Participatory Advocacy

A toolkit for VSO staff, volunteers and partners

About VSO

VSO is an international development agency that works through volunteers. Our vision is a world without poverty in which people work together to fulfil their potential. Instead of sending money, we send women and men from a wide range of professions who want the chance to make a real difference in the fight against poverty. We work with partner organisations to bring together people from different cultures and backgrounds, enabling them to share skills and achieve change together.

VSO is by far the largest independent volunteer-sending agency in the world. Since 1958, over 40,000 volunteers from 94 nationalities have worked through VSO in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, the Pacific and Eastern Europe, in response to requests from governments and community organisations. At the moment, we have around 1,500 people working in placements in these regions, the majority of whom are skilled professionals.

VSO welcomes volunteers from an ever-increasing range of countries and backgrounds. Our recruitment bases in Kenya, India, the UK, Canada, Ireland, the Netherlands and the Philippines recruit volunteers from many different countries worldwide. We also support national volunteering in all the countries we work in. This international approach allows us to combine and learn from a rich variety of perspectives.

Preface to the second edition

Advocacy is a core part of VSO's approach to development. It can bring about sustainable change because it works to change the causes of poverty, rather than dealing with the symptoms.

In 2010 VSO adopted *People First*, a new strategic plan. *People First* states that, to end poverty, the relationship between socially excluded women and men and those who hold power must change. We have developed a theory of change that has four main dimensions – conditions necessary if poor and marginalised people's capabilities are to be strengthened and their rights realised:

- improving poor people's access to quality services
- ensuring the participation of excluded groups so they can determine their own development
- promoting the development and implementation of policies that support poor people
- building organisational capacity to hold governments to account.

This toolkit will help you carry out any type of advocacy or influencing work and thus contribute to the theory of change. Through the techniques and examples in this book, you and your organisation will especially contribute to achieving improved laws or policies that work in favour of poor people. And by sharing the techniques, and working on lobbying or campaigning together, you will help build capacity for people's organisations to hold their governments to account. This will lead to enduring social change.

The toolkit has been written primarily for the use of VSO staff and volunteers, in the North and the South, and also for our partner organisations and returned volunteers. It provides a rich variety of approaches to advocacy work. Not all will be appropriate to every cultural, social or political situation. Do use your research and country experiences to identify the approaches that will be most productive in your own situation.

We hope that with the aid of this toolkit you will be able to achieve great progress.

Good luck!

First printed:
November 2009
Second print run:
January 2012

This toolkit was written by VSO volunteer Janice Cox, using materials and tools used around the world in VSO programmes. Janice has worked as an advocate in London and Brussels and now lives in South Africa. She has carried out volunteer placements with VSO in Uganda, Sri Lanka, Rwanda and Malawi. Steve Lewis, Stephen Nock, Mike Podmore, Purna Shrestha and Renaldah Mjomba provided editing and additional inputs. Our thanks go to VSO partners and programme offices who have provided examples and case studies.

How we can help you

This guide contains lessons learned throughout VSO. If you want advice or support you can get it from your programme office, or a Federation office, or from the VSO Research and Advocacy team. The Advocacy team can support you in various ways:

- provide support to programme offices that want to carry out advocacy or active citizenship work. Our traditional focus areas have been education ('Valuing Teachers'); HIV and AIDS ('AIDS Agenda'); and Health ('Valuing Health Workers').
- provide support to partners working on our newer themes: gender; climate change; improving the environment for volunteering; access to markets; employment; or any other theme important in your country.
- provide advice on VSO's Global Gender Campaign. This campaign focuses on increasing women's active participation in decision-making spaces across the world.
- share research and policy knowledge gained through international advocacy work.
- coordinate work between the national, regional and international levels, to ensure that advocacy at different levels is mutually reinforcing.
- provide advocacy training as requested, eg during visits to programmes.

Please contact us if you need specific help or advice.
Research and Advocacy Team; Policy Group, VSO
Carlton House, 27a Carlton Drive, London, SW15 2BS, UK
Tel: +44 20 8780 7500
Email: Advocacy@vso.org.uk
Website: www.vsointernational.org/what-we-do/advocacy
Advocacy blog: http://blog.vsointernational.org/

How to use this toolkit

This toolkit is made up of a written publication and an accompanying CD-ROM. The essential information is in the publication, and extra tools and advice are in the CD-ROM. You can adapt and use all the materials for your own organisation.

Part 1 looks at what advocacy is and how participatory advocacy can be most effectively carried out.
Part 2 describes some of the ways that VSO uses advocacy. This will be of particular interest to VSO staff and volunteers – other readers may want to skip this chapter.

The main body of the toolkit is the five parts below, which represent five key stages of the participatory advocacy process:

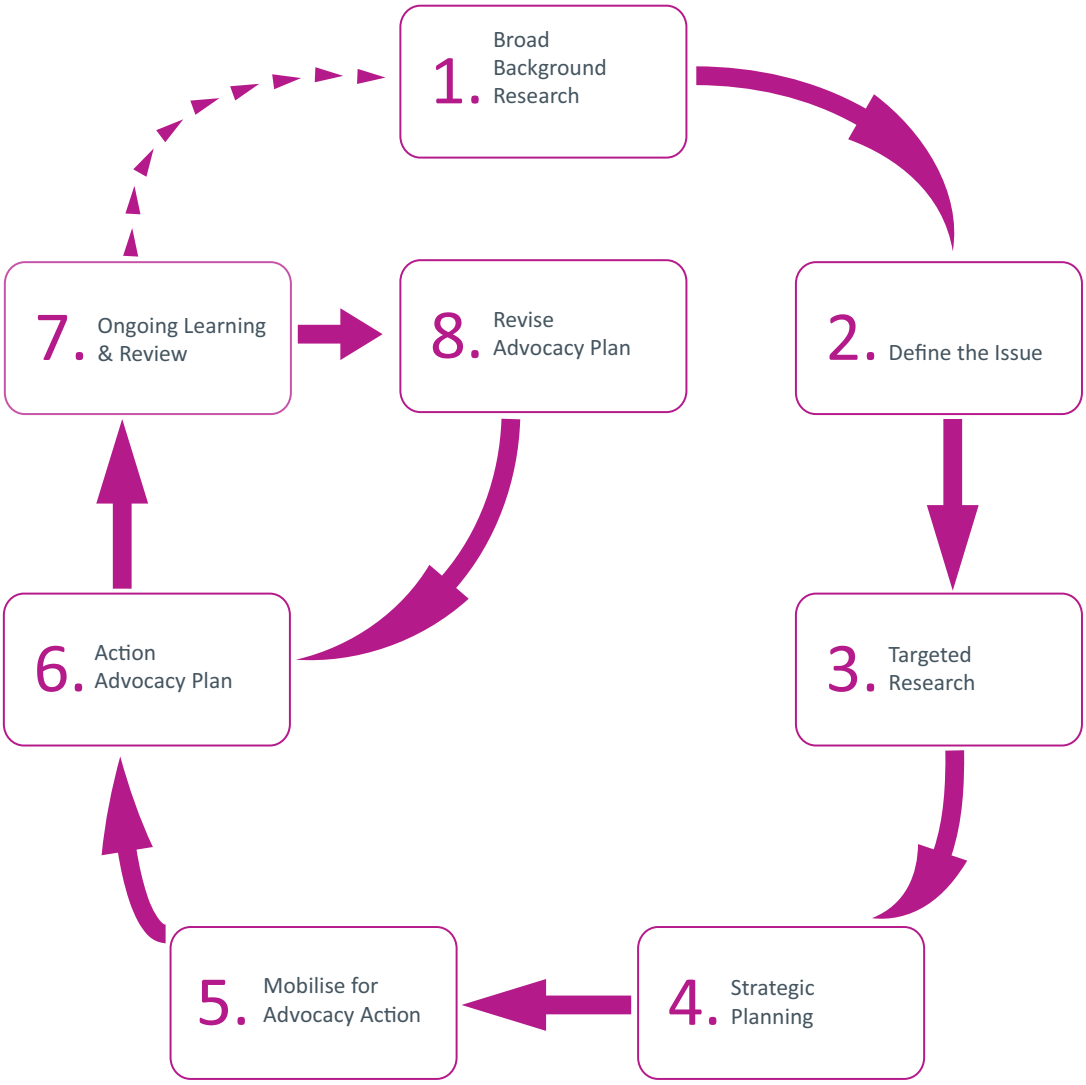
Part 3: Research and Analysis examines the initial research and analysis that is needed, including identifying the policy issue and the context surrounding the issue.
Part 4: Strategic Planning explains the steps needed to develop an effective advocacy strategy.
Part 5: Mobilisation outlines the ways you can mobilise support and resources.
Part 6: Action provides guidance on how to implement an advocacy strategy, including advice on lobbying, campaigning, media work and project management.
Part 7: Learning and Review provides guidance on monitoring your advocacy progress.
Part 8: Tools contains some participatory exercises you can do with a group of colleagues. These Strategic Planning and Analysis Tools help you think creatively about your work and what you can really achieve. On the CD-ROM you will find many other tools that you will find useful. The toolkit can be read from start to finish, but it is also designed so you can dip into it as required.

