

# Advocacy and Lobbying for Peace-Building

## Introduction

There was once an old man who decided to plant trees to bring life back to a barren countryside. People thought it was impossible, but he was determined. He worked for years, and slowly, a vibrant forest began covering the countryside. After some time, a company of woodchoppers moved into a nearby village drawn by tales of a strong, young forest. They lost no time in sharpening their axes and getting to work. For every tree the old man planted, the woodchoppers cut down two, until the land was barren again. At this point, having no more trees to cut, the woodchoppers packed up their axes and left. The old man was in tears at the loss of his life's work. But soon he recovered his determination and began planting trees once more. It took many more years, but, with the woodchoppers gone, these trees had a chance to flourish and grow. Soon a vibrant forest began covering the countryside once again. However, word of this forest soon reached the company of woodchoppers, who again moved back to the nearby village and began sharpening their axes. And you can imagine how this story continues.

The lesson? Many community workers have extraordinary determination and vision, and set themselves to bringing about a positive change. But they never see any major changes because they are on a "hamster wheel", a repetitive cycle, like the old man planting his trees. They are ignorant of the system which they are a part of: a system that keeps on sending woodchoppers back every time a forest grows; a system that rewards the woodchoppers (their timber is sold at a high price in the market), and punishes the tree-planters (their labor is destroyed every time it is complete); and which is ultimately suicidal (after the tree-planters give up, the woodchoppers will cut down every last tree, destroying their OWN livelihood). If we fail to consider the system behind things, we get trapped on that "wheel", without any long-lasting change for the future generations.

The solution? We need help! We can't do it alone. We need the support of the system we are a part of, whether that system is a neighborhood, a village, a city, or a country. This is the craft of the advocate or the lobbyist: not only changing things on the "grassroots" level, but changing the bigger system to bring about long-lasting solutions. It is an intimidating task, and much more complex than the "grassroots" work—the old tree-planter might have to involve the other tree planters, the villagers, the woodchoppers themselves, the merchants and the market, the shipbuilders, the scholars and royal advisers, and even the king of the land if needed! For this reason, many people give up on advocacy, or avoid even dabbling in it, but it is an essential tool in your "world changing" toolbox.

In this module, we will explore this craft and learn how to advocate for change. We will look at the essential steps needed to get started, and methods you can use. We will also reflect on some interesting examples from around the world of how people used advocacy to make a difference in the lives of many, many more people than they would have been able to reach by individual efforts.

# What is Advocacy?

There are as many definitions of advocacy as there are groups and networks advocating. However, each definition shares common language and concepts. Advocacy is first and foremost a process, occurring over unspecified amounts of time, sometimes brief and often lengthy. Advocacy is also strategic and targets well-designed activities to key stakeholders and decision makers. And lastly, advocacy is always directed at influencing policy, laws, regulations, programs, or funding—decisions made at the upper-most levels of public or private sector institutions.

*Advocacy is speaking up, drawing a community's attention to an important issue, and directing decision-makers toward a solution. Advocacy is working with other people and organizations to make a difference. (CEDPA, Cairo, Beijing and Beyond)*

*Advocacy is defined as the promotion of a cause or the influencing of policy, funding streams or other politically determined activity. (Advocates for Youth, Advocacy 101)*

*Advocacy is the art of influencing individuals or collective decision or policy-making to affect a positive change in an issue or situation. (POLICY Project workshop participants, March 1997, Accra, Ghana)*

Advocacy is also an art. Successful advocates can articulate issues in ways that inspire and motivate others to act. Successful advocates are skilled negotiators and consensus builders who look for opportunities to win modest but strategic policy gains while creating still other opportunities for larger victories.

Advocacy is a set of targeted actions directed at decision makers in support of a specific policy issue.

## What does an “advocate” do?

Advocacy means supporting and defending a cause you believe in. Although the term “advocate” is often used to refer to a paid legal representative, it also refers to someone who argues for a cause or course of action. Advocates support and argue for the rights of those who are in need or suffering from injustice.

