolidating best practices on what is working and how. If well analysed and packaged, this information might be useful to inform webinar topics for discussion – with the same facilitated by advocates.
7. There was an expressed need from advocates for AAC to establish a donor matrix with information on donors – who is funding advocacy, on what and where? This matrix might be useful to complement advocates efforts towards resources mobilization.
8. There is need for AAC to review and redesign its subscription forms on the website and Facebook page to disaggregate user engagements and interaction by type of audience – advocates, TAs and donors, this also includes ensuring that the website and Facebook page attracts traffic beyond East Africa.
9. There is need for AAC to establish a mechanism on how to provide mentorship and support post training and webinar events. This will ensure that the knowledge gained from these events is put into use, and more so, emerging gaps addressed in the process. The AAC Facebook page could be used for sharing such feedback and experiences.

CHAPTER ONE



INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This chapter outlines information about the advocacy ecosystem in Africa and the existing challenges, information about the Advocacy Accelerator (AAC), the purpose and objective of the study and the limitation of the study.

Advocacy Ecosystem in Africa

The need for advocacy to address the challenges of health and development is widely acknowledged and accepted. There is ample evidence of the changes good advocacy has been able to bring about, from improving systems to enabling the voices of the most marginalised to be heard and for communities to be empowered to meet the challenges of health and development themselves. However, in many places – especially in Africa, there are still overwhelming silences that prevent effective advocacy responses. Many donors and governments recognise the need for advocacy to help create the changes to systems, programmes and cultures in the health and development sector. Increasingly, the private sector, governments and other funders are willing to fund advocacy programmes and positions, and many civil society organisations are finding it possible to acquire resources to conduct more systematic advocacy work.

Despite these efforts, it is often hard to demonstrate the impact and effectiveness of advocacy work, for a number of reasons. The length of time needed to achieve policy and social change is one, as this usually far exceeds the length of time for which any project will be funded. Another is that evaluating advocacy requires new or modified techniques from those we use to evaluate interventions or service delivery.

While country-based advocacy plays a critical role in improving health and development systems, by ensuring that leaders support and implement the changes needed in their countries, there is minimal evaluation and information on what the most effective approaches are to maximizing country-based advocacy impact. There are many challenges and needs that must be addressed to ensure a stronger advocacy ecosystem in Africa. These challenges have been categorized broadly: individual knowledge and skills, organizational strength and practices, inter-institutional collaboration and alignment and advocacy ecosystem as a whole. Advocates attribute the confusion and lack of clarity on advocacy implementing strategies that would maximize impact on the many advocacy tools and guidelines that exists. Many development organisations seem to be in competition to develop and brand even more advocacy tools. In addition, accessibility of the tools by advocates in Africa remains a big challenge due to lack of a centralized advocacy knowledge hub¹.

There is nothing linear about the experience of advocacy; it operates within a complex web of interacting factors and relationships, and change can emerge and cascade in unexpected ways. At the same time, advocates and their supporters want to understand whether what they are doing is making a difference. Monitoring and evaluation is intended to support that understanding. Despite this understanding many donors have expressed lack of capacity among many advocates and evaluation Technical Assistance providers (TAs) to document advocacy processes and impact. As efforts at driving change become more diffused, involve more actors, and have more transformational goals, there is need for a radically different approach to thinking about and assessing what effective advocacy looks like. Clear answers and simple tools are appealing, but they ultimately will not result in good

¹ Strengthening country-based advocacy for maximum impact: what will it take - Catalyst for Change report, May2016/
<https://www.advocacyaccelerator.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/CatalystsforChangeReport.pdf>

representations of reality or provide the knowledge advocates need². While this is true, there seems to be unequal space between global partners from the north and local partners. The development of advocacy strategies, goals and indicators more often is a top-down approach and not driven or sufficiently informed by country-based advocates and TAs.

Many organisations in Africa are unable to sustain advocacy efforts beyond a funding cycle. Country-based organisations in Africa lack the infrastructure, budgets, and institutional commitment to lead sustained advocacy efforts. Challenges obtaining long-term financial support, attracting, and retaining qualified staff, and the model of reliance primarily on one strong individual leader, are common concerns.

On inclusion of advocacy into organizational strategies and priorities, we reiterate that effective institutional advocacy requires support from the highest levels of the organisation, without which long-term sustainability is virtually impossible. Organizational support for advocacy includes the reflection of advocacy functions and priorities in an organization’s strategy, budget, and goals, as well as dedicated staff with advocacy expertise. Country-based organisations in Africa need to understand the implications of pursuing an advocacy agenda, addressing issues of risk tolerance, advocacy leadership, and positioning with partners and policymakers.

It is estimated that Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has a total of 1,363,650 advocates engaged at both urban-grassroots and rural-grassroots, of which 56% (763,187) have access to the internet³. With the available advocacy infrastructure and human capital within the continent, there is need for continued efforts towards collecting and linking advocates to information and expertise through hosting online community for advocates to pose questions, share information and learn about professional development and support opportunities – through interactive in-person and virtual spaces. Further, evidence on lessons learnt across the field of advocacy remains scanty within the continent. There is need to collect, pool and disseminate policy analysis and mapping from select countries in Africa and sharing case studies and evaluations.

Table 1: Number of advocates in Sub-Sahara Africa

	Total Advocates	Access to Internet
Total advocates market	1,363,650	763,187
Urban grassroots	364,277	83,784
Rural grassroots	320,230	50,853
NGO/non-profit employees	346,423	329,102
Health employees	332,720	299,448

Source: Advocacy Accelerator Opportunity modelling and sizing worksheet

1.1. About the Advocacy Accelerator

Based on the challenges, needs and opportunities identified in the “*Strengthening country-based advocacy for maximum impact: What it takes?*”⁴ report, a platform that supports shared learning and exchange was recommended. The findings and recommendation led the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to invest seed funding to further assess and inform the development of the platform, the Advocacy Accelerator. With a vision towards “*a world where strong, coordinated, country-based advocacy is driving force for improvements in health and development*”, the role of the Advocacy Accelerator was to:

- (a) *Collect and link advocates to information expertise and support* by hosting an online community for advocates to pose questions, share information and learn about professional development and support opportunities; provide information and evaluation of trusted and emerging tools, models and

² Jim Coe et al, 2019

³ Opportunity Sizing Modelling Report – Advocacy Accelerator (2018)

⁴ Catalysts for Change (May 2016)

