

## **5 STEPS TO ADVOCACY**

### **A Center for Global Peace Toolkit**

#### ***Preface***

The Center for Global Peace has been involved in a number of projects supporting the development of national human rights institutions and mechanisms in Iraq. To date, the trainings have focused on preparing Iraqis to make their decisions about how to create and, then, to participate in their own national human rights mechanisms. To this end, trainings have imparted information and built skills necessary for informed and effective human rights advocacy. Building on these previous trainings, and in response to the feedback of program participants, this toolkit provides a clear and succinct explanation of how to conduct public advocacy.

#### ***Intended Audience***

Although the initial audience for this text will be Iraqis interested in human rights advocacy – either because they wish to be human rights advocates themselves, or because they need to interact with human rights advocates – the text is written generically, thus permitting it to be of use to a wider audience.

#### **Organization**

After a brief introduction to the field of advocacy, the toolkit turns to a 5-Step Approach to Advocacy that streamlines a number of successful contemporary approaches.:

The five steps are as follows:

- I. DEFINE ISSUE, PLUS DELINEATE YOUR INTEREST IN IT
- II. IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCE
- III. FRAME YOUR MESSAGE
- IV. DEVELOP YOUR PLAN
- V. EVALUATE YOUR PLAN

In addition, the following three topics are further explained in easy-to-use, one-page appendices.

- A. Using the media
- B. Coalition buildingt
- C. Legislative and Policy Analysis

## Introduction

Advocacy is a process to bring about *change* in the policies, laws and practices of *influential* individuals, groups and institutions. It involves many people and/or organizations working together toward a shared vision of change.

Advocacy work takes many shapes and serves many purposes. It is possible to advocate for ourselves or for other people. The timeline for advocacy varies, but most advocacy strategies involve both long-term and short-term thinking.. Some of the most powerful advocacy methods are led by the people affected by the problem or issue, or directly involve them. It is very important to receive the permission of the people affected by the problem if we use methods that do not directly involve them in the advocacy work.

Sometimes advocacy work is forced upon us – the problem or issue is already there, and we use advocacy to reduce the problem. This is reactive advocacy. At other times it is possible to plan for the future, to ‘set the agenda’ and use advocacy to create a positive environment or prevent a problem before it happens. This is proactive advocacy.

The purpose of advocacy is to:

- **Educate** ourselves and others about an issue or problem that needs to be addressed.
- **Change attitudes**: address specific misconceptions about a problem, including that it is intractable.
- **Influence law-makers** so that their new laws and changes to existing laws reflect greater awareness of the issues you raise.
- **Support legal and social change advocates** who are campaigning for new laws and enforcement of existing laws that address your concerns.
- **Address policy-makers** so that their agenda includes your issues.
- **Influence the media** so that it draws more attention to your concerns.
- **Pressure public officials** for enforcement of laws and policies addressing your concerns.
- **Develop coalitions and networks** to work together to achieve shared goals.

*Adapted from Janet Lord et. al, Human Rights for All .. GET CITE*

Creating lasting change takes time. Long-term planning is crucial. However, short-term plans are also important. The following 5-step advocacy plan can be useful for both short-term and long-term strategizing.

## **VI. DEFINE ISSUE, PLUS DELINEATE YOUR INTEREST IN IT**

Start by isolating and defining the issue you wish to address most.

### ***Questions to Ask:***

- What is the problem? Ask yourself: who does what to whom?
- How are you affected? For how long and with what impact?
- What are the possible causes of the situation you wish to change?

Consider as many perspectives as you can. For example:

Laws?

Attitudes?

Social traditions?

Religion?

Government?

- What can be done to improve the situation? What kind of change would YOU want to make?
- What differentiates you from others with respect to this problem, and your initial proposed solution?

### ***Desired output:***

A one sentence description of the problem you wish to address.

A one sentence explanation as to why this problem matters to you.

## **II. IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCE**

Your advocacy strategy depends on who you want to reach.

### ***Questions to Ask:***

- Who do you wish to reach with your message about the problem you have identified? What are your initial impressions?

- Who is the person, group or organization that has the power to make the change being requested?
- Who is the person, group or organization that has the power to influence the person, group or organization that has the power to change being requested?
- To what extent do you wish to address the media? [See Appendix A, “Using the Media”).
- Coalitions? [See Appendix B, “Guidelines for Successful Coalition Building”) and/or
- Legislators and policymakers? [See Appendix C, “Analyzing Legislation and Public Policy”).

***Desired output:***

A list of up to three audiences, with a one sentence description of each, arranged in declining order of importance.

A discussion as to why each potential audience member should care about the problem you identify.

### III. FRAME YOUR MESSAGE

“Framing your message” requires you to think about *what* you want to say.

***Questions to Ask:***

- What are 2-3 of the most important messages that you need to communicate to your audience?
- How do you want your audience to think about the issue? What frames of reference should they use?
- Can you tell your audience why they should care about the problem?

