



# Human Rights Advocacy

Vienna

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Janet Lord

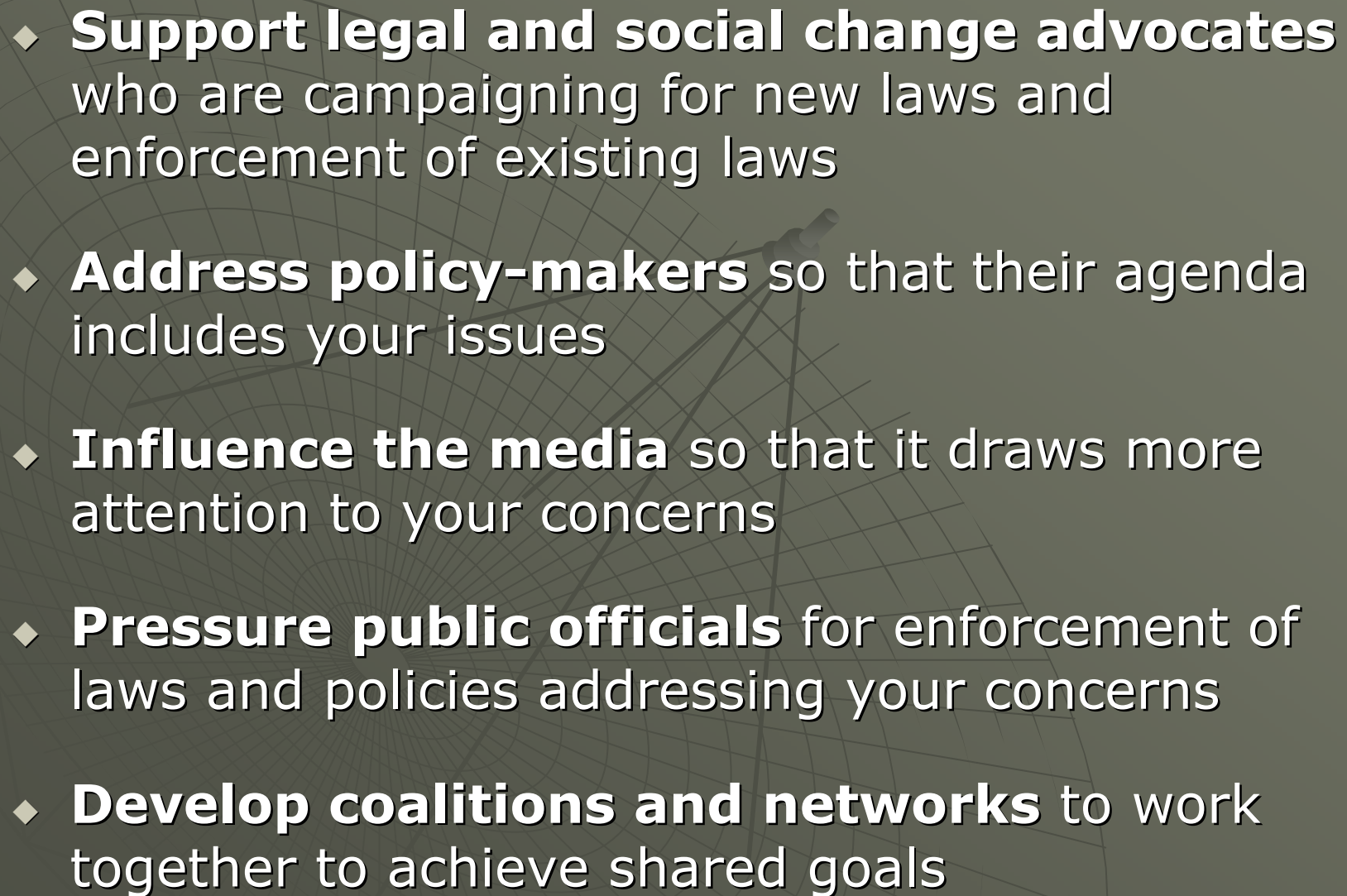
Mary Gray

# What is advocacy?

A process to bring about change in  
policies  
laws  
practices  
of influential  
individuals  
groups  
institutions

# The purpose of advocacy is to:

- ◆ **Educate** ourselves and others about an issue or problem that needs to be addressed
- ◆ **Change attitudes** by addressing specific misconceptions about a problem, including that it is intractable
- ◆ **Influence law-makers** so that new laws and changes to existing laws reflect greater awareness

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- ◆ **Support legal and social change advocates** who are campaigning for new laws and enforcement of existing laws
  - ◆ **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

# 5 Steps to Advocacy

1. Define issue, plus delineate your interest in it
2. Identify your audience
3. Frame your message
4. Develop your plan
5. Evaluate your plan

# 1. Define issue, plus delineate your interest in it

- ◆ **Questions to ask:**
  - What is the problem? 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?
- ◆ **Perspectives to consider:**
  - Laws
  - Attitudes
  - Social traditions
  - Religion
  - Government

- ◆ **Desired result:**

What can be done to improve the situation?