- approaches; serve as a “matchmaker” linking advocates to the resources and expertise they need and to provide expert perspectives and opinions on advocacy capacity strengthening.
- (b) *Provide interactive in-person and virtual spaces that foster and promote learning within and across sectors and regions by hosting “advocacy exchanges” where advocates can share practices and approaches that have been most effective in their country or region; provide facilitation and space to utilize engagement models that put local stakeholders at the center of planning and strategy development and convene donors with one another and with country-based advocates to explore promising models and approaches for their support.*
 - (c) *Connect advocates to organizational development expertise and experience by providing access to experts, resources, tools, and training opportunities to strengthen the organizational skills that serve as a foundation for sustainable advocacy efforts*
 - (d) *Gather and aggregate data, research and lessons learned across the field of advocacy by collecting, pooling, and disseminating policy analysis and mapping from select countries and support and share case studies and evaluations.*

Since its establishment in 2017, AAC has continued to push forward this vision. As an inclusive organization, the Accelerator seeks to go beyond supporting existing advocacy efforts to providing services and amplify the voices of marginalized groups including young people, persons with disabilities, lesbian, gay, and transgender groups just to mention a few. It aims to leverage technology to reach all the countries with a demonstrated need for its services and support while endeavouring to develop and nurture partnerships with like-minded organisations and individuals in priority countries during the three-year period.

1.2. Purpose and Objective of the Study

Since its inception, the Advocacy Accelerator has continued to push forward the above four priority areas. Towards this, the AAC has engaged advocates through in-person and online trainings targeting advocates in Africa, facilitated and co-facilitated customised webinars on various topics based on the feedback received from advocates and emerging evidence within the advocacy ecosystem, engaged advocates through linking and learning initiatives aimed at linking advocates in the continent, foster learning and establishing networks and collect, synthesize, package and share advocacy resources. The purpose of this study was to document the extent to which these initiatives have proven effective as reported by advocates. Specifically, the study aimed at achieving the following objectives:

To document advocates perception of AACs support and interaction based on its interventions from 2017 to 2019. This was aimed at documenting AAC effectiveness, efficiency and relevance as perceived by advocates.

To document the extent to which AACs learning, sharing and engagement advocacy resources and opportunities were accessed by advocates within the period i.e. AACs total reach.

To document the extent which AAC learning, sharing and engagement advocacy resources and opportunities enhanced knowledge and skills acquisition, adaptation, adoption, and application among advocates

1.3. Study Limitations

Considering that the study was conducted between 01st December 2019 and 31st January 2020, which is a holiday season, there was delayed response from a section of the advocates. To mitigate this, the study team made phone calls to fast track the responses. In addition, FGD interviews were only held in Kenya and not in other countries due to logistical and resource constraints.



APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter highlights the approach and methodology adopted in this study. Specifically, it highlights the study population and sample, research instruments, data gathering and data analysis.

2.1. Study Theoretical Framework

According to the Catalysts for Change report (May 2016) – “*Strengthening country-based advocacy for maximum impact: What it takes?*”, there are many challenges and needs that have to be addressed to ensure stronger country-based advocacy capacity. These ranges from individual knowledge and skills, organisational strength, and practices, inter-institutional and alignment and the advocacy ecosystem. This study gives focus on advocate individual knowledge and skills. The extent which the improved individual knowledge and skills has had an impact within their respective organisations and the broader advocacy ecosystem, is something that needs to be explored further.

The study is based on a hypothesis that advocates understand AAC role towards advancing and promoting learning, sharing and engagement. If engagement spaces are made available to them, they will interact and share their experiences leading to increased knowledge acquisition, sharing of advocacy best practices and resources. If this is achieved, it will lead to adaptation or application of the acquired knowledge by advocates in their advocacy work within their respective organisations. Figure 1 below illustrates this model in detail.

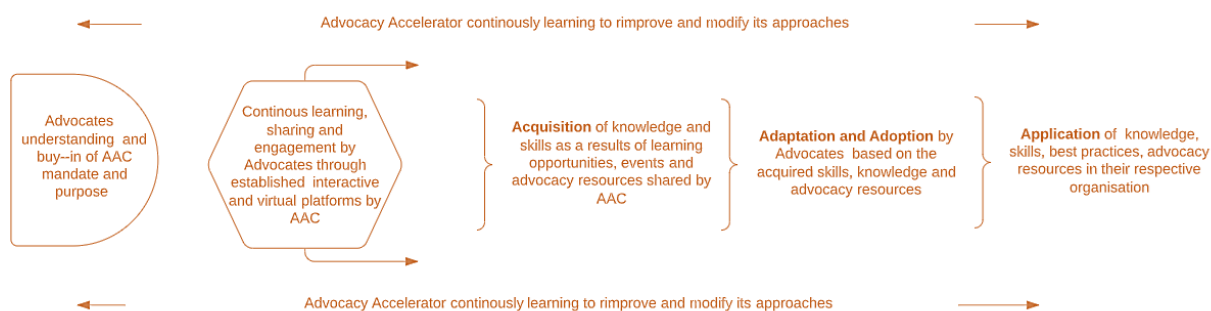


Figure 1: Study theoretical framework (Source: Author interpretation and analysis)

The study adopted a mixed approach methodology where both qualitative and quantitative was collected from both primary and secondary sources.

2.2. Study Population and Sample

For the purpose of this study, only those advocates who had engaged with AAC learning, sharing and engagement advocacy resources and opportunities (training, webinars, and linking & learning) were considered. Overall, a database with 872 advocates were considered to derive the final sample size.

Table 2: Advocates engaged by AAC between 2017-2019 in trainings, webinars and linking & learning events

	Overall	Training	Webinar	Linking and Learning
East Africa	626	246	352	28
West Africa	167	32	135	0
Southern Africa	69	30	40	0
North Africa	8	0	8	0
Central Africa	2	0	2	0
Total	872	308	537	28

Source: AAC advocate database

Various sampling techniques were employed to determine the final sample size. *Purposive sampling* was considered to (1) select advocates who had engaged with AAC events, (2) select advocates with either a mobile number or an email - the study was administered through online survey, skype and telephone interviews and (3) select countries that had minimal representation in the database. *Probability Proportion to Size (PPS)* was adopted because the total number of targeted advocates was known and the probability of selecting one advocate was proportional to the total number of advocates in the database. PPS was used to distribute the sample size across the three cohorts (trainings, webinars and linking & leaning). *Simple Random Sampling (SRS)* was used to ensure that each advocate, within a particular cohort has an equal chance of being selected. To derive the final sample size, the Raosoft formula was adopted because the target population was known.

$$x = Z(c/100)^2 \frac{r(100-r)}{E^2}$$

$$n = \frac{N \times x}{(N-1)E^2 + x}$$

$$E = \text{Sqrt} \left[\frac{(N-n)x}{n(N-1)} \right]$$

Where:

N = Total number of advocates who had engaged with AAC (872 advocates)

r = the fraction of responses of interest = 50%

Z(c/100) = the critical value for the confidence level c = 95%

E = the margin of error = 5%

Based on the above sampling approach, 267 advocates were sampled (training – 94, webinars -164 and linking and learning – 9). After data collection, a response rate of 95.1% (n=254) was achieved. Table 3 below illustrates this in detail, of this, 48 were Hewlett Foundation grantees.