They also provide them the skills and opportunities to speak on their own behalf. Advocates work for justice by raising awareness of, or changing situations and policies that are unjust. Advocacy takes place on many different levels. Professional lobbyists advocate for specific legislation; nonprofits advocate for their clients and legislation that affects them; and individual citizens advocate for a community need or a cause.

Effective advocacy comes in many forms. Ultimately, by changing the public's understanding of an issue and its solutions, advocacy can lead to a more just world.

Effective advocacy also requires new skills, research, monitoring and evaluation, and different ways of communicating. We cannot simply add advocacy to our existing job descriptions and expect success.

## Four Areas of Focus

Advocacy can be defined as a deliberate planned and sustained effort to advance an agenda for a change. It consists of organized efforts and actions that use the tools of democracy to establish and implement laws and policies so as to create a just and equitable society. These tools include

lobbying, negotiation, bargaining, mass mobilization, civil action (including civil disobedience), court actions and holding of elections.

1. Advocacy deals with questioning the authorities or policy makers and asking them to provide answers to the question of who gets what; how much one gets and how soon?
2. Advocacy aims at changing social institutions by helping advocates to gain access and a voice in the decision making of such institutions.
3. Advocates try to persuade and influence decision makers or those with governmental, political and economic power, to adopt and implement public policies that will improve the lives of those people with less political power and fewer economic resources.
4. Advocacy resists the inequality in society so as to ensure that the poor, the voiceless and those people that have been marginalized or historically left out of the decision-making processes are heard and included.

## The Difference between Advocacy and Lobbying

While advocacy is an umbrella term used for any activity that involves influencing individuals or groups to achieve an objective, “Lobbying” is a specific type of advocacy that is carried out with policy makers (i.e. government officials) and law makers (i.e. parliamentarians).

Lobbying is often seen at two levels:

- **Direct Lobbying** – This happens when a lobbyist directly tries to persuade a government official or politician (who has a say in a given issue) to influence desired change.
- **Grassroots Lobbying** – This occurs when general masses are mobilized to take up a specific issue with government officials. Most social cause based campaigns employ grassroots lobbying to create public pressure.

# Planning for Advocacy

Planning for advocacy is unlike strategic planning, where goals, objectives, activities and evaluation are presented as a seamless and logical pattern. Advocacy planning acknowledges that there are hidden agendas, different values and ideologies, incomplete information, and conflict in the world of public policy. As a result, both planning and practicing advocacy happen side by side. Nimbleness and flexibility are the keys to success.

After every action, it is necessary to adjust the goals for planning the next step. Therefore, assessment is a constant task throughout advocacy planning, rather than the final step. Advocacy planning is a continual process. If some groups have not been involved in the initial stages of planning, they can be included later when plans are being reviewed and modified. Planning that uses a participatory approach leads to more equitable power relations and more inclusive citizenship. Participatory planning for citizen-centered advocacy includes:

- Building organization and networks. Participatory analysis and decision-making help strengthen leadership and communication within and among organizations.
- Promoting political education. It involves new knowledge about power, politics and experiences that develop citizenship.
- Strengthening planning for negotiation. The process delineates a clear map of the key actors.
- Building constituencies. When we involve many stakeholders — particularly the people most affected by the advocacy issue — more people will be informed and motivated, and the campaign will have more legitimacy.

## Advocacy is not:

- Public awareness: Advocacy is not just a public campaign to inform people.
- Informing governments about a problem
- Fundraising.

It is in fact a whole cycle that ends with meaningful results. But advocacy can include the above points as a part of the overall advocacy process.

# Steps Involved in the Advocacy Process

## Defining the Issues

The first step in any advocacy campaign is selecting the advocacy issue. An advocacy issue is the problem or situation that an advocacy group seeks to rectify. This requires an ability to analyze complex environments and interrelated problems, discern a policy solution for a selected problem, envision a long-term result, and articulate a short-term objective.