This toolkit complements **START,**[1] VSO's advocacy research toolkit. START is an accessible manual based on VSO's own experience of low-cost, non-academic professional research. Although it is centred on VSO's 'Valuing Teachers' project in teacher motivation, it includes a wealth of advocacy research tools and methods that are generally applicable.

This toolkit and START are also available to staff and volunteers on PORT, Moodle and Volzone.

1. Simple Toolkit for Advocacy Research Techniques (START). 2004. Voluntary Service Overseas. www.vsointernational.org/what-we-do/advocacy/campaigns/index.asp#0

Participatory advocacy process diagram



In reality, the advocacy process is not always linear, and should be considered iterative. The various stages can be overlapping and interlinked.

Contents

Glossary

Acronyms

ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
CSP	country strategic plan
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
FACT	Family AIDS Caring Trust
GCE	The Global Campaign for Education
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NACN	Nigeria Climate Action Network
NGO	non-governmental organisation
PAP	programme area plan (VSO)
PAR	programme area review (VSO)
PO	programme office (VSO)
RAISA	Regional AIDS Initiative of Southern Africa
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SOVA	South Orisss Voluntary Action
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas

Advocacy terms

Allies	Groups or individuals who share your aim for policy change
Ask	The core request of your advocacy campaign
Audience	The person selected to receive your message (this could be a direct or an indirect target)
Messages	The main points that you want to get across in your advocacy, in support of your ask
Opponents	Groups or individuals who counter or oppose your policy change aim
Other players	Other organisations working in the same field and/or on the same issue (similar organisations)
Planning and Review	VSO's monitoring and evaluation system (partnership reviews and programme area reviews)
Policy context research	Research on the policy environment affecting the issue (eg the policy system, people and organisations)
Policy windows	Brief periods when there are unusual opportunities for policy change
Target	The policy-maker to whom your advocacy message is addressed because they have the best opportunity to make policy change (also known as a primary target)
Target (Indirect)	Person selected to bear influence on your advocacy target (also known as a secondary target)
Transparency	The openness of the policy system and procedures (to the public and civil society)

Part one: Introduction

This introduction looks at what advocacy is and how it can help to further VSO's mission. It examines different types of advocacy, and how participatory advocacy work can be most effectively carried out.

What is advocacy?

Definitions

Demystifying advocacy

Why do advocacy?

Advocacy and development work

Furthering VSO's work

What type of advocacy?

Who does the advocacy

What is advocacy?

Definitions

In a development context, advocacy is the deliberate process of influencing those who make policy. Advocacy can concern the creation, reform, implementation and enforcement of policies.

A 'policy' is 'any principle or action adopted or proposed by a government, party, business or individual etc'. This includes government legislation but can be much wider.

There are many definitions of advocacy within the development community. VSO has its own definition to explain advocacy within the context of its work:

VSO definition of advocacy
"A process that tackles disadvantage by working with communities and key stakeholders to bring about changes in policy, process, practice, and attitudes in order to ensure communities' rights are recognised and realised. The aim is to actively support disadvantaged people to influence the decisions that affect their rights and lives."

The term 'lobbying' is sometimes used interchangeably with 'advocacy', but there is a distinction.

Advocacy is an umbrella term and there are a number of activities that can contribute to a successful advocacy strategy. Lobbying and campaigning are two activities that can be part of advocacy work.

'Lobbying' is seeking to influence decision-makers on behalf of a particular interest. The term often refers to efforts to influence legislation, but private companies, donors and other large institutions are also often lobbied. Lobbying is usually carried out by a small number of people, who are experts in their subject.

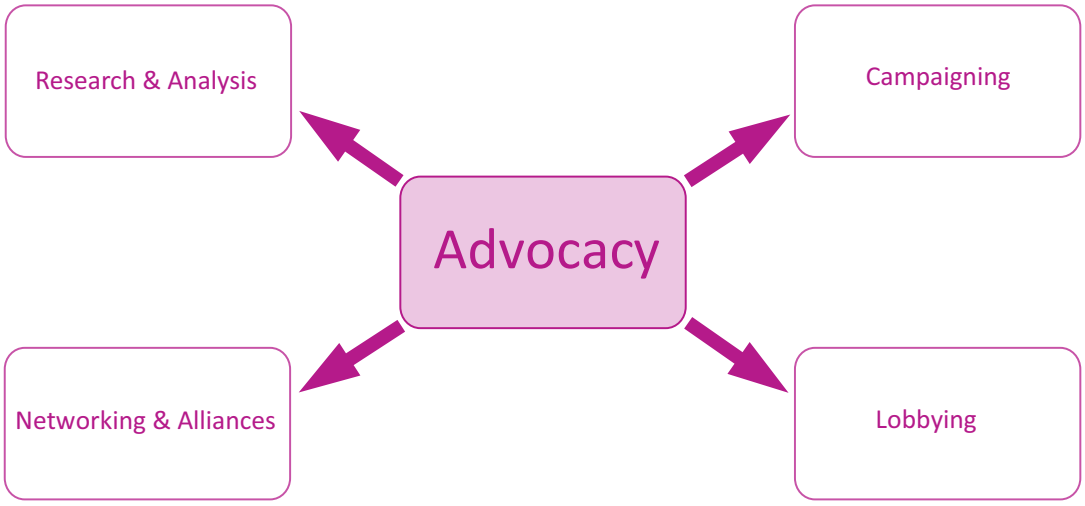
Example

The VSO programme manager in Guyana meets the minister of education to lobby for improvements to the primary schools curriculum.

'Campaigning' is: 'An organised course of action for a particular purpose, especially to arouse public interest'. Campaigning is a motivational exercise designed to activate members of the public to do something that leads to change. For a campaign to be a success it usually needs a large number of people to take an action.

Example

VSO and partners in South Africa get 10,000 parents and children to send postcards to the Ministry of Education, asking for the recruitment of more teachers.



Myths and legends: "Advocacy means street marches"
Some people think that advocacy mainly means marching in the street, burning tyres and throwing stones.
Not so. A street march is one possible part of a campaign. And campaigning is one possible part of advocacy.
If a mass street event is not appropriate in your country then you should do something else. Advocacy has many possible forms. You should take what will work best in your country and your context.

"We don't use that word ..."
Each language has different words to describe these terms, and you are best off discussing advocacy in your own language. In some countries the word 'advocacy' itself is unwelcome. In this case you might just talk about 'influencing' instead. For example, "We'd like to hold a meeting to see how we can influence the health ministry to improve the training of nurses."

Demystifying advocacy

There is often a mystique around advocacy, which can lead to unease and even fear. Once you start the process this will fade, as effective research leads naturally to a good strategy. As 'contacts' become 'real people' instead of daunting politicians and opponents you will gain confidence.

You may already use some advocacy techniques without even realising it. When you come across situations where you need to influence others, you probably instinctively employ tactics like research, planning, alliance building and negotiation. You simply learn by experience.

We intend this toolkit as guidance, not as instruction. There are no 'one size fits all' formulas for advocacy work across the world. In some countries, certain advocacy activities may not be acceptable, so will need to be replaced by more appropriate methods. In every case, local experience and common sense should be applied. Advocacy will always be more effective when it is culturally appropriate.

Dealings with government can be especially intimidating for some. But remember, if you are in a democracy you are entitled to play a part in the governance of your country. Indeed, Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

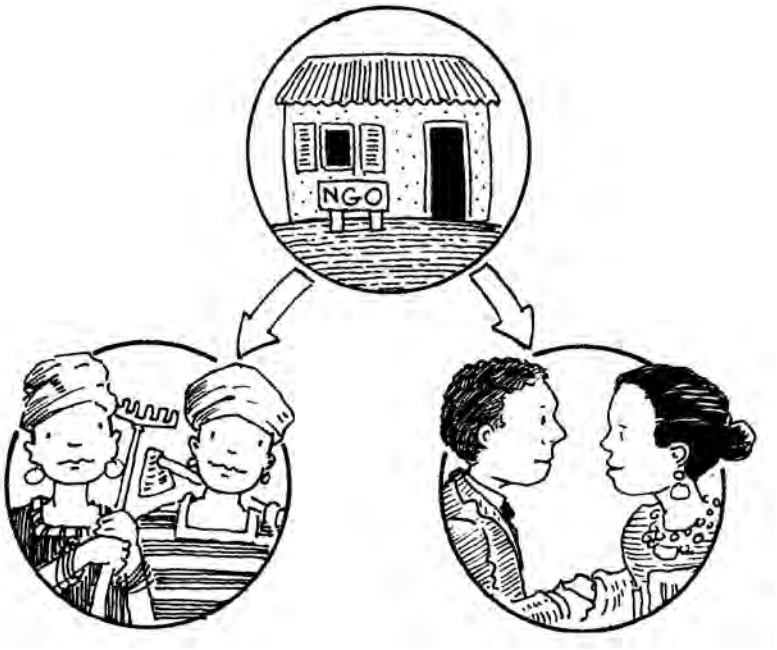
"Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives."

Why do advocacy?

Advocacy and development work

In the 1980s, development NGOs became aware that development and emergency work alone were unlikely to produce sustained improvements in the lives of the poor. This led them to re-examine their strategies, and become increasingly focused on advocacy work. Advocacy work enables them to draw on their programme experience to show the impact of existing policies on the poor and marginalised, and to suggest improvements.