Table 3: Sample size and Response Rate

	Total Population (N)	Sample Size (n)	Response Rate (RR)
Trainings	308	94	89 (94.7%)
Webinars	537	164	156 (95.1%)
Linking and Learning	28	9	9 (100.0%)
Total	872	267	254 (95.1%)

2.3. Study Instruments

The empirical research component of the study consisted of an online-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire designed used several questioning techniques. The study employed five point Likert scaled questions, multiple choice rating questions, dichotomous questions, open ended questions, and open ended and single answer questions respectively. Categorical scaled and dichotomous questions provided easiness of understanding and flexibility. For the focus group discussion, an interview guide was designed to guide the discussions based on the emerging themes from the quantitative data.

2.4. Data gathering

The outcome survey was administered online by use of a mobile data collection application (Kobo). Follow up interviews were administered via skype calls and telephone interviews – in total 12 skype calls and 28 telephone calls were made. One focus group was held targeting nine advocates based in Kenya. Literature review of various AAC documents (progress reports, evaluations/studies, platforms google analytic data etc) was also conducted. Data collection took place between December 2019 – January 2020, whilst approximately 15 min were required to complete the online questionnaire. A team of 10 research assistants (3 bilinguals – English, French and Portuguese) were trained and engaged to make follow up calls to those advocates who had not completed the questionnaire.

2.5. Data Analysis

By use SPSS Version 23.0.0 quantitative data analysis results were presented as descriptive statistics (frequencies, mean and range) and summarized in tables, bar-graphs, pie-charts, or line graphs. Percentages were computed for categorical variables. Representativeness was maintained by weighting any statistics that apply to the survey population (such as percentages) by the inverse of the probability of selection of any given survey respondent. Percentages calculation was based on values provided in nominal scales (e.g., yes/no responses, Likert scale etc). Percentages were computed using the weighted number of cases that provide a given response as the numerator, and the total weighted number of cases as the denominator. Single response variables may add up to a maximum of 100 percent, while multiple response variables may total to more than 100 percent. Qualitative data from focus group discussion was analysed using Nvivo to map-out emerging themes from the data whose findings was triangulated with quantitative data before making conclusions during reporting.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section highlights the findings of the study. The section covers the following areas in line with the study objectives: respondents demographics, advocates perception towards AAC, access to advocacy resources and opportunity by advocates and knowledge and skills acquisition, adaptation, adoption, and application among advocates.

3.1. Demographics

Out of the 254 respondents who completed the survey, 18.9% (48) were Hewlett Grantees. Of the 254 respondents, 56.5% (144) were female and 43.5% (110) were male. 78.2% (199) of the respondents were between the age of 25 and 35 years.

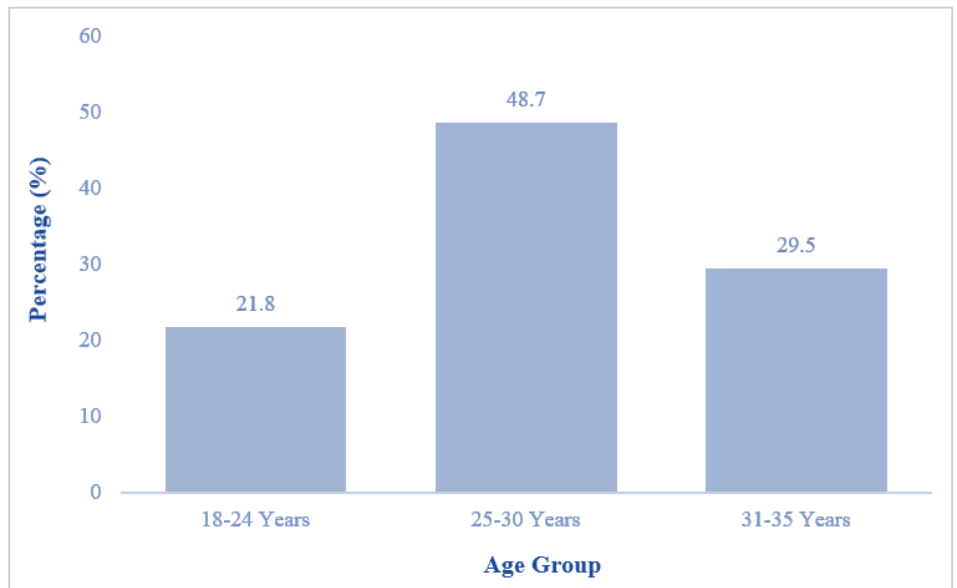


Figure 2: Respondent's age



Figure 3: Spread of study respondents in the continent

Majority of the respondents who were interviewed were Project Managers (29.3%), Projects Advisers (22.6%), Project Officers (19.4%) and Project Coordinators (12.9%). Others (15.8%) included Directors, Youth advocates, Social Accountability trainers, Research and Policy Engagement Advisers and Communication Officers. Advocates from 22 countries were interviewed. These include; five (5) countries from East Africa – Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi and Ethiopia; five (5) countries from Southern Africa – Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and South Africa; and 13 countries from West Africa – Nigeria, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Benin, Sierra Leone, Togo, Mali, Nigeria and the Gambia.

Respondents who were interviewed reported to be engaged in sub-national (60.0%) and national level advocacy (22.9%). 17.2% reported to be engaged in regional and global advocacy initiatives. Figure 4 below illustrates this in detail. In regard to the years of experience in advocacy, 83.9 % of the advocate reported to have been involved in advocacy work for 3-10 years. Only 16.1% reported to have been involved in advocacy for two years.