## Setting the Goal and Objective

An advocacy objective is a short-term target (one to two years) that contributes toward achievement of the long-term goal (three to five years). A sound objective is specific, measurable, realistic, and time-bound. It is important that an advocacy objective identifies the specific policy body with the authority to fulfill the objective as well as the policy decision or action that is desired.

## Identifying your Target Audience

Target audiences are determined for each advocacy objective and include:

- **The primary target audience** — persons and/or institutional bodies that themselves have decision making authority
- **The secondary target audience** — persons and institutional bodies that can influence the decision makers.

## Developing the Message

In today's society, we are bombarded by messages every day. The intent of the message may be to sell us a product, inform or educate us in some way, or change our opinion about an issue. An advocacy communication strategy follows many of the same principles as an advertising or social marketing campaign. It is essential to know your audience thoroughly and to deliver a *concise* and *consistent* message that is tailored to your audience's interests.

- **First**, there should ideally be only one main point (i.e. key message) communicated or, if that is not possible, two or three at the most. It is better to leave people with a clear idea of one message than to confuse or overwhelm them with too many.
- **Second**, messages should always be pretested with representatives of the target audience to ensure that the message sent is the one received.
- **Third**, the message should not only persuade through valid data (i.e. evidence) and sound logic, but it should also describe the action the audience is being encouraged to take.

### Five elements of Messages

- **Content/ idea** – The content refers to the central idea of the message. What is the main point you want to communicate to your audience? What single idea do you hope the audience will take away after receiving your message?
- **Language** – Language consists of the words you choose for communicating your message. Is the language appropriate for your target audience? Is the word choice clear, or could it be

interpreted differently by various audiences? Is it necessary to use a local dialect or vernacular to communicate the message?

- **Messenger/ source** – Source refers to the person or people delivering the message. Is the messenger credible to your target audience? Is it possible to include beneficiaries as spokespersons or messengers? For example, you might include a member of the affected population, to send a more powerful message.
- **Format/ medium** – The format or medium is the communication channel you choose for delivering the message. What is the most compelling format to reach your target audience? Different channels are more effective for certain audiences.
- **Time / place** – When and where will the message be delivered? Are there other political events that you can link up with to draw more attention to the issue? Some advocacy groups connect their advocacy activities with events such as International Day of Peace.

### **Message Mediums**

Knowing your audience also means knowing the mediums that will prove most effective when advocating with them. A good advocacy strategy will include a mix of various mediums to reiterate the key message(s) for effective results.

For instance, when advocating with an influential (e.g. local councilors, policy and law makers etc.) face-to-face meetings coupled with fact sheets, reader-friendly policy briefs, and policy forums will be very useful. You can then combine this with a media campaign (e.g. letters to the editor written by local community members, press releases, editorial and opinion pieces) highlighting the issue and your call to action. This mixture will go a long way to helping you achieve your objectives and goal.

Examples of various mediums used for communicating a key message include (but are not limited to):

- Face-to-face meetings
- Posters and flyers in public places
- Executive briefing packets
- Petitions
- Public rallies
- Public debates
- Fact sheets
- Press releases
- Policy forums
- Press conferences
- Contests to design posters, slogans

# Research for Evidence Based Advocacy

To be effective advocates of peace-building, it is important to accurately represent the needs, priorities, and interests of the communities and the challenges faced by them. Knowing the community means finding out how the policies are perceived and how people are personally getting affected by them. Furthermore, data-based advocacy messages enhance the professionalism and credibility of the advocacy message in the eyes of decision makers and other influential persons.

## Research Design

First and foremost, it is imperative to initiate the research process with deciding on the type of data sources to be employed. Is it going to be primary or secondary data sources? Common sources of **secondary data** for social causes include; censuses, information collected by government departments, organizational records and data that was originally collected for other research purposes. **Primary data**, by contrast, is collected by the investigator conducting the research.

Once the data source has been decided, the investigator must decide on the data collection methods. Data collection can involve qualitative or quantitative techniques or a combination of both.

**Qualitative data** are descriptive or narrative and convey impressions or opinions. They provide information on what people think, feel, and do and are helpful in identifying issues of importance to a target group or community.