What kind of change would YOU want to make?

- ◆ **Why you?**

What differentiates you from others with respect to this problem and your proposed solution?

- ◆ **Desired output:**

***A one sentence description of the problem you want to address***

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

## 2. Identify your audience

Your advocacy strategy depends on whom you want to reach.

- ◆ **Questions to ask:**

Whom do you want 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 make the change being requested?

To what extent do you want to address the media?

Do you want to form coalitions? With whom?

Do you want to influence legislators and policy makers?

- ◆ **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***

# 3. Frame your message

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

- ◆ **Questions to ask:**

What are two or three 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 is the problem relevant for the policy makers and the wider society*
- 3. *Policy proposal:*** *This is the suggested solution*
- 4. *Proposed action:*** *What your action should do and how and with whom it should be done*

# 4. Develop your plan

Developing your plan requires you to think about *how* you want to deliver and use your messages.

- ◆ **Questions to ask:**

In what way should these messages be communicated:  
what tools are you going to use?

- Newsletters

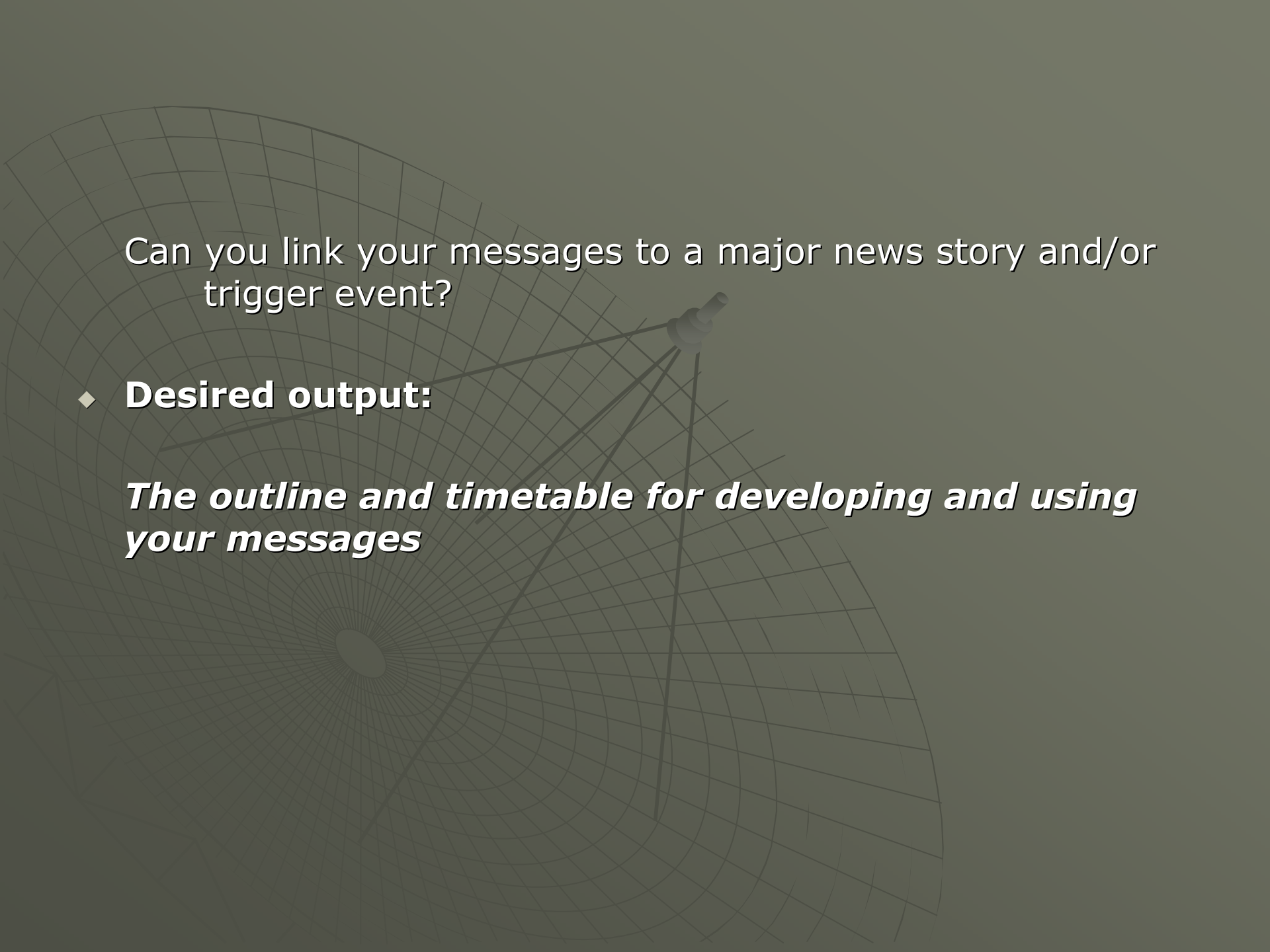
- Special events

- Publicity campaigns

- Internet blogging

- Other Internet forms of communication

To what extent do you want to use your messages 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 messages to a major news story and/or trigger event?

- ◆ **Desired output:**

***The outline and timetable for developing and using your messages***

# 5. 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?

Did the audience take appropriate action?

**What are your next steps for action?**

◆ **Desired output:**

***A constructive critique addressing the questions listed above***

# 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

Using paid advertising selectively (public service announcements)

# Cultivating relationships

- ◆ Journalists need information and ideas for stories with importance to the local community or to the audience they address
- ◆ Advocates need to think of themselves as sources
- ◆ To be a good source you need
  - Expertise
  - Credibility
  - Reliability
  - Timely information
  - Broad knowledge of an issue
  - The ability to direct journalists to other sources to add to the story
  - provide sufficient background to cover key points, including opposing points of view

# Creating news, linking to breaking news

- ◆ Potential attractive features of issues
  - Concern large numbers of people