The increased transparency and openness of many governments make advocacy increasingly effective. Today the development movement is carrying out a greater number and range of campaigns, with a greater degree of professionalism. These advocacy initiatives are now often supported by private foundations and bilateral or multilateral donors.



Example

An NGO sees the effect of climate change on women farmers, and is able to produce evidence to lobby government.

Furthering the work of VSO and partners

VSO's advocacy work complements our other programme work, and can bring about sustainable change in development. VSO views the benefits of its advocacy work in terms of improvements in:

- the material position of the poor and disadvantaged
- attitudes and political will
- the positioning and participation of civil society.

In brief, the programmatic reasons VSO undertakes advocacy work are:

- Traditional development work alone will not be able to produce sustained improvements in the lives of disadvantaged people.
- Advocacy is a key tool for addressing the causes of poverty and disadvantage. Advocacy does not merely deal with the symptoms of poverty, but ensures that the structural causes of that poverty and disadvantage are addressed.
- Advocacy is an empowering approach towards sustainable progressive change. It can enable people to influence decisions affecting their lives and bring advances that empower communities and individuals.

We also recognise that advocacy can benefit other aspects of our work including visibility, recruitment and fundraising. It helps VSO to be recognised as a serious player in development circles and provides greater public exposure.

VSO uses an approach based on people's rights, which is two-pronged: we seek both to influence policy improvement and to empower individuals to know and claim their rights. Advocacy is aimed at the 'supply side' of rights – realising improved rights (in constitutions or legislation) – and citizen education is aimed at the 'demand side' of rights – enabling citizens to understand and claim their rights.

What type of advocacy?

There are many different types of advocacy work. These should be carefully considered to ensure that the approach adopted is appropriate to your organisation, the national strategy and country situation. There are various ways to categorise types of advocacy including:

- **Geographical**: Advocacy can take place at any level – in a particular village, district, country, region or globally.
- **Timing**: An advocacy campaign can be ongoing or time-limited (eg one specific event).
- **Issue**: Advocacy can cover a single issue or a range of issues. In general it is easier to achieve success if you have a small number of focused objectives.
- **Approach**: Approaches can vary from abolition to reform. Abolition is when you try to stop an unpopular policy. Reform is where you seek incremental improvements. Abolition is likely to be more confrontational (and publicly critical of the existing ideology), whereas reform is usually viewed as more collaborative and/or practical.
- **Targets**: Advocacy can be directed at a number of targets: government, businesses, groups of people or individuals.
- **Attitude**: This can vary from conflict to engagement. 'Adversarial advocacy' is often associated with ardent abolition or protest movements which document the failures of government or policy-makers, and criticise them, to effect change. 'Programmatic engagement' is more commonly undertaken by organisations that work with government to deliver services. It involves constructive discussion of policies to effect internal reform and incremental changes within existing systems.

Myths and legends: "If we do any advocacy in this country we'll be closed down."
In each country the 'environment' for advocacy is different. In countries where the concept of 'active citizenship' is respected, there are frequent public campaign events. In other countries, including many where VSO works, the government is suspicious of NGOs and is not very open to people's participation in decision-making. Any NGO considering an advocacy strategy needs to carry out a risk analysis, ie assess what is relevant in your country and on your issue.

Who does the advocacy?

Advocacy can also be categorised by who does it. The various options are discussed in more detail in tool 6.

The degree of involvement of the disadvantaged is a prime consideration. There are three options:

- advocacy done **for** disadvantaged people
- advocacy done **with** disadvantaged people
- advocacy done **by** disadvantaged people.

There is no one correct approach – each has its own advantages and disadvantages. On most occasions VSO and partners will carry out in-country advocacy with the disadvantaged. However, we recognise that the ideal is for advocacy work to be done by disadvantaged people themselves, and our long-term aim is to empower them to achieve this.

Part two: Advocacy in VSO

Working at different levels

Local advocacy

National advocacy

Regional and international advocacy

VSO corporate advocacy strategies

AIDS agenda

Valuing health workers

Valuing teachers

Working cooperatively

Building links from local to national to international

Advocacy with partners

Who leads the advocacy?

Principles of partnership advocacy

Volunteer advocacy placements

Long-term volunteers

Short-term volunteers

Working at different levels

VSO both carries out advocacy directly and supports partners to carry out advocacy. This work can take place at a local, national, regional or international level. The most successful work joins up the work from different levels into one strong campaign. The following pages describe some pieces of work at each of these levels.

Local advocacy

Many VSO partners work in one particular part of a country. They carry out advocacy in their locality or region. Main targets might be the mayor or the district council. As many countries have decentralised their ministry functions over the last two decades, the scope for successful local advocacy has increased.

Example Building an alliance to stop the spraying of pesticides in Uganda

In 2008, small-scale organic farmers in the Bundibugyo district of Uganda became worried that the use of DDT to control malaria would threaten the organic status of their produce.

Local NGO BASO planned a campaign to protest. They formed a coalition of concerned stakeholders including farmers, the cocoa-exporting companies and the Sustainable Agriculture Trainers Network. BASO had a VSO volunteer, a communications specialist, who helped them source and disseminate information to the different stakeholders. With her support BASO were able to package appropriate messages targeting different audiences.

The lobbying of senior decision-makers was backed up by two mass actions, a peaceful demonstration and a letter of appeal to the office of the President of the Republic of Uganda, signed by 20,000 people.

The campaign successfully resulted in increased awareness of the impact of the proposed spraying of DDT and halted the spraying of DDT in the Bundibugyo district.[2]

National advocacy

Each programme office will determine its key aims and priorities during the country strategic planning (CSP) process. The policy environment should be considered as an integral part of this process, and advocacy research should form part of the situational analysis.

The policy environment is an important part of the context in which country offices operate, and has a significant influence on how VSO can best contribute to development. Advocacy opportunities can influence the programme office's programme area priorities and aspects such as partnerships and volunteer placements.

To work, advocacy has to be strategic, which means analysing aspects of the country-specific situation, including:

- development priorities
- the national policy environment
- stakeholder priorities and attitudes (including disadvantaged people, the media, the government and donors)
- other players (including other NGOs, networks and coalitions)
- the programme office's competitive advantage (or niche).

All CSPs and programme area plans (PAPs) should include an analysis of the policy environment, and any implementation gaps. Having undertaken such an analysis, programme offices are then able to decide whether they wish to develop an advocacy strategy focusing on these policy and implementation issues. Not all programme offices decide to undertake advocacy work. However, it is encouraged as a very powerful tool in implementing most PAPs and in addressing the structural causes of poverty.

2. A longer version of this case study, with more detail, is available on the CD-ROM.

Example Indonesia – lobbying for employment rights for people with disabilities

In Indonesia, VSO is supporting a campaign to win employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The World Health Organisation believes there are more than 22 million disabled people in Indonesia. Over 80% are unemployed.

Under Indonesian law, companies with more than 100 employees should ensure that at least 1% of their staff are people with disabilities. But the legislation remains in general unknown and unenforced. VSO works with 12 partners to push for implementation of the law.

Good progress is being made in some provinces. In 2008 the Bali Hotel Association agreed to implement the campaign, a move that could result in 1,500 paid jobs for people with disabilities in the next five years. The Four Seasons hotel chain has already recruited a group of applicants, all with polio-related physical difficulties. Other companies, for example in the furniture industry, have also joined the programme.

"This is a way to make business people think about and understand their obligations and the rights of people with disabilities. Giving people with disabilities an opportunity to work is a good idea because to give material is only momentary, but a job is an actual way to survive," said Joko Dharmanto.

Programme areas

Programme offices should always consider advocacy as a means of achieving beneficial change in their priority programme areas. Where possible, advocacy work should:

- work with range of decision-makers and stakeholders, including national and local government, policy-making bodies, multilateral institutions and private sector enterprises
- strengthen the ability of disadvantaged people to influence the decisions that affect their rights and their lives
- use a range of working methods. These might include policy research, direct lobbying, influencing, constructive engagement, working in networks and alliances, media work, and public campaigning.

The most appropriate advocacy approaches to use will be identified during the strategy process, as they will vary according to the country, programme and organisational context. But VSO always draws on the voices of partners, volunteers and staff in its advocacy work, and uses the unique testimonies of volunteers' experience on the ground. VSO volunteers also build advocacy skills among our partners, through volunteer placements and general training.

Given VSO's strategy and our primary role of supporting partners through volunteer interventions, preference should be given to advocacy approaches that involve:

- VSO playing a **strategic role** (as catalysts for change)
- bringing **partners together** who have shared interests in creating policy change
- forming **strategic partnerships** in order to carry out advocacy and policy work
- **capacity-building** for advocacy.

VSO works to promote the rights of disadvantaged people. We pay close attention to political, social and economic discrimination, and power relationships between citizens and authority structures. When policy-makers are not fulfilling their human responsibilities to others, advocacy can be used to hold them accountable.

Regional advocacy

Regional advocacy is gaining importance as more regional political and organisational groupings such as SADC, ASEAN and Mercosur are developed.

