

MAKING ADVOCACY HAPPEN

This section will help you to build on the strategic background – research, identifying targets etc. you have developed for your advocacy, and to convert this into action plans. It offers theory for good execution of advocacy action plans. The following chapter offers actual methods of Carrying out advocacy, ranging from lobbying meetings to mounting media campaigns. Key to this chapter is an examination of the action-based steps in the planning. Remember, the advocacy planning cycle is only a tool. In the real world, you will have to adjust both your planning and your actions, and do things in a different or parallel order. You may even have to return to earlier steps, in light of information or progress as it emerges. There are a number of approaches to advocacy, and a whole host of activities that can be used to mount advocacy work. These specific advocacy actions are outlined in the following chapter, but this chapter will show you how to create a plan to implement various actions as part of your advocacy on any particular issue. Advocacy actions can be grouped under four broad headings:

- **Lobbying:** the process of trying to directly influence decision-makers, such as politicians, civil servants, or corporate chief executives
- **Public campaigning:** activities to engage the public, and to mobilize visible support for your position
- **Media work:** raising public awareness of your issues, with a view to changing public attitudes and behavior, and encouraging support for your other advocacy actions
- **Capacity building:** increasing the knowledge of those affected by a particular issue, and increasing their skills and developing their structures to enable them to carry out their own advocacy

The next chapter breaks these different elements down into concrete actions. These streams of advocacy actions can work to complement each other. Any advocacy project will need to work on several levels, employing each of these categories of action, if they are to address governments, donors, the public and the media. While your emphasis in some spheres will depend on the context and different activities will be employed as a result, you are still likely to need a broad range of activities to achieve your goal. An advocacy project may employ different approaches simultaneously, aimed at different target audiences, or feature one approach aimed at the same target audience over time. This is where partnership working (see below) begins to become particularly important. Through collaboration, two different organizations can employ different approaches to the same advocacy target, using their strongest skills and resources, whilst working towards the same end.

Key idea: The advocacy continuum

There is a range of approaches to advocacy, some of which are confrontational, while others involve working alongside advocacy targets to achieve desired change. You might think of these different approaches as belonging to an inter-related continuum:

Cooperation – education – persuasion – litigation – contestation

What resources and capacity do you have for advocacy?

Before you can finalize which activities you will carry out; it is vital to consider what resources you have at your disposal. In reality, you are likely to have to continually consider resources as you make progress with your advocacy actions. Assessing and allocating resources before you begin advocacy work is not always possible.

Indeed, part of your advocacy work may be to raise finances or lever additional resources in order to carry out other advocacy work. The resources you have available for advocacy work will be a mix of financial, human capacity and common or shared knowledge. Examining each of the elements in turn will enable you to identify any gaps that need filling before you can begin a particular action.

- **Money:** what money do you have available for this advocacy project? Where is money coming from: your organization, partners, and other funders? Are there likely to be cash flow problems, or difficulties getting authorization for spend? Roughly how much do you think you will need to implement the activities you are considering? Is your budget realistic, and based on actual costs or quotes?

- **People:** who will be available to work on the different aspects of the project?

- **Skills and experience:** do the key people have the right skills and experience? If not, can you train them or get other people involved?

- **Other human resources:** do you have access to other people who can help? Do you have volunteers to distribute leaflets, campaign supporters to write letters, community members to attend meetings?

- **Partners:** what could potential partners deliver?

- **Information and knowledge:** have you been able to do enough research and analysis on the issue, on your objectives and solutions, and to identify your targets? If not, do you need to look again at the earlier steps in the advocacy planning cycle?

- **Relationships:** what relationships do you, your staff, volunteers and partners have which you will be able to use? These may be among target audiences, influential or in practical areas such as materials design or the media

- **Time:** do you have enough time to implement your project effectively? Are there particular deadlines that you have to meet? Are there external events that you wish to use, such as elections, national or local political meetings, government planning cycles or international summits?

- **Reputation:** do you or your partners have a strong reputation among the target audiences, with the public or the media? If not, have you developed strategies and tactics to get around this? Can you recruit influential spokespeople or celebrities to speak on your behalf? Do you need to work in partnership with another, better-known organization?

FORGING THE RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS WITH ALLIES

Partnerships, alliances and even short-term coalitions can greatly enhance advocacy by bringing together the strengths and resources of diverse groups to create a more powerful force for change. Coming together to bring about social change is nothing new to people in the developing world. Improved communications technology and the challenges of sustainable development is leading to stronger alliances among civil society organizations. The entry of such partnerships into public policy is a positive step that provides new opportunities to engage in collective advocacy.