**Quantitative data** can be counted or quantified to give numeric estimates and generate conclusive findings. They can tell us how many people of different demographic characteristics live in the target area, verify the number of times something happens, or document differences between things that can be measured in numbers.

For example, to emphasize the challenge posed by sectarian violence in Pakistan the following one-liner is likely to capture attention: In 2017 alone 194 people have lost their lives/embraced martyrdom\* and 648 individuals have been injured in 11 incidents of sectarian violence in Pakistan (Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal). (\*The use of culturally appropriate terms is extremely important for an advocate of a social cause.)

### Qualitative research techniques:

- Questionnaires
- Focus groups
- Interviews
- Observations

### Quantitative research techniques:

- Surveys (Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement – PSLM/ USOC)
- Census of population
- Baseline studies

## Developing an Action Plan

If you have an idea for advocacy, it is important to develop a concrete plan for rolling it out. Bringing together the main points from the preceding articles, here are some key steps for developing this plan:

- Identify one advocacy issue for action;
- Set the advocacy goal—a long-term change that you hope to contribute to;
- Set specific advocacy objectives that will contribute to achievement of the goal;
- Assess the support and opposition and identify primary and secondary target audiences for each objective;
- Develop and practice delivering advocacy messages to key members of your target audience;
- Review data collection and analysis techniques to support your advocacy messages

At this stage, for each activity, resources needed to support the activity are identified, which may be material, financial, human (e.g. technical expertise), or technological. Responsible persons are identified for undertaking the activity and an appropriate time frame is assigned.



# Advocacy Ideas: Planning an Event

Hosting an event is a great way of bringing key people together and bringing the needed attention to the issue you have chosen. Suppose you are working with a team to advocate the need for better housing in your area.

## Understand the issues

Before planning any advocacy event, your group should be well-informed on the issue. You might invite a representative from local organizations working on the issue, tour poverty housing areas in your community, or talk to affected members of the community.

## Know your audience

Whether you are planning a letter-writing campaign or hosting a meeting, it's important that you know whom you are advocating to. Before choosing an advocacy event, make lists of people who need to hear your message in order for change to take place. This list could include voters, officials, and the media. It will also be beneficial to brainstorm groups that might be interested in helping spread your message or may benefit from improved housing in your community.

## Create your message

After you have researched the housing issues in your community and come up with a list of individuals you would like to advocate to, your group should decide what issue your advocacy event will center on. Once you have chosen your topic, brainstorm a motto or phrase that sums it up. You can support this motto with a picture or image and a list of key facts that support it.

## Choose an event

Once you have decided on your message, decide what event will best get it across. Brainstorm with your group about which activities will be most effective for your particular message.

When choosing your event or activity, keep in mind how long each event will take. Is the activity your group has chosen realistic? How much time is needed to plan this event, and how much will it cost? Also, try to choose activities that everyone in the group can participate in.

## After the event

Send out thank-you messages to collaborating organizations, sponsors, participating media and committee members.

## Reflect with your group

- What was your favorite part of the experience?
- What do you think was most effective?
- What would you do differently next time?
- What are some ideas for future advocacy events?
- What did you learn about housing and advocacy?

# Advocacy Ideas: Engagement Activities

Building on the same example of advocating for better housing conditions, there are many activities you can do, aside from events, that would help raise awareness and build the support that you need.

**Neighborhood tour:** Take students (or interested guests) on a guided tour, either on foot or in a vehicle, of a neighborhood with many substandard homes and then to a neighborhood organization or community leader which can brief them on the situation. Before you tour, explain where you are going and what participants should look for: both the negative and positive aspects of the area. If possible, the students can talk with people they meet in the community to learn what they like and what they would change about the area. After the tour, students should reflect on their experience through journaling, drawing or discussion.

**Community scavenger hunt:** Get some friends together to find the local “resources”, like food banks, shelters and social service offices. Which grocery stores accept food stamps? Where is subsidized housing in your community? Do this without the assistance of a personal vehicle or the Internet; you will have to ask others for rides or take the bus.