Regional advocacy can be undertaken in three ways:

- analysis of the **regional policy and implementation issues**
- **regional coordination of a number of national-level advocacy strategies** and
- a VSO **multi-country programme on a common theme**.

All approaches have value. The first involves focused work on policy changes and implementation around regional policy matters. Regional intergovernmental policy bodies, stakeholders and donors can be targeted. The value of the second approach is in the information-sharing across a region with many similar issues, while allowing for lobbying to be focused on national policy and local implementation. The third option involves developing a regional programme that includes an advocacy element. This can again be valuable for lesson-sharing and coordination.

Example Working to influence HIV policy across southern Africa – the RAISA experience

- **Working with regional stakeholders to develop a regional advocacy strategy.** RAISA has a regional advocacy strategy to reduce the burden of HIV and AIDS care on women and girls.
- **Creating regional alliances** eg RAISA supported partners to attend the workshop that resulted in the Proposed Code for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) on the Equality of Women and the Reduction of Risk of HIV Infection.
- **Using national experience to feed into regional frameworks.** RAISA shares its programme experience with regional initiatives, such as the Southern African Task Force of the UN Coalition of Women and AIDS.
- **Sharing VSO partner's experiences within an existing regional framework** eg working with men in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia. This advocacy raises regional awareness around the needs of men and the key reasons why men should be included in the response to HIV and AIDS.

International advocacy – VSO corporate advocacy strategies

VSO has three corporate advocacy programmes which join up work from the national to the regional to the international levels. These are AIDS Agenda, 'Valuing Teachers' and 'Valuing Health Workers'. Each of these corporate campaigns is based on ongoing policy research and analysis in the programme countries, and uses this evidence to lobby international agencies and governments.

AIDS Agenda seeks to mitigate the impact of HIV and AIDS on women, girls and vulnerable men, and to address the gender inequalities that currently drive the pandemic. The campaign has two particular areas of focus: to reduce the disproportionate burden of HIV care on women and girls, and to increase the promotion and funding of prevention programmes that seek to transform dominant concepts of masculinity and work with vulnerable men. The campaign researches how gender inequality drives the HIV pandemic and proposes policy and practice changes at national, regional and international levels to address these inequalities and halt the spread of the HIV pandemic.

'Valuing Teachers' sets out to research what teachers themselves feel about their profession – what motivates them and what helps them perform well – in order to inform policy-making and implementation at national and international levels. Following the research, advocacy strategies are developed. These include the development of partnerships and volunteer placements in civil society coalitions, in teachers' unions, in girls' education organisations, and in networks of people with disabilities, other minorities or people living with HIV and AIDS, to develop their capacity to use research findings to increase their voice in policy-making; and in ministries of education to increase their capacity to be responsive to civil society and improve teacher and education management systems.

'Valuing Health Workers' is VSO's third corporate international advocacy programme. It aims to raise awareness of the critical shortage of health workers in developing countries, and bring the voices of health workers to the attention of policy-makers to suggest solutions. Like the other strategies it is based on in-country research, and close collaboration with volunteers and partners in each country.

VSO contributes to international debates. For example, it has contributed to a review of migration policies to the European Community to try to slow the 'brain drain' of health workers from the developing world to Europe and contributed to the 'High Level Task Force on Innovative Financing of Health Systems'.[3]

3. For more information about each advocacy strategy please see www.vsointernational.org/what-we-do/advocacy

Working cooperatively

Advocacy work is often more successful when carried out in coalition with other like-minded agencies.

Example The Global Campaign for Education

VSO is a member of The Global Campaign for Education (GCE), an international network of national education coalitions, which aims to make sure every child can go to school no matter where they live in the world. It's a large global coalition that works to get world leaders to keep the promise they made in 2000, that everyone should have the chance to get an education by 2015.

GCE coordinates the Global Action Week on education in April every year. Its aim is to raise public awareness of the need for education around the world. In 2008 over 8 million people, including national leaders and celebrities, took part in the World's Biggest Lesson.

Advocacy work in VSO federations

Some of the VSO federation members run their own strong advocacy programmes. In the Netherlands and Kenya, for example, VSO has been lobbying to increase the attention given to HIV services for people with disabilities. In VSO UK there has been a successful campaign to create a UN dedicated body for women. For more details of this work please see www.vso.org.uk/act/campaign

Building links from local to national to international

VSO international advocacy work is based on our programme work. This programmatic base gives us our key legitimacy in the international policy arena. Thus, we need to ensure that there is constant communication between country programmes and UK advocacy staff so our policy messages resonate with programme experience. This also keeps programme offices abreast of our work and the changing international policy environment and trends.

Our voice is much stronger when we make direct links between our national, regional and international advocacy strategies. Also advocacy strategies at different levels are strengthened if they reflect a shared understanding of issues among partners, programme offices and others. Similarly, it is useful to share lessons across different national-level advocacy strategies ie from programme office to programme office and across regions. This can be useful both for lesson-sharing and in order to identify potential coalitions and partners.

Example Sharing learning from the national to regional and international level

One example of the benefit of working at different levels comes from a volunteer organisation in Zimbabwe, the Family AIDS Caring Trust (FACT). FACT worked to change the burden of AIDS care on women and girls through a campaign to recruit and train more male volunteers. With support from the National Volunteer team and VSO Jitolee, FACT succeeded in recruiting male volunteers throughout its programmes, with:

- 166 of the 500 youth volunteers being young men (working on peer counselling, awareness-raising and home help)
- 110 of 300 of the volunteers in their home-based care programme being males.

Once FACT had shown that it is possible to improve policy and practice at a local level, the work was shared at regional and international level. VSO RAISA shared the example with partners at the annual conferences. And now VSO RAISA is working to make sure that good practice is adopted in the most important intra-government level institutions in the region.

Advocacy with partners

Although it is possible to do advocacy work on your own, often it is more effective to work in collaboration with others.

VSO collaborates with partner organisations on advocacy in various ways, such as:

- placing a volunteer to build advocacy skills and support the partner's advocacy
- supporting advocacy work led by a partner, eg a climate-change NGO
- asking partners to support an advocacy 'cause' that VSO is leading on.

VSO also has partnerships aimed specifically at progressing advocacy initiatives – eg with women's groups, national NGO networks, trade unions and climate coalitions.

Example Campaigning to increase women's political participation

People First commits VSO to increasing our programme and policy work on gender issues. One key issue we campaign on in many countries is women's influence in political and public decision-making processes. This includes a focus on women's representation in leadership roles. In Bangladesh for example, research showed a lack of meaningful participation by women in local government. VSO developed partnerships with women's groups in three rural areas and with advocacy NGOs in the capital, Dhaka. VSO provides various volunteer placements covering areas such as strategic planning and lobbying.

A success has been that a law has been passed making it mandatory for at least one woman to be vice-chair on all local government committees. But in advocacy we often see that supposed successes are not the end of the work. In Bangladesh many of the women vice-chairs have only a token presence. VSO and partners are continuing to work on empowering women at these village levels, until a day when women are not only present but active and influential in every committee.

Who leads the advocacy?

There are various approaches and, in VSO, each case should be discussed by the programme office in order to decide on the most appropriate. The following guidance may help:

Single-owner advocacy, by VSO: Here advocacy is carried out by VSO (staff and/or volunteers) alone. This approach is discouraged, as VSO is essentially a partnership-based organisation. There would be only a few exceptions to this principle. For example:

- a one-off advocacy opportunity that is implemented at short notice
- advocacy on a very specific issue of interest to VSO but not to our partners (eg the legal framework for volunteer agencies, access to visas, etc).

Single-owner advocacy, by partner (VSO neutral): Here a partner that is supported by VSO carries out advocacy on their own account, without VSO involvement. This will often be the case, for example, if the advocacy covers an issue that is not in VSO's programme. In this case, the minimum that VSO should do is to be aware of the work, and carry out a risk analysis – could it impinge in a negative way on our volunteers or our reputation?

Single-owner advocacy, by partner (VSO supportive but not visible): Here a partner that is supported by VSO wishes to carry out advocacy on an issue that would contribute to a VSO programme. VSO has full knowledge and understanding of the work, but it may be controversial or cause political difficulties. VSO can usually support behind the scenes, but not be seen publicly to be supportive. This is considered as 'partner's-own advocacy', with the partner carrying the risk. In any case of this nature, VSO must carry out a risk analysis and stay informed of the work as it develops.

Shared advocacy – VSO + Partner: Here an advocacy programme is 'shared and coordinated' between VSO and a partner or set of partners. This is the most common approach for VSO if the advocacy contributes to VSO's programme and has synergy with our volunteer placements. In this case, planning should be joint, workload allocated according to possibilities, and visibility shared.

Principles of partnership advocacy

There are principles and recommendations that apply specifically to advocacy work. These are summarised briefly below.

Integration

Advocacy should not be seen as something separate from programming and the placement of volunteers. Advocacy work should be integrated into the country strategic plan (CSP), the programme area plan (PAP), the programme area review (PAR) and the budgeting process. The process of choosing partners and developing joint programmes should take into account the possibilities of carrying out joint advocacy, as well as their ability to utilise volunteers well.

Joint planning/playing to strengths

If possible, advocacy should be planned from an early stage with the partners. This might usefully include joint strategic planning and a joint steering group.