Key idea: Advocacy alliances

Relationships amongst advocacy allies come in many shapes and sizes, and are described in various different ways: alliances, networks and coalitions. What they have in common is that they link individuals and organizations that share common values and concerns,

and which are working towards a common objective or a common action. In longer term coalitions, groups come together initially to lobby together, and continue to gain strength and voice and results over a number of years. The Jubilee Debt campaign is an example of this. Advocacy alliances can be long- or short-term. In the short term groups may come together to lobby on a particular issue for a specific time only, then go back to working separately when that time is complete. There are many good reasons why striking good partnerships is an effective way to mount advocacy campaigns.

Another key benefit of alliance work is that it offers opportunities to learn and build capacity within each of the partner organizations. When building alliances, you might consider what each partner can learn from each other. Alliances also allow advocacy actions to take place at various levels, as different partners exploit their access and influence with different levels of decision-making, from information relationships with community leaders, through to formal channels for lobbying government departments. Through bringing together organizations or individuals with different expertise or experience, advocacy alliances are able to carry out a more wide-ranging set of advocacy actions. They allow a variety of interventions, including public mobilization, lobbying, education and information provision, where one organization acting alone might not be able to deliver such a combination. Alliances certainly do bring advantages to advocacy work, but they can be difficult to form and difficult to sustain. They tend to suffer from unrealistic goals or expectations. For any organization considering progressing an alliance, the associated investment you will need to put in should be considered from the outset. You should also consider whether entering into an alliance will help to achieve success, or whether some of your potential allies might be more effective as independent actors. In short,

you will need to assess whether by working together you are more likely to succeed, and whether the alliance itself will succeed.

Quick and useful: Pros and cons of alliances

Advantages

- Strength and safety in numbers
- Broadens support base
- Increases access to policy makers
- Expands base of information and expertise
- Creates new networking and partnership opportunities
- Shares workload
- Fosters a sense of synergy
- Adds credibility and visibility
- Opens opportunities to create new leaders

Disadvantages

- Politics of identity/culture
- Distracts from other work
- Generates an uneven workload between stronger and weaker members
- Requires compromise
- Causes tensions due to imbalances of power
- Limits individual organizational visibility
- Poses risks to profile/reputation

Creating alliances

Taking a step-by-step approach when forming a new alliance will contribute to its strength and flexibility later on. The first step in any alliance is to consider who the best partners might be. You will need to think broadly about possible allies. Your analysis, already carried out, of the different stakeholders in your issue will assist you to identify key allies and those organizations who are most likely to be effective partners in achieving your advocacy goals. You will need to carry out some research to explore common interests and to define your expectations for working together.

Quick and useful: Balanced alliances

A good alliance must find a balance of skills, in order to be effective. You might research the following issues, when considering which partners to link up with.

- Communications capacity
- Policy research and expertise
- Sectoral representation, to engage different stakeholders
- Regional representation, to promote cross-fertilization
- Organizational capacity, to support the activities of the alliance
- Collaborative work culture, to adapt to the needs of the alliance
- —Insidell/—outsidell advocates

The next step is to consider the ingredients of a successful alliance, and how these will be applied to the alliance you are considering:

- Having a common goal or interest
- Creating clear governance structures

- Choice of partners
- Open communication between partners
- Ability to develop action plans, with long- and short-term outcomes.

Of these, one of the most important is for the members of your alliance to share a common purpose. If the alliance is to be strong and united, such a goal will need to be defined by the alliance jointly, not imposed on it by one stronger member. It is sometimes possible that allies can pursue complementary goals, rather than a single shared goal. Carrying out joint advocacy work may be a more effective way to help partners achieve their goals, but there would need to be equal priority given to each partner's aim. In the same way, alliances should be regarded as successful even if they do not clearly achieve the common goal to which the partnership is working. Partners should remember to look inward at the numerous wins that may come, even with the loss of a specific campaign. Success of this kind is incredibly valuable, for building future alliances and for making an immediate impact on those who have engaged in the advocacy work. There are a number of factors which will influence whether an alliance will be successful.

- **Representative:** does the alliance give equal weight to the voices of all the partners, and their stakeholders, within it? All perspectives should be heard. This is vital for legitimacy and therefore influence
- **Evidence:** between them, allies must have quality evidence to submit if the alliance itself is to be regarded as legitimate and credible. Such evidence must be well presented
- **Persistence:** all alliance members will need to be prepared for the fact that influence requires sustained pressure over a long period of time

- **Influencers:** the partnerships must include those who have the power and influence to get things done in the policy arena
- **Links:** where allies have links with others who can contribute to the advocacy work and advance its agenda, the alliance is likely to be strengthened. These can complement other strategies
- **Networking:** partners need to be able to communicate easily, so information technology links are vital, as well as face-to-face opportunities
- **Communication:** tensions and conflict may arise amongst allies, these must be discussed openly, and time must be taken for conflict resolution and problem solving
- **Equality:** attention must be given to allies both giving to and gaining from the relationship.

Alliance success depends on whether partners can trust and rely on each other. For that, basic structures and accountability processes are important. While trust can come with time and working together on particular issues, it also depends on a clear governance structure to help an alliance function and manage differences.