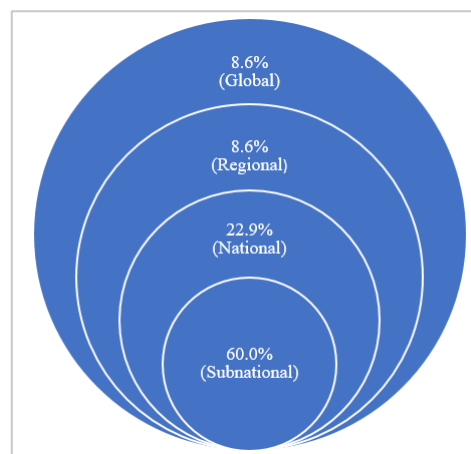


Figure 4: Respondent regional spread

3.2. Advocates understanding of AAC mandate

One of the recommendations given by advocates in the “*Strengthening country-based advocacy for maximum impact: What it takes?*”⁵ report was the establishment of a platform that would support shared learning and exchange. Two years down the line, the study sought to understand advocates perception and awareness of the AAC mandate with an assumption that increased awareness of AAC may lead to increased buy-in and support from the advocates to learn, engage and share. To determine this, a Likert scale was used, where respondents were asked to rate their understanding of AAC mandate. Overall, 78.4% (199) reported to have either very good or good understanding of AAC mandate and its role in strengthening advocacy capacity in the continent, this include 85.7% (41) of the Hewlett supported grantees. The rest (21.6%) reported to have a fair understanding.

Of those who reported to be aware, they reported to have learnt about the AAC through referrals by friends (40.5%), AAC Facebook page (16.2%), AAC website (13.5%), Amref (10.8%), Y-ACT (10.8%), Kenya Adolescent and Youth SRHR and HIV Network (2.7%), LinkedIn (2.7%) and UNAIDS (2.7%). Hewlett supported grantees reported to have learnt about AAC through Amref, Facebook, and referrals; the rest (14.3%) reported to have learnt through Y-ACT. The FGD complemented the findings from the survey. Key recommendations from the group was that there is need for AAC to engage more with the grass-roots advocates who have no access to technology; majority of the established online platforms by AAC leverage on technology which limits those who do not have access to technology. It was recommended that AAC needs to work closely with “donors” to reach out to these groups – this means leveraging on donor support and buy-in. Secondly, there is need for AAC to have a clear calendar of events to guide the engagements. It was reported that most of the webinars and training held during the period were impromptu which provided minimal space to plan by the advocates. Lastly, while advocates appreciated the general trainings conducted by AAC which equipped them with additional knowledge and skills they did not have, they recommended for more customized trainings to address their immediate needs.

3.3. AAC online platform awareness, subscriptions, and access by Advocates

The study sought to understand advocates awareness of online advocacy resources and opportunities facilitated by AAC, whether they had subscribed and accessed these resources, and if so whether they found the content useful and relevant. Online resources in this regard refers to advocacy resources and opportunities shared on AAC website, Facebook, and twitter. On the website, the advocacy resources are divided into themes to help in the navigation of the content. The themes are revised based on the most searched content on the website. They include youth, SRHR, Africa advocacy resources, advocacy strategy, budget advocacy, evaluation and assessment, communications and media, advocacy capacity building, research, and resource mobilization.

⁵ Catalysts for Change (May 2016)

Advocates awareness and subscription of AAC platforms

Overall, 62.2% (158) self-reported to be aware of AAC online advocacy resources and opportunities as shared on AAC website, Facebook, twitter, and LinkedIn; of these, 85.7% (41) were Hewlett supported grantees. Of those who reported to be aware, 45.2% (115) reported to have subscribed to the Facebook page, 42.9% (109) to the AAC website and 11.9% (30) to AAC LinkedIn page. The reported subscriptions across all the platforms was deemed to be low with advocates reporting lack of awareness of the platforms as the main reason (70.2%, n=67). The rest reported not to have made individual effort towards subscribing. Based on the findings, there is need for AAC to enhance the visibility of these platforms among advocates in order to increase its awareness hence subscription.

Literature review revealed that AAC had engaged 146,366 audience globally as at December 2019 on its website platform, of which 6,036 (4.1%) were from Africa (East Africa – 4,200, South Africa – 675, West Africa – 671, North Africa – 408 and Central Africa – 114). Further analysis showed that AAC had engaged 1,319 members on its Facebook page and 1,304 on its twitter. Despite the recorded achievement, it was difficult to establish from the existing literature and platforms whether these engagements were from advocates, something that this study tends to address (refer to the subscriptions and access paras). There is need for AAC to review and redesign its subscription forms on the website and Facebook page to disaggregate user engagements and interaction by type of audience, this also includes ensuring that the website and Facebook page attracts traffic beyond East Africa.

Platform Access, Engagement and Usefulness

Based on the study hypothesis, it is assumed that if an advocate is aware of the existence of online resources and opportunities facilitated by the AAC, it will lead to increased access and engagement. Overall, 81.8% (208) confirmed to have accessed these resources; 87.4% (42) being Hewlett supported grantees. On the AAC website, 721 downloads of advocacy resources were recorded. Examples of advocacy resources that were accessed include advocacy communication and media (12.9%), SRHR advocacy guidelines (12.1%), Youth advocacy guidelines (11.2%), Budget advocacy (11.2%), Advocacy research (11.2%), Advocacy strategy (9.5%), Advocacy organisation development (8.6%), Advocacy resource mobilization (6.9%), Advocacy capacity building (6.0%), Accountability (5.2%), Advocacy Evaluation and Assessment (2.6%) and Africa advocacy resources (2.6%). Lack of knowledge on how to access the resources was cited as the main reason by those who did not access them. Figure 5 below illustrates the various resources downloaded by the advocates as reported by them.