Share visibility

The principle of conducting advocacy with partners implies that we will share visibility that accrues through the work. Any reports produced as part of the work should include the logo of each of the main author agencies. Similarly for any public events (conferences, etc), consideration should be given to how each agency can be credited.

Focus on capacity development

This is a key strength of the VSO model. Each piece of advocacy should leave the partner in a stronger position. The opportunity we have to bring in volunteers with skills in advocacy, media, communications and policy analysis is a key benefit we should build on. Care should be taken, however, because of the political sensitivities of conducting advocacy. Partners should be made aware that although volunteers bring invaluable outside skills, they may also have some gaps in their understanding of the local political situation. Usually volunteers should not take a 'front-line' role in advocacy.

Example LINKS study tours

Often the best way for VSO to be effective in advocacy can be in capacity-building and 'behind-the-scenes work'. For example, in 2007 education partners from four countries visited Malawi and Zambia in a study tour to learn from the education advocacy experience of the local education coalitions. This enabled many of the partners to go back to their own countries afterwards more confident to argue for improvements in terms and conditions for teachers.

Volunteer advocacy placements

There are many activities a volunteer can support and many activities that can be led by volunteers, partners or programme managers. On the CD there is a brainstormed list of advocacy activities a volunteer can support.

Example Climate change mitigation in Nigeria

Nigeria is a country already suffering the effects of climate change. VSO has placed long-term volunteers with the Nigeria Climate Action Network (NCAN). VSO and NCAN together lobbied government officials so that Nigeria mitigates the impact of climate change through research and forward planning. NCAN highlighted the need for a government body that would have legislative influence and be provided with a budget to promote cross-department solutions. The VSO placements and the hard work of NCAN resulted in the building of advocacy capacity amongst civil society. NCAN and other partners were able to drive the harmonisation of the Climate Change Bill which resulted in the passage of the bill establishing a Nigeria Climate Change Commission by the National Assembly.

Volunteers can be given a wide variety of advocacy placements. The following list includes examples of what such placements may involve (NB: this is not an exhaustive list, just selected examples):

Long-term volunteers

- Undertaking **participatory research** (using START), and then working with the programme manager and partner to **disseminate research**, assist post-research **advocacy strategy planning**, and begin advocacy **strategy implementation**.
- **Collecting baseline data**. Where volunteers collect disaggregated data at district/local level in order to build information needed to share learning about services in different districts/areas at the national level, and advocate for its replication nationwide ('modelling advocacy').
- Working as **coalition or network coordinators/assistant coordinators**. Coordinating network meetings, facilitating advocacy planning processes, accompanying network members to lobbying meetings, coordinating research, campaigns or media activities.
- Working on **advocacy capacity building**. Helping one or more organisations to build capacity in areas such as: advocacy strategy, lobbying, media work, engagement in coalitions, etc. Volunteers often strengthen links and sharing between coalitions in the region, and may set up study tours to neighbouring countries with more experience.

Short-term volunteers (two weeks to six months):

- Undertaking **partner needs assessments** to determine what work a long-term volunteer might do.
- Undertaking **short participatory research or feasibility studies** (on specific, focused issues that do not require large-scale, in-depth stakeholder consultation).
- Helping programme office staff, partners or coalitions/networks to review advocacy work already undertaken and **plan future strategies** and activities.
- Organising and facilitating one-off **large-scale conferences, or study tours**.
- Organising **awareness-raising/campaigning events** – such as Action Day/Week activities, eg World Teachers' Day, World AIDS Day activities, or organising national-level events with ministers or the President, etc.

Example Working against corporal punishment in Thailand

Sometimes policies on the provision of volunteers can bring about policy change. In Thailand, VSO staff and volunteers have been working for years to combat corporal punishment in schools. This has included volunteer activities such as modelling alternative methods for classroom management. The programme office set a 'standard' that VSO would only work with schools that developed a policy banning corporal punishment. This led to VSO withdrawing from some institutions. But the twin approach has resulted in schools across the country abandoning corporal punishment.

Part three: Research and analysis

"An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest."
Ben Franklin

This section explains the importance of effective research to provide credible evidence for our advocacy work. It examines different aspects of research and analysis, including not only the policy issue, but also the policy environment, system, and the organisations and people involved.

The importance of participatory research

What is participatory research?

Why is research important?

Methodology

START

Research methods and sources

Who could do the research?

The issue

Selecting a policy issue

Problem causes and impacts

The policy environment

Laws and regulations

Policy-making systems

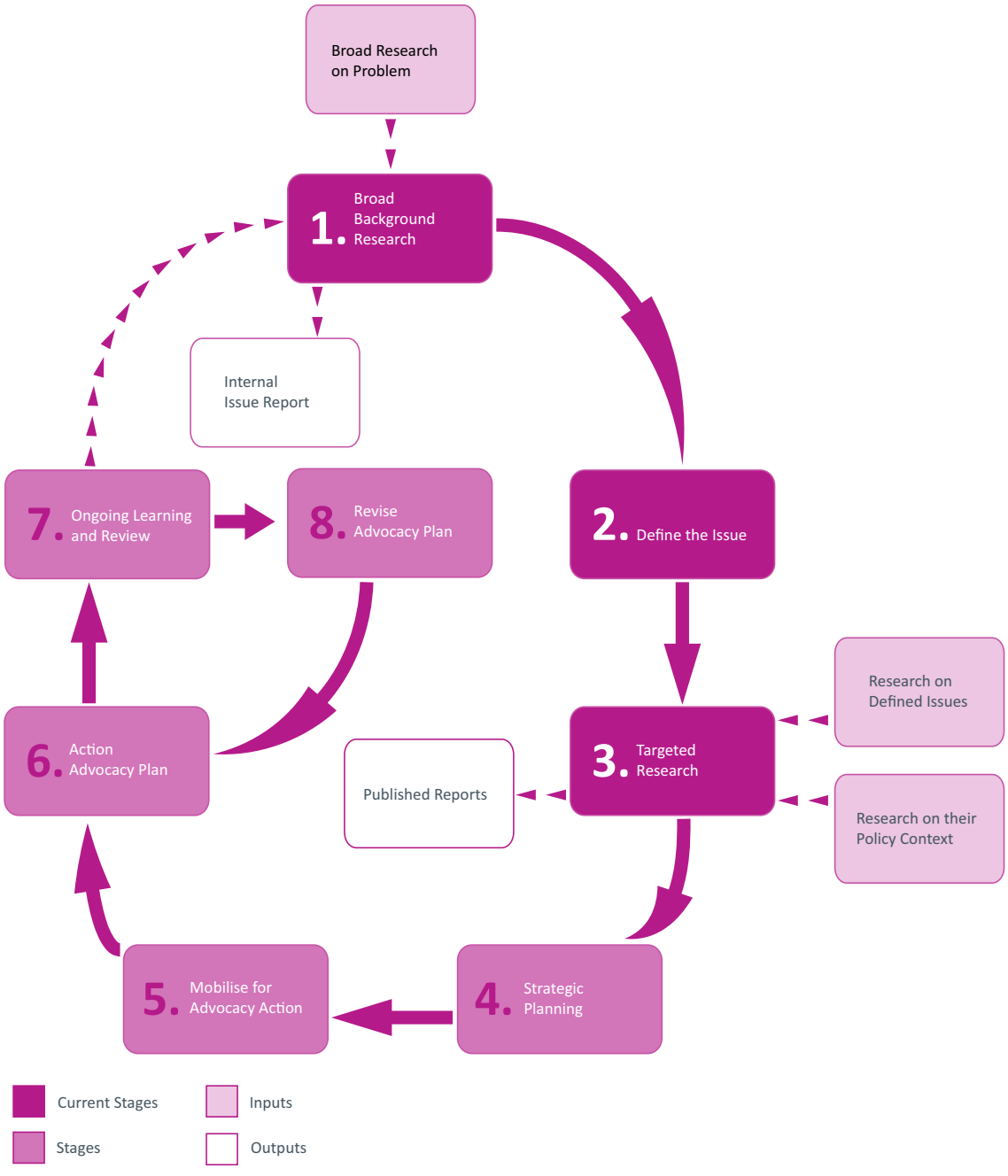
Law making, administration and enforcement

People and organisations

Policy-makers, power and influence

Power

Advocacy research and analysis



Research and analysis – top tips

- Follow the methodology contained in START
- Ensure research and analysis is participatory
- Build a thorough understanding of both your issue and the policy context (including ways in which social change is achieved in your social and political context)
- Place your issue in context – determine if it's really important
- Ensure that your research is credible and easily understandable
- Identify the causes and solutions for your policy issue
- Build understanding of key decision-makers – their interests, motivations and power bases
- Identify the key targets of your advocacy, and then work out how to influence them
- Determine the target audience for your research reports, then ensure they are tailored to influence this audience (in terms of content and timing)

The importance of participatory research

What is participatory research?

In order to persuade policy-makers to change their policies or laws, you will need information. So you need to do some research. That could mean anything from combing through documents in a library to searching the internet, or talking to witnesses.

VSO believes that for research to be legitimate, the opinions of the people directly affected by the policy issue must be sought. Their voices should be used as the basis for advocacy. For this reason, VSO recommends that all research undertaken or commissioned by our staff and volunteers is participatory research.