***Desired output:***

A message with four components:

- 1. Problem Statement:** A description in plain language of the problem.
- 2. Relevance:** Why and how are the problems relevant for the policy makers and the wider society.
- 3. Policy proposal:** This is the suggested solution.

**4. Proposed action:** What your audience should do and how and with whom they should do it.

#### **IV. DEVELOP YOUR PLAN**

“Developing your plan” requires you to think about *how* you want to deliver and use your message.

***Questions to Ask:***

- In what way should these messages be communicated; what tools are you going to use? Newsletters? Special events? Publicity campaigns? Internet Blogging? Other Internet forms of Communication?
- To what extent do you want to use your message for “Agenda-Setting,” that is for bringing a new or neglected issue to the attention of the media and to policy makers?
- Can you link your message to a major news story and/or trigger event?

***Desired output:***

The outline and timetable for developing and using your message.

#### **V. EVALUATE YOUR PLAN**

It is important to monitor and keep track of your actions. Record your progress on the action planning forms and celebrate your successes!

***Questions to Ask:***

- Did your audience act in the manner you had anticipated?

If you met your goal:

- What factors contributed to your success?
- How can you build on this success?
- Should you repeat this strategy?

If your goal was not met:

- How could your advocacy be improved?
- Is your message clear?
- Did you identify the right audience to which to deliver it?
- Did your audience receive the message?

What are your next steps for action?

***Desired output:***

A constructive critique addressing the questions listed above.

## **APPENDIX A: USING THE MEDIA**

The specific news strategies frequently used by media advocates include building professional relationships with journalists, creating news, linking issues with breaking news, and using paid advertising selectively.

### **Cultivating Relationships**

Journalists need information and ideas for stories with importance to the local community. Advocates need to think of themselves as sources for these stories. To be a good source, it is necessary to have expertise, credibility, reliability, and timely information as well as a broad knowledge of an issue. A source should be able to point the journalist to others who can add to the story and provide sufficient background to cover key points, including the points of opposition.

### **Creating News**

Issues that concern large numbers of people, raise broader community issues, involve conflict, controversy or injustice are potential news stories. Every day, news outlets have a "news hole" to fill, and there always is more news than can be covered. The more interesting, important, and easy to cover a story is, the more likely it is to be covered.

### **Linking to Breaking News**

Every day, there are stories in the news to which advocates can link their issues. Sometimes breaking news can be anticipated.

**Evaluation** - The basic question of the impact evaluation is whether the policy being advanced was actually adopted. However, media advocacy inevitably is only one of several important factors that contribute to achieving the desired change.

Evaluation questions in media advocacy revolve around three points:

- Did the issue get on the media agenda?
- Did the issue get framed from the policy perspective?
- Did the media coverage advance the message?

Basic outcome issues include whether (1) the issue was placed on the public agenda, (2) it put pressure on and mobilized key decision makers, and, (3) the policy was enacted or the change occurred.

## **APPENDIX B: GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESSFUL COALITION BUILDING**

A coalition is a group of individuals and/or organizations with a common interest who agree to work together towards a common goal, often to carry out a particular campaign. Coalition goals are as varied as coalitions themselves, but often contain elements of one or more of the following:

- Influencing or developing public policy, usually finding a specific solution to a specific problem
- Changing people's behavior
- Building a healthy community

### **Reasons to Form a Coalition Include:**

- To address an urgent situation
- To empower elements of the community—or the community as a whole—to take control of their future
- To obtain or provide services
- To bring about more effective and efficient delivery of programs
- To pool resources
- To increase communication among groups and break down stereotypes
- To revitalize the energies of members of groups who are trying to do too much alone
- To develop and use political clout to gain services or other benefits for the community
- To create long-term social change

### **Questions to Ask When You Are Thinking About Building a Coalition**

- What would your unifying issue(s) be?
- What resources could come from other organizations?
- What obstacles might you encounter?

## APPENDIX C: ANALYZING LEGISLATION OR POLICY

### Questions to ask

The following list of questions may help you analyze a policy statement or piece of legislation:

- Who benefits from this legislation or policy (if anyone)?
- Who loses (if anyone)?
- What will be the consequences five years from now of enforcing this?
- How does the legislation or policy affect marginalised groups?
- Is this something ordinary people can understand?
- Who supports this law/policy, and why?
- How did this issue first come to the notice of decision-makers?
- What is the financial cost?
- Can it be enforced? If so, by whom, and how?
- What is the penalty if you don't obey this law/policy?
- Does the law/policy violate the UN Declaration of Human Rights or any other convention signed by your country?
- Is the law/policy consistent with your own country's Bill of Rights and/or Constitution?

*Reference: Adapted from **Training for Transformation, Book 4**, by Anne Hope and Sally Timmel, Mango Press, Zimbabwe, 2000.*