**Shadow day:** Get permission to spend a day following someone from a grassroots organization. Share your observations and what surprised you, touched you and inspired you with others during a group meeting.

**Watch a movie:** Show a film to a group of people about some aspect of poverty, and hold a discussion or reflection afterward. You may consider having a table, jar or other place for donations. Donations should only be a suggestion. Some films that touch on poverty:

- It Was a Wonderful Life
- The Motorcycle Diaries
- Born into Brothels
- Slumdog Millionaire
- The Visitor
- Slum Survivors
- Billy Elliot
- The Grapes of Wrath
- The Pursuit of Happiness
- Good Fortune
- City of God

Be sure to check ratings before showing films, as some may contain violent situations.

**Writing contest:** Accept essays, news reports, feature writing or other types of writing. Ask donors to provide prizes. Consider publishing the pieces for distribution on campus or in your community.

**Artwork:** Invite all willing artists to creatively portray their ideas for solving the problem/issue. Classes could view the works and reflect on what can be done to resolve the problem.

# Advocacy Ideas: Bringing the Media on Board

The media is a very important stakeholder in any advocacy campaign, as the media can spread your message much farther than you personally could, and can generate widespread support which you might need.

## The do's and don'ts of working with the media

### Do:

- Choose one spokesperson to speak with the media.
- Return calls from the media the same day.
- Hold media events at times that are appropriate considering deadlines.
  - Television and radio deadlines are two to three hours before airtime.
  - Morning papers have an early evening deadline.
  - Afternoon papers have a late morning deadline.
- Be sure to greet the media when they arrive at an event. Have your spokesperson ready to answer any questions.
- Introduce media members to youth volunteers and stakeholders who will provide a good interview.
- Concentrate on the positive aspects of the program and each event.
- Research answers to questions. Provide honest, factual answers.
- Invite media representatives, especially television anchors and feature columnists, to volunteer with your project.
- Remain confident, friendly and calm.

### Don't:

- Call a media outlet on deadline to pitch a story.
- Ask to review the story before it goes to print.
- Hold a news conference unless you have something major to announce.
- Contact the media unless you think the story is newsworthy.
- Make something up if you don't know the answer; find out the truth.

## Introducing your story to the media

Media sources to consider:

- Newspapers
- Alternative weeklies
- Television
- Radio
- Newsletters of groups interested in similar issues
- School media
- Community websites

## Write a press release

### Purpose of the press release

Your press release serves two purposes: to attract the media to your event and to clearly spell out the message that you want the media to report. Your press release may be printed word-for-word.

Therefore, be precise and make sure your intended message is clear. Your press release gives the media the go-ahead to cover your event in advance. Release it one to two weeks before your event.

A press release should answer the following questions in the beginning section:

- Who is involved?
- What is happening?
- Where is it happening?
- When is it happening?
- Why or how is it happening?

### **Press release logistics**

When the time comes to distribute your press release, you will hopefully have a relationship with someone at each media source that is going to cover your event and will know how to deliver the release. Many reporters prefer to receive press releases via email. Make sure to cut and paste the text of your press release into the body of the email; many reporters will not open emails with an attachment because of computer viruses.

## **Write a letter to the editor**

Letters to the editor are a powerful way to reach thousands of people. You can write letters to editors of newspapers, newsletters, magazines — any appropriate printed medium. Letters to the editor can serve two functions: They can applaud an article or efforts made by an individual or organization, or they can point out a shortcoming in society and call for change. See below for tips on writing letters to the editor.

- Use letterhead if possible.
- Include your contact information. Also include a signature line with your title, such as “(school name) Campus Chapter president” or “Youth United (affiliate name) member.”
- Be familiar with the publication. Know what kind of readers it attracts and what types of letters it typically prints, and write an appropriate letter.
- If your letter is in direct response to a previously published article or column, include the headline and the date published in parentheses.
- Be timely. Don’t wait longer than a week to respond to an article, column or local event.
- Make your letter pertinent to that local outlet. Don’t send a form letter, especially if you would be using someone else’s words.
- Be short, concise and polite — write less than 200 words.
- Your letter should never attack a group or individual. If you are addressing a problem, define that problem and suggest possible solutions.
- Include pertinent information about your project, what it is, contact information, etc.