Caution!
The next section of this toolkit deals with research methodology. However, this only contains a brief overview of principles. A more detailed description is contained in VSO's START ('**S**imple **T**oolkit for **A**dvocacy **R**esearch **T**echniques'). In order to plan your advocacy research effectively, we strongly recommend that you obtain a copy of START at an early stage and use this in conjunction with this toolkit. START is included on the CD at the end of this toolkit, or on the VSO website.

Making your research effective

If research is to be useful to policy-makers, it will need to be:
General – Providing extensive background information, not just selective cases and anecdotes
Accessible and Easily Understandable – A body of good evidence, well analysed and presented in a user-friendly format
Targeted – Findings presented in different formats, tailored to different audiences, with the information needs of policy-makers being taken into account
Relevant – Appropriate to their area of work and interests
Measurable – Incorporating facts and statistics
Timely – Up to date and provided at the right time
Practically Useful – Grounded in reality, and providing practical solutions
Objective and Accurate – Without unsubstantiated value judgments
Credible – Reliable, sourced appropriately, using accepted methods
Authoritative – Carried out by an organisation that policy-makers perceive as credible.

Tip
Remember: legitimacy and credibility are necessary for policy influence. **Double-check and reference your sources**. Only use recognised and credible sources.

A useful ploy is to use your targets' or your opponents' information where possible (as they cannot contest it!).

General background information helps to place the issue in context, providing the 'bigger picture' against which the local problem can be examined – for example: by providing facts and figures, or researching the international and regional dimensions of a problem. Sometimes it is useful to refer to international human rights frameworks or conventions. See the CD-ROM for a list of relevant declarations.

Research also helps to personalise your issue and build empathy. You can do this by using methods such as case studies, quotations from those affected, photos, etc. As far as possible, the research and the identification of potential solutions should be based on the voices of those personally affected.

Effective research should:
- focus on a problem that directly affects disadvantaged communities
- be linked to our programme work. (Indeed, many Programme Managers have used the findings of participatory research to inform the future direction of their whole Programme Area).
- look into the root causes of problems found on the ground
- analyse the policy environment to uncover implementation gaps
- link local, national, regional and international aspects
- collect evidence in a systematic way.

Why is research important?

Participatory research helps you to gain a clear understanding of the causes and effects of development issues from the perspective of the people affected, which makes it possible to build a consensus about practical solutions.

Research is the foundation for successful advocacy. It is important for both:
- **successful advocacy work** – by providing accurate evidence to support advocacy; and
- **an effective advocacy strategy** – by enabling thorough strategic analysis.

Tip
Do not sweep data under the carpet if it does not support your case. Anticipate and unearth the arguments against you and deal with them in your advocacy work and reports.

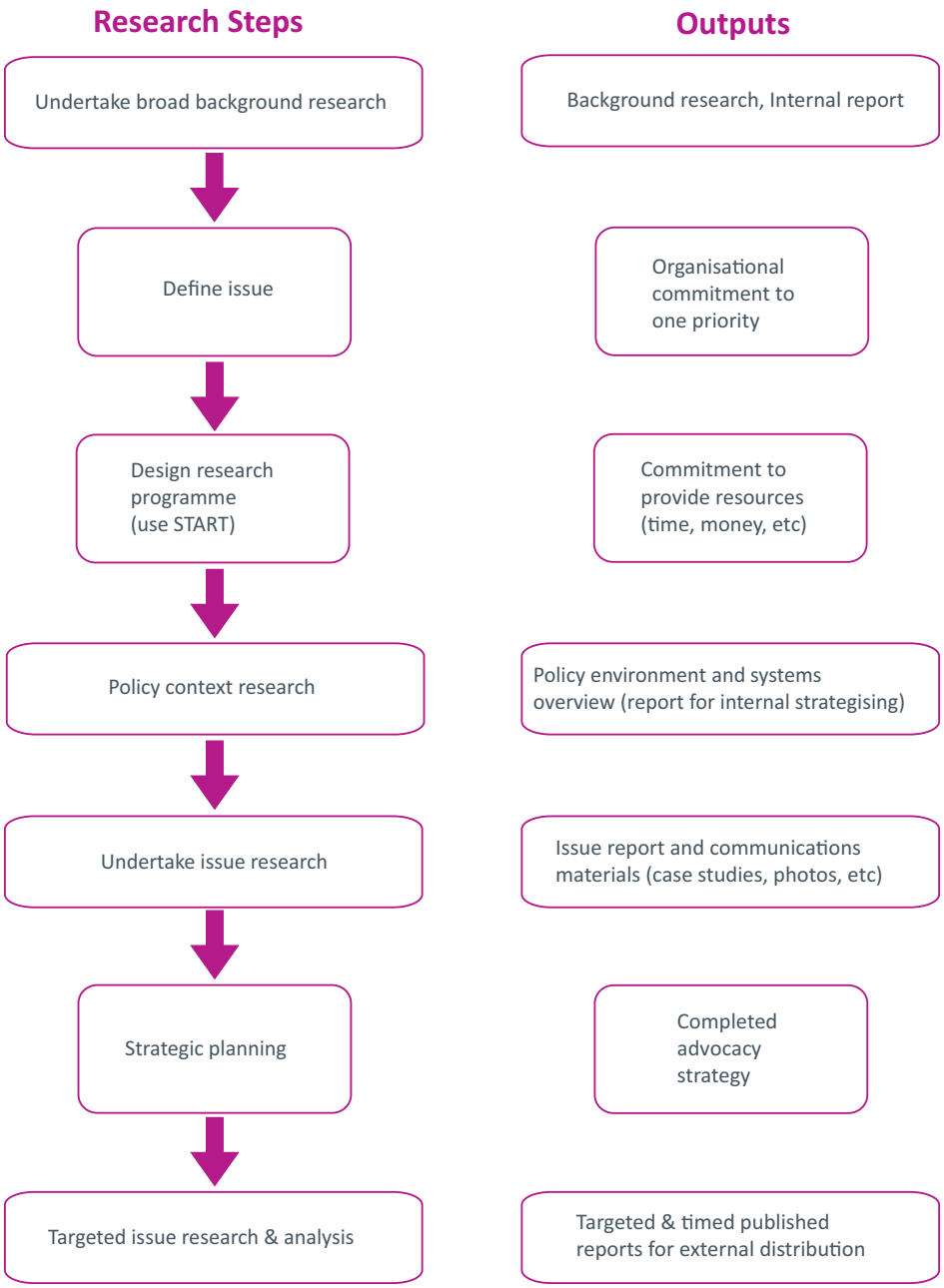
Participatory research can:
- give your advocacy substance
- establish your reputation as an expert on the issue
- provide feasible and workable solutions to your issue
- provide you with case studies, anecdotes and examples to make your issue 'come alive'
- provide cost–benefit arguments, including the (often hidden) cost of alternatives and inaction
- demonstrate public support or public concern
- help you to analyse your issue from different perspectives
- help to disprove myths, rumours and false assumptions
- analyse and provide counter-arguments to positions held by stakeholders who may not be sympathetic to your cause
- provide evidence for your positions
- explain why previous strategies have or have not worked
- provide the basis for media and public awareness work.

It is said that every dollar spent on research is worth ten spent on lobbying. If your research is thorough, it will be easier to develop a winning advocacy strategy.

Example Nepal – good research gets good results

Following the publication of their 'Valuing Teachers' report, VSO Nepal's national advocacy led to improvements in pre-school education and textbook delivery in rural areas and changes in government policy. This included new life insurance for teachers, and the introduction of positive discrimination in teacher recruitment and promotion to increase the numbers of female, disabled and minority teachers and head teachers. These changes were responses to recommendations made in Nepal's 2005 report Lessons from the Classroom, and the result of months of coordinated lobbying by VSO staff, volunteers and partners.

Steps in the advocacy process where research could be needed:



Methodology

START: **S**imple **T**oolkit for **A**dvocacy **R**esearch **T**echniques
VSO's START toolkit is a comprehensive guide to carrying out participatory research on an advocacy theme. It is recommended that this is used to guide advocacy research.

START helps to refine understanding of complex problems, and to identify potential solutions or areas where advocacy is needed to achieve changes in policy or policy implementation.

START covers the following areas:

- defining the research question
- carrying out a literature review (background reading before the research)
- choosing research methods and participants
- setting up the research itinerary and logistics
- guidance on one-to-one interviews, focus groups and questionnaires
- analysis of the research findings, including formulating recommendations and solutions
- advice and tips on writing a policy report.

Research methods and sources

The first stages of research will include gathering facts and figures and reviewing materials already produced. After this stage, there are various other research methods available:

- in-depth interviews
- consultations or focus groups
- opinion polls
- surveys and questionnaires
- computer-based 'web conferences' or web discussions
- field visits and investigations
- case studies
- pilot projects.

There are many useful sources for research, and using a wide range will add depth, context and interest to your work. Remember that there are many other organisations out there collecting information (including government departments, universities and other NGOs) – and many would be willing to share it with you.

Who could do the research?

Within VSO, research can be carried out by staff, volunteers or partners. One of the big strengths of VSO is the ability to recruit volunteers who have research skills. When research is carried out by a volunteer, it should be done in collaboration with one or more local partner organisations, or with a network. The volunteer should not only help carry out research but should also aim to build the capacity of the local partner.