Figure 5

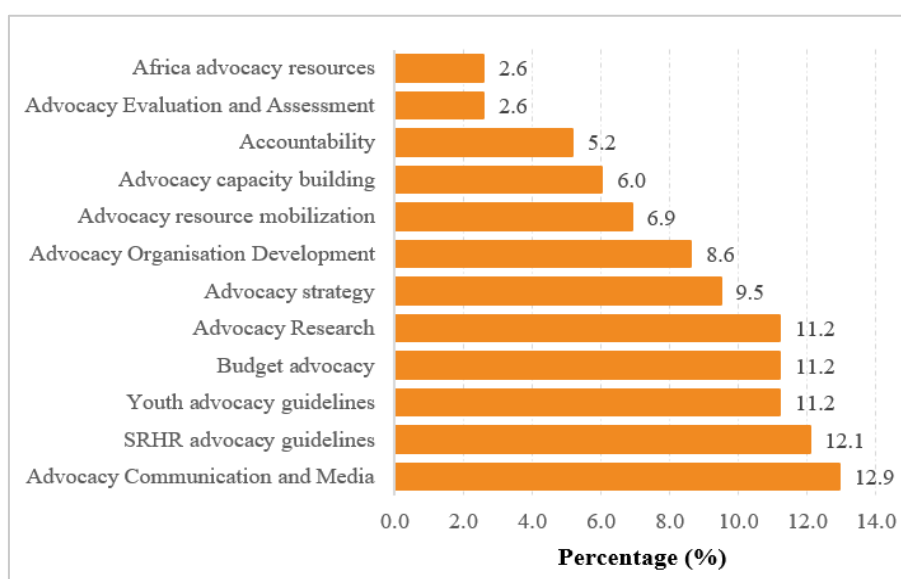


Figure 5: Advocacy resources downloaded by Advocates

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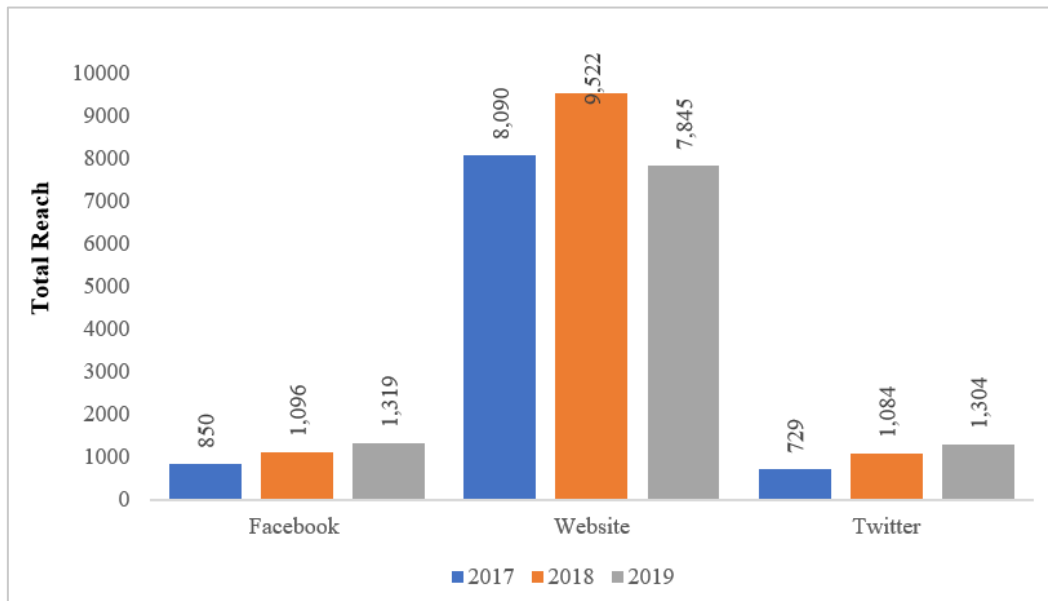


Figure 6: AAC total reach by platform

In terms of the usefulness and relevancy of the content to meet advocates expectations, 48.6% (123) reported to have found them useful and relevant to their work; 68.9% (33) being Hewlett supported grantees. Lack of customized and user-friendly content was cited as the main reason by those who did not find the content to be useful, including the content being broad and not customized to their needs hence difficult to apply in their work.

Support requests by Advocates

The study also sought to understand whether advocates had made specific requests to AAC, to facilitate them with a specific advocacy resource or support. Overall, 24.3% (62) had made specific requests to AAC. These requests ranged from different issues such as monitoring and evaluation TA support and guidelines and model for training on media advocacy.

Other requests by advocates that were met by AAC include requests to attend a specific training where 24 scholarships were issued by AAC, how to design an advocacy strategy and how to connect with other advocates. Majority who did not make any request cited various reasons. On the positive side, advocates cited that the trainings and webinars addressed some of the immediate needs. The readily available advocacy resources were cited as useful. On the negative side, a section of the advocates reported that AAC is still growing and not well established hence lack of trust among the advocates. Advocates lack of understanding and awareness of AAC scope of work and capability (what it can offer and cannot offer) was also cited as a reason a section of the advocates did not share their requests. Staff turnover, especially for short-term projects, led to a section of the advocates shifting to other programme areas that does not include advocacy. Other reasons include lack of information on how to make specific requests, most of the content provided by AAC was already accessible by advocates on the internet or its already what most advocates have been using in their organisations. When asked whether they had shared advocacy resource or opportunities with AAC, 10.8% (27) reported to have shared. Specific advocacy resource shared by advocates include advocacy strategies during trainings and organisation advocacy strategies for AAC to understand how advocates conduct their advocacies. Of those who had not shared a specific advocacy resource, it was reported that they had not had further engagements with AAC after the learning events (trainings and webinars) and they were not aware whether or not they were required to share and there was lack of clarity on how to share.

3.4. Trainings, webinars, and Linking and Learning events

Trainings

As at December 2019, AAC had conducted a total of 14 trainings (13- in person and 1 on-line) targeting advocates in Africa. The trainings targeted 308 advocates (262 – in person training and 46 – online training) (East Africa – 242, South Africa -34 and West Africa – 32). These trainings include: advocacy in practice, Africa Health Agenda International Conference (AHAIC) youth pre-conference, Africa Women Development Fund (AWDF) effective feminist advocacy training, Basic mobilization training, Campaign accelerator training, modern campaign fundamentals training, Pit Stop resource mobilization, ToC for advocacy and capacity building programmes, and Youth in person advocacy curriculum training. This study sought to interrogate the extent which knowledge was acquired, adapted, and applied by the advocates.

The study sought to understand whether advocates were satisfied with the trainings, and whether they found the training useful and relevant. Based on a Likert scale, advocates were asked to share their satisfaction level. Overall, 94.4% (85.7% Hewlett grantees) reported to be satisfied or very satisfied with the trainings, and its content. 86.1% (78.1% Hewlett grantees) of them reported that the training content was useful and relevant to their work. Some of the useful and relevant content reported by the advocates include media engagement in advocacy, designing theory of change for an advocacy programme, conducting advocacy actions, analysing advocacy issues/problems in the community, advocacy resource mobilization and budgeting, developing an advocacy strategy, developing advocacy messages, monitoring and measuring advocacy interventions and designing advocacy asks.