  - Raise broader community issues
  - Involve conflict
    - controversy
    - injustice
    - human interest
    - link to individuals
- ◆ There are always “news holes” to fill, but there is also more news than can be covered
- ◆ Every day there are stories in the news to which advocates can link their issues—sometimes “breaking” news can be anticipated

# Evaluation

**Basic question of impact evaluation:** Was the policy being advanced actually adopted?

Media advocacy is only one factor that can contribute to achieving the desired change

**Evaluation questions in media advocacy:**

Did the issue get on the media agenda?

Did the issue get framed from the policy perspective?

Did the media coverage advance the message?

**Outcome issues:**

Was the issue placed on the public agenda?

Were key decision makers pressured and mobilized?

Was the policy enacted or did the change occur?

# 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.

This can be to carry out a particular campaign or to form a long-term alliance on issues

Goals can be varied, 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 thinking about building a coalition

- ◆ What would your unifying issue(s) be?  
To what extent is there agreement on issues?
- ◆ What resources could come from other organizations?  
How would they complement your resources?
- ◆ What obstacles might you encounter?  
To what extent is there agreement on strategies?  
Are there current or potential future conflicts of interest?

# Analyzing legislation or public policy

## Questions to ask:

- ◆ 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 marginalized groups?
- ◆ Is this something ordinary people can understand?
- ◆ Who supports this law/policy, and why?

## **More questions:**

- ◆ How did this issue first come to the notice of decision-makers and to your notice?
- ◆ What is the financial cost?
- ◆ Can it be enforced? If so, by whom, and how?
- ◆ What is the penalty if this law/policy is not obeyed?
- ◆ 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?

# Examples of web-based advocacy

[www.nihrc.org](http://www.nihrc.org)

**Northern Ireland Human Rights  
Commission**

[www.aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org)

**American Civil Liberties Union**

[www.ncsd.org](http://www.ncsd.org)

**National Council for Support of  
Disability Issues**

[www.equalitynow.org/english/takeaction/guide\\_activism\\_en.html](http://www.equalitynow.org/english/takeaction/guide_activism_en.html)

**Equality Now**

[www.equalitynow.org/arabic/navigation/hub\\_ph01\\_ar.html](http://www.equalitynow.org/arabic/navigation/hub_ph01_ar.html)

[www.tahirih.org](http://www.tahirih.org)

**Tahirih Justice Center**

[www.amnesty.org/arabic](http://www.amnesty.org/arabic)

**Amnesty International**