As background for their placement, each volunteer should be given a copy of any policy briefings or research reports that are relevant to their role, even if they are going to a service-delivery job. This helps to place their role into context, and may also make it possible for them to advocate effectively within the context of their job.

The volunteer, and national civil society colleagues, should:

- identify the causes of poverty and discrimination, or policy issues
- understand the structure of policy-making bodies
- understand formal and informal policy-making processes
- identify key actors and institutions that make decisions about policy, as well as those who can influence policy-makers
- analyse the distribution of political power among key actors.

The issue

Selecting the key policy issue

Within VSO, advocacy issues tend to arise in different ways.

- Barriers arise to the implementation of your placement activities that could be overcome through advocacy.
- The disadvantaged people that you are working with identify a particular problem that cannot be overcome through project work.
- Development activities that you support have resulted in successes that could be replicated more widely. Advocacy can help in sharing and 'scaling up' the impact of the work.
- Institutions whose policies affect the lives of the poor announce new proposals that need to be responded to – either by resisting or modifying these proposals.

These are all reactive ways in which a perceived need for advocacy arises. You can also take a proactive approach. This will usually be initiated by research and analysis, for example as part of the country strategic planning process. When an advocacy issue is identified in this way, it can be meaningfully integrated into programme work, and used as a tool to achieve programme objectives.

The number of advocacy issues it is possible to tackle will depend on your resources. You should focus your work on only as many objectives as you can realistically achieve (which may be just one for each programme area). Advocates who attempt to fix everything run the risk of changing nothing.

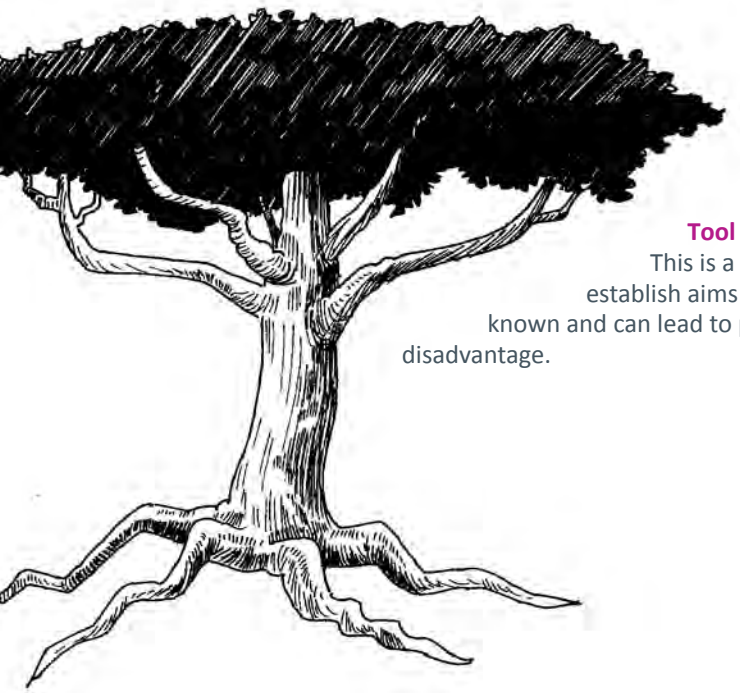
Tool 1. The issue choice matrix
This tool is designed to assist with the choice of advocacy issue. See Part 8 for a full description.

In making your choice of advocacy issue, remember that:

- the issue must be of relevance to your programme area
- the issue should be something you care passionately about and want to advocate on
- you need to carry out a risk analysis to ensure that your choice of issue will not bring harm to VSO or your partners (or that the envisaged benefits far outweigh any risk of harm).

Problem causes and impacts

Once you have identified your main issue you need to identify the causes and impacts of the problem.



Tool 2. Problem tree analysis
This is a tool for analysing problems. It also helps to establish aims and objectives for your issue. This tool is well known and can lead to productive discussion about real causes of disadvantage.

Caution!
Whilst the problem tree can be a useful tool it also has negative connotations, because it focuses on problems, rather than looking at solutions. You may wish to also use idea-generating approaches. 'Appreciative inquiry' methods, examine past successes and achievements, with a view to replicating or improving on these.

Use participatory tools to generate new and creative ideas.

Once you have mapped out the problems, by using the problem tree, you will want to make sure your report 'comes alive' for the reader. Your research report should include case studies relevant to your issue and target audience.

Tool 15. Research advocacy case studies
This tool provides guidance on producing effective research case studies.

The policy environment

The policy environment includes all aspects surrounding policy-making. So while your 'narrow focus' might be on the legislative process, the broader socio-economic environment is also important. You need to be aware of what are the pressing concerns of the day – including in the media, research institutes, donors, trade unions and civil society.

Tool 16. The 'context, evidence, links' policy framework
This tool helps with the assessment of different external factors that impact upon the policy-making process, and provides pointers on how to influence policy and practice.

Key questions to be asked when analysing the policy environment include:

- Are the problems you have identified important to society?
- What are the existing policies and laws that cause these problems and how are they implemented?
- How could changes in policy help resolve the problems?
- What type of policy change is needed (legislation, regulation, legal decision, or other)?
- What are the financial implications of the proposed policy change?

One aspect of the policy environment that will have an enormous impact upon your advocacy is the level of transparency. In some open and democratic regimes, it is possible to obtain all relevant information through official channels, and also to take part in relevant meetings and consultations. Conversely, in regimes that lack openness it may be difficult to meet key decision-makers and achieve involvement. Advocacy is more likely to be successful in a more democratic political system. However, VSO has found that policy – for example in health or education ministries – can be influenced in almost any country.

Laws and regulations

Your research should include any existing laws (acts and regulations) that may affect your issue. Different countries have different legislative systems, so these will take different forms. Once research has identified legislative provisions, it is necessary to go one step further, and to research enforcement. International conventions and agreements may need to be incorporated into national legislation and successfully implemented, or they may be directly applicable.

"To change the world, we must first understand it"

Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary-General

Policy-making systems

Different countries have different legislative systems, which will impact upon their policy system. Sometimes the provincial or local government, rather than national government, might be the target for your advocacy. There are also different legal systems (civil law, common law and religious law).

A critical element in the success of any advocacy campaign is a good understanding of the policy-making system of your country. This includes the formal and informal ways in which policies are made at different levels. This analysis helps you to understand the opportunities that exist, including critical points of timing ('policy windows').

This knowledge also prevents NGOs from making tactical mistakes that can alienate policy-makers. In many countries, government and political leaders remain sceptical about including civil society in policy-making, believing that they lack appropriate experience, skills, and knowledge. The way to overcome this perception is to become a skilled and knowledgeable advocate.

"Being aware of the political environment is very important. There are times when our findings have not been taken seriously, or have been set aside, because the political timing was not right or the research came at an inopportune time in terms of the politics around the research findings."

Mavuto Bamusi of the Malawi Economic Justice Network

Law making, administration and enforcement

Policy-making processes should be mapped and understood. This includes the legislative process, which can be quite complex. These processes affect timing and opportunities for input and influence.

It is also necessary to map and understand how policies are administered and implemented. In many cases, laws are agreed on paper but not enforced. Factors affecting implementation will include: the nature of the bureaucratic processes, incentives, capacity, and the level of practicality and acceptability of the policy.

In this category, it is necessary to include research into factors such as budget allocations. Some VSO partner organisations carry out 'budget monitoring' of major ministries, to determine if funding is arriving where it has been promised.

People and organisations

Policy-makers, power and influence

People and organisations are at the heart of policy-making. To succeed in influencing policy, it is necessary to understand their motivations, and the way in which power and influence work. Successful advocacy involves building and maintaining relationships that enable you to influence policy-making in favour of your issue.

First, identify the institutions and individuals involved in decision-making. This will include all stakeholders associated with the desired policy change, for example:

- decision-makers (major powerful players – regional, national or local, where relevant)
- advisers to decision-makers
- influencers (eg newspaper editors)
- disadvantaged people
- allies and supporters
- opponents
- undecided on the issue (who you may be able to influence).

Next, research and analysis is needed to uncover:

- relationships and tensions between the players
- their agendas and constraints
- their motivations and interests
- what their priorities are – rational, emotional, and personal.

Tool 3. Decision and influence mapping
This tool helps to analyse decision-makers and their sources of influence.

Tool 4. Allies and opponents matrix
This is used to categorise the allies and opponents of your advocacy issue.

Tool 23. Other player analysis
This tool is a matrix that can be used to consider other organisations working in your field, and the nature of your relationship with them.

Tool 5. Venn diagram
A tool to map stakeholders involved in the policy system, and the relationships between them.

Once you know and understand policy-makers and the way they think, you are better able to judge the channel and tone needed to reach them. They will also assist in identifying the best targets (and indirect targets) for your advocacy work.

> **Tip**
> Keep a database of organisations and people, and update as new information is received. Remember personal information, as well as organisational, since this may help in building relationships.

