

AN INTRODUCTORY GUIDE TO ADVOCACY

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Background

As a diverse network of 26 NGOs, working in 87 countries and with over 800 national civil society counterparts, we work on multiple themes in humanitarian and development settings. This experience should drive Advocacy that underpins genuine transformative change in our thematic areas. The diversity of our network means that members will have varied views on Advocacy, experience and ways of working. However, this document is an informative guide for members to support individual member advocacy efforts.

What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is an organised attempt to **change** policy, practice, and/or attitudes by presenting evidence and arguments for how and why change should happen.¹ Intentional behaviour **targets a shift** in a particular area to achieve a preferred result.

Advocacy can be focused on large-scale outcomes, such as the enactment of global agreements on climate change, or it can be conducted on a small scale. For example, protecting vulnerable communities' land rights from Multinational companies with mining interests.

Advocacy includes activities and publications to influence **public policy, laws and budgets** by using facts, their relationships, the media, and messaging to educate government officials and the public.²

¹ Open Society Foundation *An Introductory Guide to Successful Advocacy*, see [OSI_AdvocacyR1.PF.indd \(opensocietyfoundations.org\)](#).

² Adapted from the description by Future Advocacy, see [Home - Future Advocacy](#).

Advocacy can include many activities a person or organisation undertakes, including **media campaigns, public speaking, commissioning and publishing research**. Lobbying (often by lobby groups) is a form of Advocacy where a direct approach is made to legislators on a specific issue or specific piece of legislation.³ Advocacy groups are using social media to facilitate civic engagement and collective action.

As a Christian network, our Advocacy goes further. Our Advocacy pursues the transformation of an unjust situation to create a more just outcome that embraces humanity and promotes dignity.



³ [Advocacy - Wikipedia](#).

Why should we pursue Advocacy?

Advocacy:

- Allows individuals to have their voices heard in the public sphere while supporting the protection of human rights.
- Can directly influence decisions in public policy, thus making the public increasingly aware of such issues crucial for social change and holding perpetrators to account.
- Enables people to understand each other better and promotes problem-solving and participation.
- Highlights available resources and services by revealing previously unknown resources and services that may be available to assist advocacy efforts.
- Educates the greater community and can help equip people with the skills they need to defend and claim their rights.
- Fosters respect for a cause by enabling individuals, groups and people in power alike to find common ground and solve problems civilly.

Different Advocacy Styles

Confrontational Advocacy

In a sense, all Advocacy has an element of confrontation. We see an injustice being done, confront those who hold power to change the situation or policy, and use whatever influence and resources we have to see a change made.

Confrontational Advocacy is most effective when decision-makers are resistant to change or when advocates have limited voice, access, or influence within the system. In these circumstances, confrontational Advocacy will draw attention to an issue, seek to elevate its importance on the political or public agenda, and demonstrate that a constituency wants change. Advocacy tools that can be used to carry out confrontational Advocacy can include

protests, direct appeals to the media, social pressure, and economic pressure, such as boycotts or calls for trade sanctions.⁴

It's worth noting that confrontational approaches to Advocacy are still often peaceful, creative and relational.

Cooperative Advocacy

Cooperative approaches to Advocacy rely on developing credibility and relationships with those with influence and convincing them the desired change is in the public interest and, in some cases, their enlightened self-interest. Cooperative Advocacy works best when decision-makers are responsive to change and where there are channels available to make those modifications within the existing system.⁵

Cooperative advocates often provide high-quality analysis, offer the capacity to assist in implementing desired changes, and mobilise grassroots support for a particular change. Cooperative Advocacy is not passive. It must identify needed changes and strongly advocate for them to be effective. It can still involve challenging social and legal norms, but it will prioritise cooperation over confrontation.

Standard tools of cooperative Advocacy can include report writing, lobby meetings with critical influencers, letter writing, petitions, community dialogues, and public events.

How do we pursue Advocacy?

Four broad themes:

1. Understand your issue.
2. Planning Advocacy.
3. Doing Advocacy.
4. Monitoring & Evaluation.

⁴ Adapted from the ADRA Advocacy Handbook.

⁵ Adapted from the ADRA Advocacy Handbook.



It is important to note that the *Risk Analysis* stage requires an understanding that all advocacy interventions have some strategic risk. There are risks that opponents might react very negatively to your evidence and proposals, which could hurt your organisation's future reputation and sustainability.⁶ There are some instances where, depending on the work and geographical location, there could even be a threat to your safety or freedom from those who have much to lose from your successful advocacy campaign. Before you take any new actions, such as conducting research, filing a complaint, talking to the media or holding a protest, consider and discuss the range of possible security risks. Assess the likelihood of

⁶ International Centre for Policy and Advocacy 'A Guide to Policy Advocacy in Transition Countries', see [6.5. Assess the strategic risk of the campaign | Making Research Evidence Matter \(icpolicyadvocacy.org\)](#).

possible security problems and take this into account in deciding whether it is worth proceeding with the planned activity.⁷

The purpose of the *Monitoring and Evaluation* stage is to:

- Check whether work is on track and adjust work as necessary.
- Learn to improve performance in existing or future work.
- Demonstrate accountability to different stakeholders, such as donors and supporters.
- Enhance communication with other stakeholders and generate financial and political support.⁸

In place of the Step-by-Step guide provided, one can also use an Advocacy cycle to help with your planning.⁹

Here are a Few Things to Remember:

Element	Purpose	Activities
Context	What is achievable and over what timescale is primarily determined by the context and level of engagement of key audiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquire a deep appreciation of the context in which you are working. • Have flexible advocacy interventions that consider the possibility of changing contexts.
Build Relationships	Developing credibility and relationships with those with influence and those who can be allies is critical for successful Advocacy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be intentional about growing relationships across various domains.

⁷ Inclusive development International 'Managing Risks', see [Managing Risks | Advocacy Strategies | Corporate Accountability \(followingthemoney.org\)](#).

⁸ INTRAC for Advocacy 'M & E of Advocacy', see [ME-of-advocacy.pdf \(intrac.org\)](#).

⁹ For more details on the Advocacy cycle see Open Society Foundations 'A Guide to Successful Advocacy' [OSI_AdvocacyR1.PF.indd \(opensocietyfoundations.org\)](#).

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in ongoing constructive dialogue with decision-makers and key allies.
Measure success	Measuring success is essential to help you track progress toward your goals and motivate your supporters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review progress toward the advocacy goal, considering activity and change indicators. • Celebrate successes with your team and supporters.
Learn from failure	Things will inevitably go wrong; learning from these failures is essential for future success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipate the possibility of failure. • Acknowledge failures, disappointments, and setbacks. • Review failures for what can be learnt for further and future Advocacy.
Refine strategy and set new goals.	Change is rarely achieved overnight and can take years. Regular monitoring and evaluation will help refine your strategy and keep you on track for success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be both persistent and adaptable as circumstances change or stubbornly refuse to change. • Review goals and strategy at regular intervals and as needed.

Remember that there is a strength in numbers. As a network, we have diverse expertise and cultural understandings amongst us, which is worth taking advantage of. Where your organisation may lack expertise or experience, other members may be able to assist. Finally, it is worth noting that the same principles of individual member advocacy will apply to network advocacy, and the geographical, thematic, organisational and language diversity

in the network means that collaborative Advocacy can achieve excellent outcomes if we come together behind common goals.