

## Impact Story Dissemination of information material

<p><b>Impact Story</b></p> <p>Dissemination of information material</p>
<p><b>Intervention Definition</b></p> <p>Negative gender stereotypes still reinforce the underrepresentation of women in male-dominated fields, like the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). For example, women are perceived as less credible in the high-tech start-up world and female founders of innovative start-ups in Germany made up only 14.6% in 2017. Those stereotypes are apparent in societal cultures as well as certain policies, like the allocation of research grants (Watson and Hjorth 2015). Interest groups may address policies which are influenced by gender stereotypes by providing expert information to political decision-makers in order to achieve policy changes (Wehrmann 2007). Furthermore, support for gender equality from a broader segment of the population may be mobilised by generating a public discourse which favours gender equality and equal representation (Lang 2009).</p> <p>The intervention "Dissemination of information material" can encompass various activities. Firstly, the data on the current level of gender equality in the specific field needs to be collected and strategically formulated as policy recommendations. The gathered information is then disseminated either through direct contacts with decision-makers or through the media. Filing a petition or participating in institutionalised hearings for interest groups are also possibilities to advocate for policy change (Wehrmann 2007). Moreover, organising or participating in events can raise awareness for gender equality (Jutbring 2016). Since framing is pivotal for successful advocacy it should be considered to link the issues with a larger movement and to build coalitions with other interest groups which support this movement (Chopra et al. 2014). The internet is a low-cost option to establish a network with other interest groups as well as to generate public attention (Seibicke 2017). Once the policy has been successfully changed, the implementation needs to be observed (Klugman 2011).</p> <p>For example, in order to promote women entrepreneurs in STEM fields, Women Founders Consult (WFC) in Germany conducts a research study on the challenges and barriers for women to become entrepreneurs in this area. WFC will summarise the results of the study as policy recommendations. Since the organisation already included political decision-makers in the conception of the research design, those stakeholders will also be consulted as direct contacts to disseminate the policy recommendations. Furthermore, WFC has established networks with several other interest groups on the local, regional and national level. WFC is integrated into hannoverimpuls, a public business development agency in Hanover. Therefore, the promotion of women entrepreneurs is framed as an economic development as well as a gender equality issue.</p>
<p><b>Intervention Definition Short</b></p> <p>The intervention "Dissemination of information material" aims at advocating for policy change in the identified problem area, i.e. gender equality. After the specific information is collected to formulate matching policy recommendations for the problem, those recommendations will be disseminated in order to put them into public and policy agendas (Klugman 2011).</p>
<p><b>Objectives</b></p> <p>(6) Foster ethics, positive gender attitudes, public engagement, science education, open access and/or governance</p>
<p><b>Output</b></p> <p>Short-term outputs of "Dissemination of information material" are the aggregated data and information on the issue as well as the identification of possible solutions (Klugman 2011).</p>

Indicators for this output are whether research studies have been conducted and policy recommendations have been formulated. In the example of the promotion of women entrepreneurs in STEM fields by WFC, the equivalent is the completed research study on challenges and barriers for women STEM entrepreneurs in the German state of Lower Saxony as well as according policy recommendations, which promote innovative start-ups in Lower Saxony founded, by women.

The produced and communicated information material is measured either by the number of personal conversations, letters or phone calls with decision-makers (Wehrmann 2007) or by the number of press releases as well as online and offline publications on the issue (Seibicke 2017), depending on whether the advocacy's target group is political decision-makers or the general public. WFC, for example, wants to deliver the information of its research study to political decision-makers.

A broader network of like-minded interest groups is also an output of disseminating information. This is assessed by an increased number of members in an already existing network or by the number of new networks of which the organisation is now a part (Klugman 2011).

#### **Output Short**

Immediate outputs of "Dissemination of information material" are the collected information on the respective issue and the identification of possible solutions for it (Klugman 2011). The information which has been delivered is the key output (Wehrmann 2007). Integrating the organisation into growing networks is a short-term result as well (Klugman 2011).

#### **Output indicators**

5.5.3 Conducting the research (data collection, data analysis)

5.5.3 Communicating and disseminating the results of the project

#### **Outcome**

When advocacy is successful, decision-makers will give legitimacy and higher priority to the respective issue, i.e. gender equality (Jutbring 2016) and there will be more institutional acknowledgement and support for the target group (Prakash and Gugerty 2012). Institutional support is assessed by a more equal distribution of resources (Klugman 2011) for example in the allocation of public grants (Prakash and Gugerty 2012). In Lower Saxony, WFC tries to achieve an equal distribution of financial support by eliminating the institutional bias of investors against female entrepreneurs. Its goal is to increase the probability of new business launches and the sustainability of businesses founded by female entrepreneurs.

A middle-term effect of the "Dissemination of information material" is triggering a policy change towards the desired direction (Chopra et al. 2014). Even if the predefined policy result is not reached, exceptions to the general legislation are a partial success of the advocacy efforts (Junk and Rasmussen 2018). Furthermore, a positive policy outcome might also be preserving the status quo when an existing policy which supports the interest group's claim has been under threat (Klugman 2011). To what extent the policy recommendation has been adopted is evaluated by a comparison with the actual legislative text. WFC wants to influence the programmes by the State Ministry of Economy in Lower Saxony, which support start-ups towards being more responsive to the needs of female entrepreneurs in STEM fields.

Moreover, through advocacy, public support for the target group is solicited (Lang 2009). Public support is indicated by the increase of media publications which portray the target group positively and endorse the policy recommendations (Klugman 2011). Due to the broad frame of WFC's programme, support by both, advocates of economic development as well as advocates of gender equality can be expected.