“...Being a Project Officer and a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Officer of a small Community Based Organisation i.e. Network Empowering Samburu Transformation (NEST) in Samburu County, it was challenging for me to multi-task the two roles. This is because NEST is still trying to grow as an organisation before it can hire a full time M&E Officer...besides boosting my knowledge on the Theory of Change concept, which was new to me, the training helped me gain more insights on how to link Political Economic Analysis/Context analysis to Theory of Change design for advocacy programs. It was great learning more on effective monitoring and evaluation of advocacy and capacity building programmes...the training was an inspiring learning experience for me, and it really enriched my professional journey. I loved being there!”

~ Felix Lekurchalan, NEST ~

Webinars

The AAC has been using webinars to promote the exchange of information and to share advocacy resources. As at December 2019, eight webinars had been organized and held where 789 participants attended. Out of this, 537 were from Africa (East Africa – 357, Western Africa – 135, Southern Africa – 39, North Africa – 4 and Central Africa – 2). Overall, 78.3% (62.8% Hewlett grantees) of the advocates reported to be satisfied or very satisfied with the content of the webinars. Of this number, 72.4% (82.8%) reported that the webinar content was useful and relevant to their work.

Webinar Topics:

- Donor funding for advocacy in the Global South: Are funding models for local advocacy fit for purpose?
- Etat des lieux du plaidoyer en Afrique de l'Ouest francophone: que faudra-t-il pour accélérer les approches africaines du plaidoyer dans la région?
- How to work effectively with mainstream media and engage them to increase the visibility of your advocacy work
- Integrating social media and traditional media to enhance advocacy: Proven effective strategies for advocates
- Media as a Critical Partner in Advocacy: How to Ignite the Power of Media for the Impact of Advocacy
- No Royal Road: Finding and Following the Natural Pathways in Advocacy Evaluation
- Pan Africanism: Mass movement building for youth advocates in Africa
- Use of Art and Creativity to bring out social issues and prompt youth to act: Case of Tribeless Youth

Linking and Learning

CSOs value the advice of peer CSOs, as well as support from grantees for convening CSOs working in the same field in different countries (Aspen, 2019). The linking and learning (L&L) platforms were customized to cater to the needs of small CBOs to share experiences, evidence, and approaches. The Knowledge Management and Community (KMC) approach was utilized to co-develop the platforms with the diverse users of the platforms. As at December 2019, a total of 28 advocates in Kenya and Tanzania were engaged in two linking and learning events organized by AAC. Overall, 69.4% of the advocates reported to be satisfied or very satisfied with the linking and learning opportunities. 88.3% confirmed that the linking and learning opportunities were useful and relevant to their work.

3.5. Knowledge Acquisition, Adaptation and Application

Knowledge Acquisition

The study also sought to understand whether the trainings (online and in-person), webinars and linking and learning events contributed to advocates acquiring new knowledge and skills based on a Likert. Overall, 43.5% (56.4% of Hewlett grantees) agreed or strongly agreed that the three learning events had provided room for learning, sharing, and engaging. This in a way led them to acquiring new knowledge and skills in their area of work. Online and in-person trainings (97.1%) were found to have had the highest impact towards imparting new knowledge and skills to the advocates as compared to the webinars and linking and learning (<20.0%) events. Figure 7 below illustrates this in detail. Advocates report to have been connected, through the linking and learning events, with competent persons providing technical assistance to INGOs which they are leveraging on to improve their advocacy practice and resource for additional funding.

Of those were not satisfied (56.5%), they cited lack of follow up support from AAC on areas that they needed mentoring and TA after the events. Advocates reported to have leveraged on the technical support received from Amref. There is a general perception from advocates that they have the necessary resources to advance effective advocacy within their organisations – something that needs to be explored further.

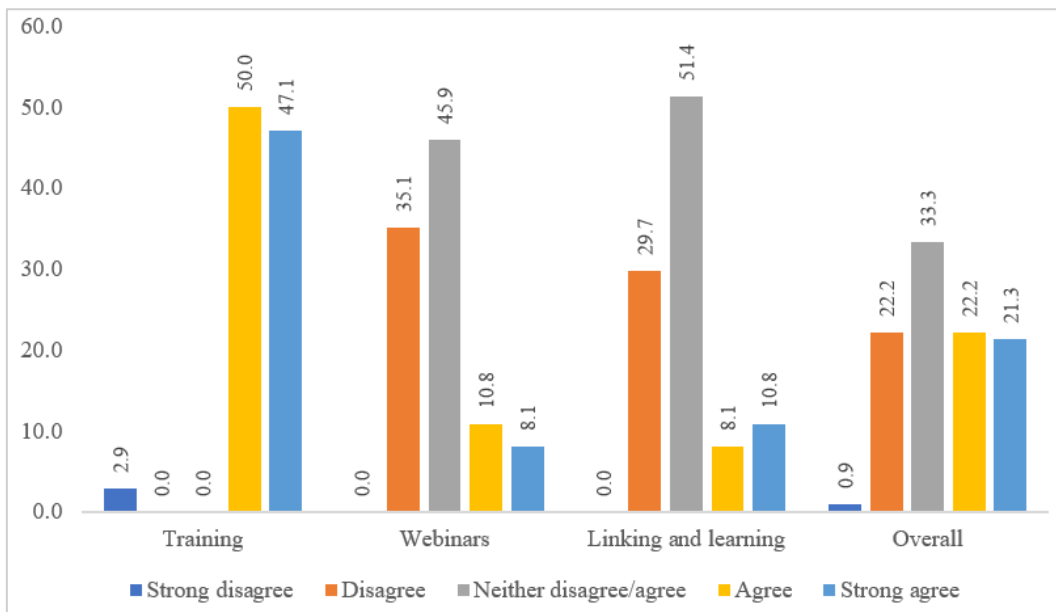


Figure 7: Advocates knowledge acquisition

To understand specifically which areas advocates had gained new knowledge and skills, six areas were assessed. Advocacy strategy formulation, networking and coalition building, M&E for advocacy, advocacy messaging and communication, resource mobilization and the use of evidence in advocacy planning. Over 80.0% of the advocates reported to have acquired new skills in advocacy strategy formulation (83.8%) and advocacy messaging and communication (88.5%). Other areas that new knowledge and skills were acquired include networking and coalition building (61.5%), advocacy resource mobilization (61.5%), use of evidence in advocacy planning (34.6%) and M&E for advocacy (15.4%). Based on the findings, advocates demonstrated a clear need on M&E for advocacy and the use of evidence in planning advocacy work which needs to be considered by AAC moving forward.

