

Developing Advocacy Objectives

***Before you can pick a path, you must know
the hill you are trying to climb.***

Advocacy is about getting something, making a change that advances your long-term goals. And the first step toward getting something is knowing, as clearly as possible, what it is you are after.

What is Your Vision?

- Every child should be safe from violence at school.
- Every child should have access to pre-primary education.
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What is Your Intermediate Goal Toward that Vision?

- School violence will be reduced by 50% within three years.
- Participation in pre-primary education is up by 25% in three years.
- Families without access to child health services is cut by 50% in three years.

What do you Need to Change to Advance Toward that Goal?

- A change in public policy
- Additional spending in the budget
- Changes in how programs are administered
- Changes in public behavior

Seven Steps Toward Developing Clear Advocacy Objectives

1. Define the Problem in the Most Basic Way

Example: Not all the children who need it get to go to pre-school.

2. List Out the Key Elements of the Problem

- The issue is voluntary access not mandatory participation.

- The quality of those services is also of concern.
- Pre-school participation is linked to a many child development issues (education, health, nutrition, etc.).
- Family income is a main barrier to access.
- Lack of public understanding about the value of pre-school is also a barrier.

3. Restate the problem in a more complete way

Access to quality pre-school is vital to child development, however, that access is limited based on family income and family understanding of the importance of pre-school.

4. Lay out the policy or institutional factors behind the problem

- *Lack of effective government leadership*
- *Lack of appropriate standards for programs*
- *Insufficient financing*

5. Identify the long-term changes needed to address the problem

- Shift responsibility for program development and planning to national level.
- Develop national standards for pre-school programs.
- Add budget support to allow for family pre-school subsidies

6. Consider some key criteria for picking shorter-term advocacy objectives

- What will help solve the problem?
- What is politically achievable?
- What kind of support will it generate?
- What kind of opposition will it generate?
- Does it build momentum toward bigger things?

7. Develop your advocacy objectives (*example*):

- *Development of UNICEF policy paper on access to pre-school*
- *Formation of national working group to develop draft standards*
- *Formation of government roundtable on reorganizing responsibility*
- *Modest increase in coming year budget allocation for pre-school*

DEVELOPING ADVOCACY STRATEGY

Nine Key Questions for Developing an Advocacy Strategy

"If you have an hour to chop a stack of wood, it is worth spending the first half hour sharpening your axe."

One of the most common confusions in the development of advocacy strategy is the difference between "strategy" and "tactics." **Tactics** are specific actions – writing letters, meeting with lawmakers, issuing reports – the building blocks of advocacy. **Strategy** is something larger, an overall map that guides the advocacy effort toward clear objectives. Strategy is a hard-nosed assessment of where you are, where you want to go, and how you can get there. At its heart, effective strategy is rooted in five key questions.

Looking Outward

1. OBJECTIVES: What do you want?

An effective advocacy effort must begin with a clear set of objectives. This can include long-term objectives that may not be attainable immediately and short-term objectives that help build toward those in concrete ways. All of these objectives need to be defined at the start, in a way that can launch an effort, draw people to it, and sustain it over time.

2. AUDIENCES: Who can give it to you?

Who are the people and institutions you need to move? This includes those who have the actual formal *authority* to deliver the goods (i.e. public authorities) and also the other actors who will *influence* their decision making (the media, key constituencies, and others). In both cases, an effective advocacy effort requires a clear sense of who these audiences are and what access or pressure points are available to move them.

3. MESSAGE: What do they need to hear?

Reaching these different audiences requires crafting and framing a set of messages that will be persuasive. Effective advocacy messages generally have two basic components: Why the advocacy objective is the right thing to do on the merits ("Increasing funds for children's health saves lives.") and why it is in the political interest of the authority to do it ("We have a coalition of fifty groups supporting this proposal.").

4. MESSENGERS: Who do they need to hear it from?

The same message has a very different impact depending on who communicates it. Who are the most credible messengers for different audiences? Three kinds of messengers are important: "Experts" whose credibility is largely technical; "Authentic Voices," of the people who can speak from personal experience; and "People with Clout," who come with the kinds of political connections that make authorities want to listen.

5. ACTION: How best to get the message delivered?

There is wide continuum of ways to deliver an advocacy message. Some are "inside strategies" in which persuasion takes place through traditional channels and meetings. Other approaches involve "outside strategies" aimed at changing the context in which those decisions are made, through the formation of coalitions and the application of outside pressure through media work and the like. The mix of these approaches that is right for an advocacy effort depends on what is needed to get the job done and what the groups involved are able to do and comfortable doing.

Looking Inward

6. RESOURCES: What have we got?

An effective advocacy effort takes careful stock of the advocacy resources that are already there to be built on. This includes past advocacy work that is related, alliances already in place, staff and other people's capacity, information and political intelligence. In short, you don't start from scratch, you start from building on what you've got.

7. GAPS: What do we need to develop?

After taking stock of the advocacy resources you have, the next step is to identify the advocacy resources you need that aren't there yet. This means looking at alliances that need to be built, and capacities such as outreach, media, and research which are crucial to any effort.

8. FIRST EFFORTS: How do we begin?

What would be an effective way to begin to move the strategy forward? What are some potential short term goals or projects that would bring the right people together, symbolize the larger work ahead and create something achievable that lays the groundwork for the next step?

9. EVALUATION: How do we tell if it's working?

As with any long journey, the course needs to be checked along the way. Strategy needs to be evaluated revisiting each of the questions above (i.e. are we aiming at the right audiences, are we reaching them, etc.) It is important to be able to make mid-course corrections and to discard those elements of a strategy that don't work once they are actually put into practice.

Taking Action

Finally, all of the elements of advocacy strategy – concrete objectives, a solid analysis of your audiences, effective partnerships, a thoughtful message and media approach – need to be assembled together in a concrete plan for advocacy action.

I. What are Your Options?

First, look at the full list of options you have for action:

Inside Strategies

- Informal meetings with decision makers
- Organized lobbying visits
- Providing information and proposals
- Providing testimony

Outside Strategies

- Release of a public report
- Media work
- Organizing public support
- Public criticism
- Public pressure

II. Strategic Considerations

Then subject these options to an evaluation based on a set of important strategic considerations:

- Where are there some specific opportunities to be exploited?
- What is most likely to have an impact?
- What will build your partnerships?
- What will build your connections to your key audiences?
- What builds your power?

In general it is always smartest to employ a strategy that involves the least effort and the least political tension that still gets the job done.

III. Institutional Considerations

- What will help build those internal capacities?
- What are your current capacities for action?
- What capitalizes on the UNICEF 'brand' and fits within UNICEF protocol?

Advocacy actions need to fit not only the context but your organizational realities as well.

IV. What information and materials do you need?

"Evidence-based advocacy" begins with assembling the evidence. Take stock at the start of what you need and how you will put it together. Give consideration to the following:

1. What do you need to know for policy reasons?
2. What do you need to know for strategic reasons?
3. What exists that is useful?
4. What gaps are important to fill?
5. What formats – written, video, published, Internet, etc.?

V. Putting Together Your First Actions

Then you have to just begin. One of the most important challenges in a new advocacy effort is to get past inertia and start. Here are some useful considerations in developing a plan for initial action:

- Pick an action that will deliver something tangible within six months.
- Do it jointly with your new partners.
- Begin the conversation with your target audiences.
- Allocate the resources required.

VI. Evaluate your Progress.

- What is your theory of how "change" happens?
- What are the measurable building blocks of that theory (meetings, media, partnerships, commitments)?
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- How has the context changed: new opportunities and challenges?

Remember, it is also important to see unexpected opportunities and seize them!