<p><b>Outcome Short</b></p> <p>An expected effect of the "Dissemination of information material" on the target group is an intensified institutional and public support for its members (Jutbring 2016). The overarching middle-term effect is a policy change or strengthening of policy towards the desired direction (Chopra et al. 2014).</p>
<p><b>Outcome indicators</b></p> <p>1.1.1 Percentage of Member State funding programmes explicitly including gender requirements</p> <p>3.4.1 Proportion of women receiving a grant</p> <p>4.1.1 Enacting of policy change</p> <p>5.5.3 Media Coverage</p>
<p><b>Impact</b></p> <p>Beyond a successful policy change, the "Dissemination of information material" can contribute to a change in public norms and therefore target groups might experience a decline of discrimination and stigmatisation (Klugman 2011). The dismantling of prejudices against female entrepreneurs can open the regional start-up ecosystem for female founders. The increase in the number of start-ups which are successfully founded by women is therefore an indicator for a change in public norms. Moreover, a sustainable alteration of male-centred attitudes and a male-dominated culture is assessed by whether the respective issue, i.e. gender equality, stays on the agenda of decision-makers (European Institute for Gender Equality 2015).</p> <p>Through ongoing experiences with advocacy, the organisational capacity of the interest group can be enhanced. This includes whether the organisation is capable of raising more funds as well as achieving more goals with those funds. Furthermore, the organisation's capacity to learn from successes or failures can be improved. This is indicated by whether strategies have been altered after their goals were achieved or not (Klugman 2011). Another effect on the organisation's capability is the establishment of international networks which can be operationalised to put pressure on a government to further comply with the interest group's demands (Prakash and Gugerty 2012). A group's linkage to international organisations indicates its international network.</p>
<p><b>Impact short</b></p> <p>In the long term, a change in public norms increases the success of target group members in the respective areas. This results in a positive change in the target group's professional climate towards a supportive environment. On an organisational level advocacy can have an impact on the interest group's financial and networking capacity as well as on its capability to learn from past advocacy efforts (Klugman 2011).</p>
<p><b>Impact indicators short</b></p> <p>1.1.1 Share of female heads of research performance organisations</p> <p>4.1.1 Acceptance of cultural change</p> <p>4.1.1 Sustainability of gender equality initiatives</p> <p>5.1.1 Share of women founding a company</p> <p>5.2.2 Improved cost effectiveness and sustainability of solutions</p>

### **Policy Context**

An interest group most easily directs a policy change towards the desired outcome when it influences a legislative draft during the first phase of its development. The access to political decision-makers is crucial because a base of mutual respect and trust can make sure that the information is considered by the decision-makers (Wehrmann 2007). In the example of WFC, the conducted research study already included political stakeholders in its conceptualisation. Therefore, the organisation established good contacts with political stakeholders.

Depending on the issue, advocacy takes place in different policy markets which vary in entry barriers as well as levels of competition or collaboration (Prakash and Gugerty 2012). Especially interest groups which advocate for gender equality are confronted with intersectionally complex policy fields (Seibicke 2017).

Even after a policy change towards the favoured direction has been reached, the observation of the implementation process is essential because the passed legislation might not be put into action or could be overturned (Klugman 2011).

Oftentimes, the success of the "Dissemination of information material" is owed to a window of opportunity (Prakash and Gugerty 2012). Since political contexts and political decision-makers change frequently, the strategies of interest groups have to be continuously reassessed (Klugman 2011). Furthermore, those strategies have to be modified depending on whether the policy decisions are made on the regional, national, European or global level (Wehrmann 2007). Institutions of the European Union for example, prefer institutionally well organised communication and consultation (Seibicke 2017).

### **Organisational Context**

Interest groups have to react swiftly to the changing policy framework. Moreover, successful advocacy is mostly not rooted on a linear process but needs multiple strategies. Although disseminating the information through gate-keepers to the acting government can be rewarding, engaging more critically with current decision-makers can also be a good strategy (Chopra et al. 2014). This is for example the case when large parts of the public can be mobilised through protest (Lang 2009).

When different strategies are considered, the existing resources of the interest group need to be taken into account. Especially organisations which advocate for gender equality might have fewer resources (Seibicke 2017). If the transaction costs for a desired goal are too high for the advocacy group, the costs for a single group can be reduced by forming networks with like-minded organisations (Prakash and Gugerty 2012). Although the resources as well as the combined influence of the network increase with the number of organisations, it also intensifies the communication costs in formulating a collective frame for the respective issue. The framing is especially important because a given frame can dominate the public discourse as well as the arguments of the opposing camp, which can influence the success of the advocacy initiative (Junk and Rasmussen 2018).

WFC also experiences the importance of resources. Its funding is limited in time and therefore some of its employees might leave for more secure working situations. Furthermore, the planning of long-term activities is difficult with short-term funding. WFC cooperates with the start-up centre at Leibniz University and thus they can use public resources and thereby lower their transaction costs. Furthermore, it is integrated in hannoverimpuls through which it gains additional resources. This integration also frames the programme as an economic development as well as a gender equality issue, which can improve its impact.

When interest groups organise or participate in events to raise awareness of an issue, it is advisable to concentrate on regularly reoccurring events because those achieve a wider reach of the message. Furthermore, international mega-events might not be as suitable since they are harder to access for advocacy groups. Therefore, national or local events should be preferred (Jutbring 2016).

### Sources

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