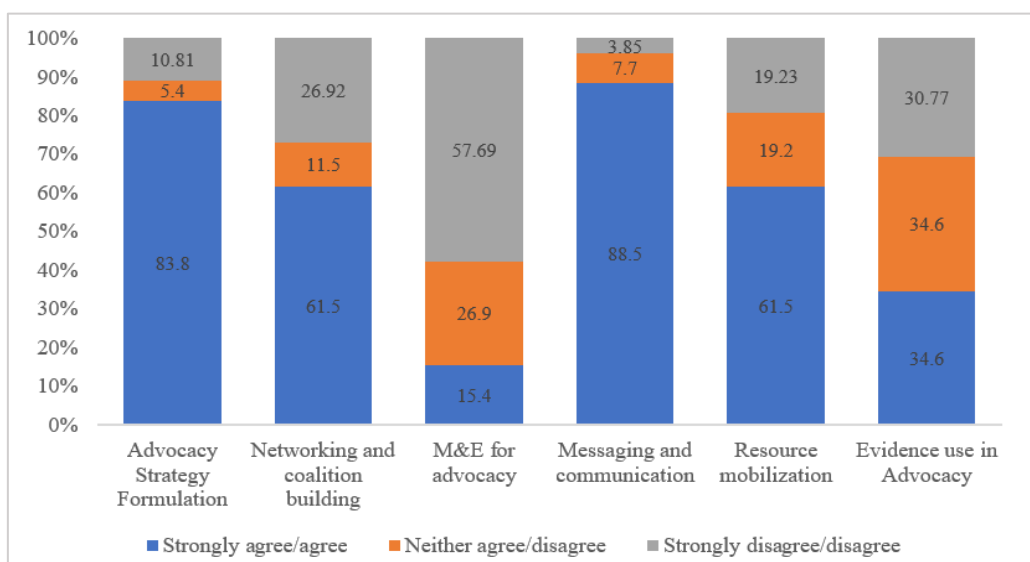


Figure 8: Knowledge acquisition by thematic area

Knowledge Adaptation and Application

To understand whether advocates adapted or applied the new knowledge and skills acquired in their advocacy work, a Likert scale was used across the three areas of focus – training, webinars and linking and learning. Overall, 48.2% (39.7% of Hewlett grantees) reported to have adapted or adopted the new skills in their work in one way or another.

Table 4: Knowledge Adaptation by Advocates

	Training	Webinar	Linking and Learning
Strongly Agree/Agree	94.6	30.8	19.2
Neither agree nor disagree	2.7	69.2	76.9
Strongly Disagree	2.7	0.0	3.8

We sought to understand how advocates adapted or applied the knowledge and skills gained from the trainings, webinars and linking and learning. In this section, we have only reported those training or webinars that were reported to have a high impact, hence their adaptation or application by the advocates.

The trainings were applied in various forms by different advocates depending on the need. For example, a section of the advocates reported to have applied the knowledge gained from the trainings in designing new ToCs for their new projects, including reviewing their old ToCs. The training was also useful in improving data collection, analysis, and reporting processes of advocacy projects, based on the tools that were trained and on. Other use of the same training includes drafting of new funding proposals, defining and reconstructing advocacy asks, mapping and tracking assumptions and documenting changes (political, social and economic) within different contexts and how the same impacts on the different advocacy asks being pursued by the advocates.

“...When we were doing the backward mapping during the ToC training, I was working on a proposal for OAY, I was able to do it well. It has been 3 weeks, but I have put my knowledge into practice...”

~Theory of Change Training Participant~

In addition, advocates report to have shifted their old practices on how to engage with policy makers. For those advocates who relied mostly on social media to engage with their advocacy targets/policy makers, they realized the importance of mixing both social media with physical visits. This approach is cited to have yielded high results from a section of the advocates, where policy makers paid attention to the different advocacy asks pursued by the advocates.

“...Most of the time we were just used to having twitter campaigns. Through the trainings we have attended, we were trained on how to engage policy makers. We learnt that we do not have to focus on twitter alone but also pay policy makers a visit, how to package our advocacy messages. There is a time we were doing budget advocacy, we got to have a one-on-one with one of the policy makers. Through this engagement, we managed to effectively push for an increase in the health budget (SRH 2019) by Ksh 200m...”

~Modern Campaign Training Participant~

How to effectively package your advocacy messages and how to identify and engage new advocacy allies were considered critical topics during the trainings. Advocates report to have improved their skills on how to package their advocacy messages, something that they are currently practicing in their respective organisations and projects. How to map and engage new policy makers has helped advocates to push their advocacy agenda, which had stalled, at an advanced stage.

“...After the training that we received, we started creating allies with the government. We now have the policies that we were pushing for at an advanced stage...”

~Advocacy in Practice Training Participant~

There were few citations from the advocates on how the knowledge gained from webinars and the linking and learning events had been adapted or applied. Despite this, the “*No Royal Road: Finding and Following the Natural Pathways in Advocacy Evaluation*” was deemed to useful in shaping how different advocates design their advocacy evaluations.

“...A lot of information was shared which was quite helpful. I also got some peers, who requested for more information about the webinar that I attended (No Royal Road). The book really helped me to shape the design of my evaluation...”

~Webinar Participant~

Despite advocates reporting to have gained new skills and knowledge, there were varied perspectives on how purposeful and need-based the trainings and webinars were. A section felt that that the trainings and the webinars topics needs to be customized to address their immediate needs for ease in adaptation and application. Based on these findings, there is need for AAC to reinforce advocates participation in identifying and designing training and webinar topics for them to be more purposeful and need-based in order to address the immediate needs of the advocates. On the other hand, there is need for advocates to be on the frontline in facilitating some of the webinars for a more practical and solution-driven discussions.

3.6. Trainings Needs by Advocates

We sought to understand topics advocates would like to be trained on by AAC. Tied to packaging of advocacy evidence so as to attract funding, advocates expressed the need to be mentored on resource mobilization (22.2%), effective monitoring and evaluation of advocacy interventions (20.0%) and packaging of evidence to inform strategic decisions (12.2%). Documentation of advocacy processes and impact are critical to credibility, improved learning, and the ability to attract organizational resources (Catalysts for Change, 2016). Worth noting that resource mobilization/fundraising, learning and evaluation and use of evidence and research in advocacy also stood out in the *Aspen Mid-term review report* (Sep 2018). Other areas expressed by the advocates, in this study, include how to build and sustain networks and coalitions, designing and implementing advocacy messages and communication strategies. There is need for the AAC to consider these areas in their flagship mentorship and training programme during the next phase of implementation. Figure 9 below illustrates this in detail.