## **Create a public service announcement**

Public service announcements are used by nonprofit organizations to publicize issues of general interest. Space for public service announcements is free but can be difficult to obtain.

Contacting the appropriate person at each media outlet is essential. Many outlets have a public service director. For those that don’t, the best person may be the production or advertising manager at a newspaper or the community relations director at a radio station. Newspaper PSAs should be short and to the point. A radio PSA is usually 15 or 30 seconds long.

### **Public service announcement template**

*[Org/project name] wishes to invite young people, their parents and youth leaders to [event] at [date and time] in [location] and [description]. This event is part of Youth United, a program to involve young people in our mission of ending substandard housing in [city] and throughout the world. Youth United homes are sponsored and built entirely by young people. To learn more about this event or Youth United, please contact [name] at [phone number] or go to [website].*

# Case Studies

## 10 Meters Apart – Macedonian Peace Prayer

War-torn and plagued with communal violence between Muslims and Christians, restoring peace to Macedonia seemed like a far cry. However, in 2013 the government encouraged the citizens to come up with campaigns that would help bring the Muslims and Christians together.

In response to this call, a filmmaking company, New Moment New Ideas Company Skopje produced a short film in which religious leaders belonging to both the Muslim and Christian faith conducted a joint prayer for peace. This was the first joint prayer in the country's history.

The powerful message of "10 Meters Apart" has since played an important role in curbing tensions between the two religious communities, making this one of the most successful advocacy campaigns in war torn regions of the world.

The short film can be accessed from: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=prvqa6ORL\\_g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=prvqa6ORL_g)

## The Iran-US Deal

When the possibility of a deal between Iran and the US first came to the fore, it was met with strong reactions from both its proponents and opponents. A high level of lobbying was at work to sway the vote of those congressmen and women who were undecided whether to support the bill or oppose it.

The deal proposed to lift sanctions on Iran on the condition that it would roll back on its nuclear program over the passage of 10 – 15 years.

In the weeks that followed, both proponents and opponents of the bill engaged in an elaborate lobbying effort to see their side win.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee for instance, not only spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on paid advertisement in states whose congressmen/women were undecided. They also engaged high profile lobbyists to directly lobby with the lawmakers in Washington D.C.

On the other hand, The National Iranian American Council and the Arms Control Association also engaged professional lobbyists and launched lobbying campaigns to secure a win for their cause.

Finally, the latter prevailed signifying one of the biggest lobbying victories in recent times.

## Alif Aailan

Pakistan today faces an education crisis of unprecedented proportions:

- There are 24 million boys and girls out of school—that's nearly half of all children in the country.
- Of those children who do go to school, the vast majority receive an education of poor quality.
- On any given day, 11% of teachers are absent from the classroom.
- Corporal punishment is widespread and remains unchecked.
- Budget allocations for education are insufficient and funds that are available are not spent effectively.

To raise and resolve these problems with the government, Alif Ailaan is a campaign launched in February 2013 that aims to make education a top priority for all citizens of Pakistan. Its goal is to ensure that every child in this country—rich or poor, boy or girl, whether they live in a village or a big city—is in school. It works with politicians, education officials, teachers, parents and communities, and civil society organizations to make sure children are enrolled in school, stay in school and receive a good quality education.

Alif Ailaan works with all provincial governments and regional administrations, education secretaries and chief ministers, as well as the federal government and Minister for Education.

In a unique and innovative move, Alif Ailaan has pioneered various score cards, such as education score and school infrastructure scores etc. These have proven to be effective methods of advocating for education and providing mechanisms for school monitoring and evaluation.

*Source: [http://www.alifailaan.pk/frequently\\_ask\\_questions](http://www.alifailaan.pk/frequently_ask_questions)*