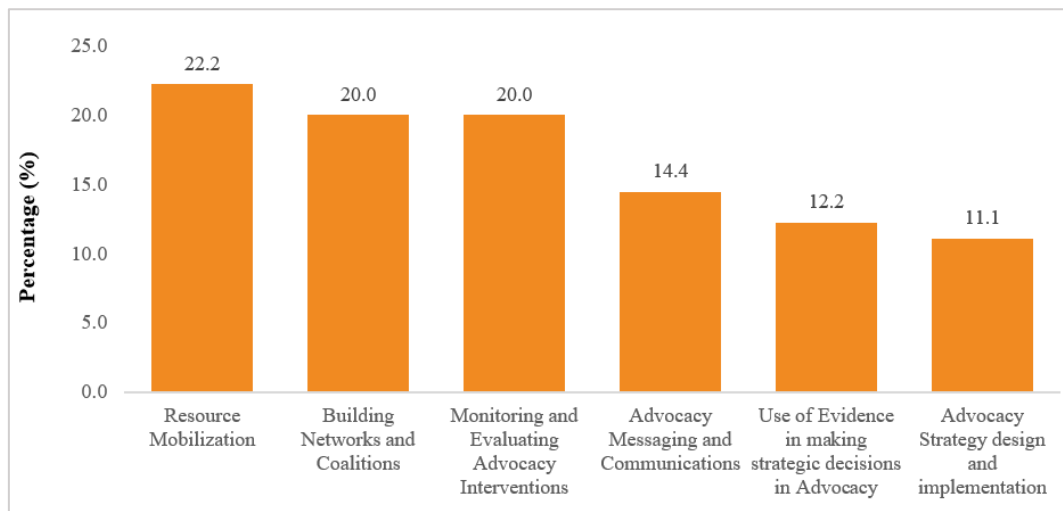


Figure 9: Advocates capacity building needs

Further, advocates revealed that they would like to have access to Theory of Change guidelines – something they would be referring to when reviewing or designing their project or organizational ToCs. There was also an expressed need from advocates to have access to case studies/success stories on good practices in advocacy. A section also felt that they would like to access content on how to translate policy to action/practice and how to create stronger partnerships. A matrix on who is funding advocacy in the continent was deemed important in order to complement their resource mobilization efforts.



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Conclusion

Since its inception in 2017, the AAC has made tremendous efforts towards increasing its visibility within the advocacy ecosystem. Despite this achievement, more efforts need to go towards scaling up this recognition beyond East Africa. Increased visibility has somehow led to an increase in awareness and subscription by advocate to AAC learning and sharing platforms. A section of the advocates finds the platforms to be accessible and useful to foster learning, engagement and sharing of advocacy knowledge and resources. Majority of the advocates confirms to be satisfied with the training topics and content as compared to those delivered in webinars and linking and learning events. As such, both in person and online trainings are confirmed to have high impact in terms of how advocates report to have either adapted or applied the gained knowledge and skills. Despite this, both trainings, webinars and linking and learning events were deemed to be useful channels for learning, sharing, and engaging, where new knowledge and skills were gained even if it was not applied by some of the advocates. Areas that advocates report to have gained new knowledge and skills include advocacy strategy formulation, advocacy messaging/communication, networking and coalition building and resource mobilization. There is still an expressed need from the advocates to be trained on resources mobilization, building networks and coalitions and M&E for advocacy; something that AAC may want to reinforce or prioritize in the next phase.

4.2. Recommendations

The study findings point to a range of possible actions that can be taken by AAC to ensure that the learning outlined can be addressed effectively. The outlined recommendations below are based on the study analysis of the findings. Validity of each recommendation can be traced back in the main report.

1. There is need for AAC to increase its visibility to other regions beyond East Africa, especially in the Francophone countries. The Anglophone dominance can be attributed to the fact that majority of the learning content are in English, which in most cases the content is not translated in other languages like French and Portuguese. AAC can also purposefully target and engage donors to reach out advocates in other regions – this will also mean pushing for more support from donors. Another approach would be to establish regional hubs and recruitment of regional representatives from these regions. Understanding of the region-specific needs will be a prerequisite towards addressing the specific needs of the advocates
2. While AAC is visible among advocates who have been engaging with it, there is still need to define, package, and share with advocates its vision, mission, and objectives towards strengthening advocacy in Africa. This in a way will help and guide advocates on what and how to engage with AAC hence managing expectations from them.
3. There is need for AAC to devise ways on how to engage grass-roots advocates who have no access to technology, which is the main source of engagement. One of such ways could be working with donors and grantees to cascade advocacy resources, materials, and information to their sub-grantees.

4. A quarterly calendar of events for trainings, webinars, linking and learning etc, will help advocates to plan their attendance in advance – including reaching out to more advocates.
5. AAC needs to strike a balance between conducting general trainings and more customized trainings. Of importance should be to continuously collect feedback from advocates on the important topics and issues they would like to be supported on. In regard to the AAC website, there is need for the “search for” element to be re-activated in order to track and package the most searched resources by advocates on the AAC website. This information would be useful in updating the online resources based on the need as expressed by advocates.
6. In order to conveniently foster cross learning among advocates, AAC can introduce a quarterly magazine that pulls together findings and best practices from advocacy evaluations conducted by different organisations or projects in the region – including case studies. This will help in consolidating best practices on what is working and how. If well analysed and packaged, this information might be useful to inform webinar topics for discussion – with the same facilitated by advocates.
7. There was an expressed need from advocates for AAC to establish a donor matrix with information on donors – who is funding advocacy, on what and where? This matrix might be useful to complement advocates efforts towards resources mobilization.
8. There is need for AAC to review and redesign its subscription forms on the website and Facebook page to disaggregate user engagements and interaction by type of audience – advocates, TAs and donors, this also includes ensuring that the website and Facebook page attracts traffic beyond East Africa.
9. There is need for AAC to establish a mechanism on how to provide mentorship and support post training and webinar events. This will ensure that the knowledge gained from these events is put into use, and more so, emerging gaps addressed in the process. The AAC Facebook page could be used for sharing such feedback and experiences.

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