Power
Power is a measure of a person's ability to control the environment around them, including the behaviour of other people. Historically, it has been monopolised by the few, leading to widespread poverty, marginalisation and the violation of human rights. Much of civil society works to reverse this pattern and bring previously excluded groups and individuals into arenas of decision-making, while at the same time transforming how power is understood and used.

> **Rights-based approaches and inclusive programmes**
> VSO believes that poverty is a result of unequal access to a livelihood, education, healthcare, political participation and justice. All of these are universal human rights.
> By inclusive programmes we mean those that:
>
> 1. Identify those people who are at most risk of exclusion. Typically, exclusion occurs on the basis of gender, race, class, disability, mental health, HIV and AIDS, age, language, religion and sexual orientation.
> 2. Strengthen the voice of excluded groups and strengthen the ability of duty-bearers (eg Ministries of Education and Health, local government and other service providers) to respond.

An understanding of how power operates is vital to successful advocacy. This includes the power sources of the organisations and individuals involved in policy-making and the roles and balance of power amongst these. You should also analyse your own power sources, and plan how to use and develop these.

"If you want to change anything, you need first of all to think about your source of power".

Charles Handy, author and philosopher specialist in organisational behaviour and management

Tool 6. Force Field Analysis
This is a tool for assessing the driving and restraining forces of an advocacy issue. This helps to identify the approaches that are likely to be most effective in changing the balance of power in favour of your issue (shifting the equilibrium).

Example Sometimes just an implied threat can bring about change.

VSO has supported the advocacy task force of the National Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS in Nepal to try and bring about improvements in service provision in the Teku hospital. There was still no progress after more than four months of meetings, including with the hospital director. So ATF gave an ultimatum that if their demands were not met, 200 HIV and AIDS activists would protest directly to the Prime Minister. This resulted in a meeting with the Health Minister and progress on many of their demands, including a new 15-bed HIV unit at the hospital which will remain open around the clock, and the promise to establish a centre of excellence for HIV and AIDS.

Advocacy is most effective if it is focused on the individuals or groups that have the greatest capacity to introduce the desired policy change. These are called '**targets**'.

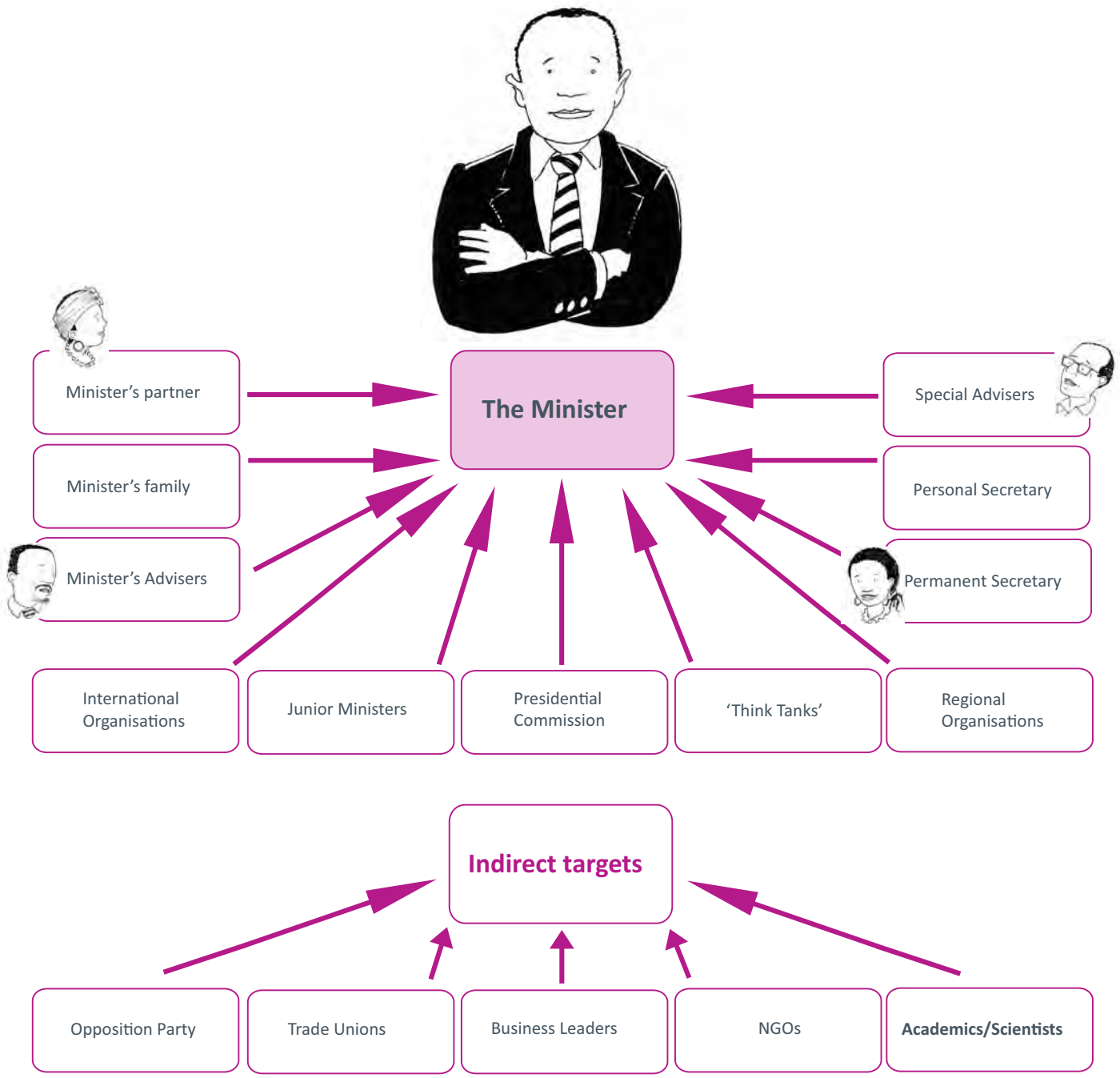
Once we have a clear picture of the decision-making system, we will be able to identify our advocacy targets. Often, the most obvious advocacy target is not accessible or sympathetic, so it is necessary to work through others to reach them. This involves working with 'those who can influence those with influence' and who have sympathetic views, rather than targeting the decision-maker directly. These are sometimes called **indirect targets**.

Thus, in addition to determining targets, you need to assess the most effective ways in which to influence them. This involves research into the position and motivations of each actor, and their sources of advice and influence, in order to decide on the best channels for reaching them on your issue. This approach is known as 'influence mapping'.

Tool 3. Decision and Influence Mapping
The main tool to map and analyse decision-makers and their sources of influence.

The more information you have about the actors that may influence and affect policy change, the easier it is to devise an effective advocacy strategy. The following is an example which shows some possible indirect targets that could help to influence a minister.

Indirect targets to influence the minister



These indirect targets can also be lobbied in a way that encourages them to lobby other indirect targets, thus making the approach more acceptable to the Minister. For example, an NGO lobbies a 'think tank' to make approaches to the Permanent Secretary or Special Adviser, who then approaches the Minister. Or a friend or family member of the Minister approaches his wife, who then tackles the issue with her husband.

Tip
Never underestimate the influence of donors and researchers in the policy-making process. Money talks. Research provides the ultimate information power.

Part four: Strategic planning for advocacy

This section explains what an advocacy strategy is, including the elements that build a strategy. It also explains the steps needed to develop an effective strategy.

Advocacy strategy explained

The value of strategy

Producing a strategy document

Strategic analysis

Introduction

Define the issue

Assess the external situation (environmental analysis)

Assess the internal situation (organisational analysis)

Assess other stakeholders

Strategies for dealing with opponents and allies

Risk analysis

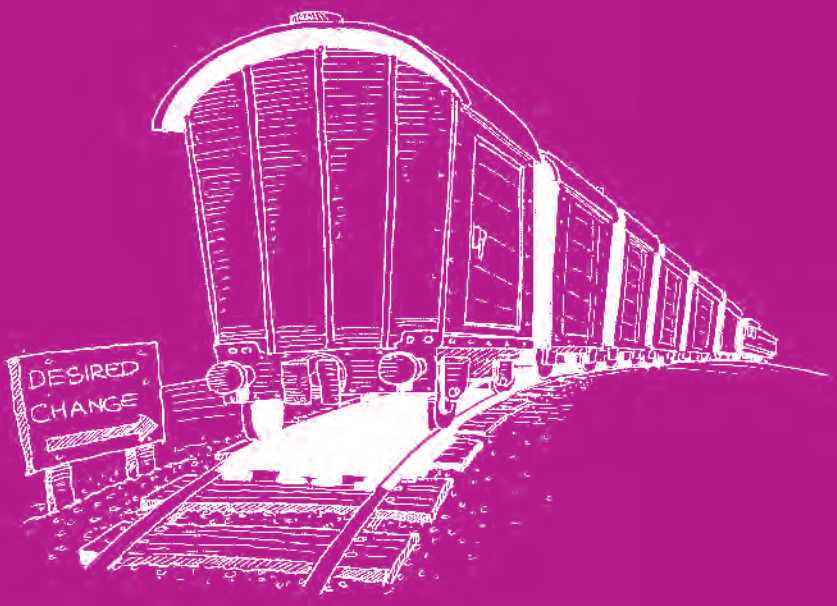
Strategic choice

Introduction

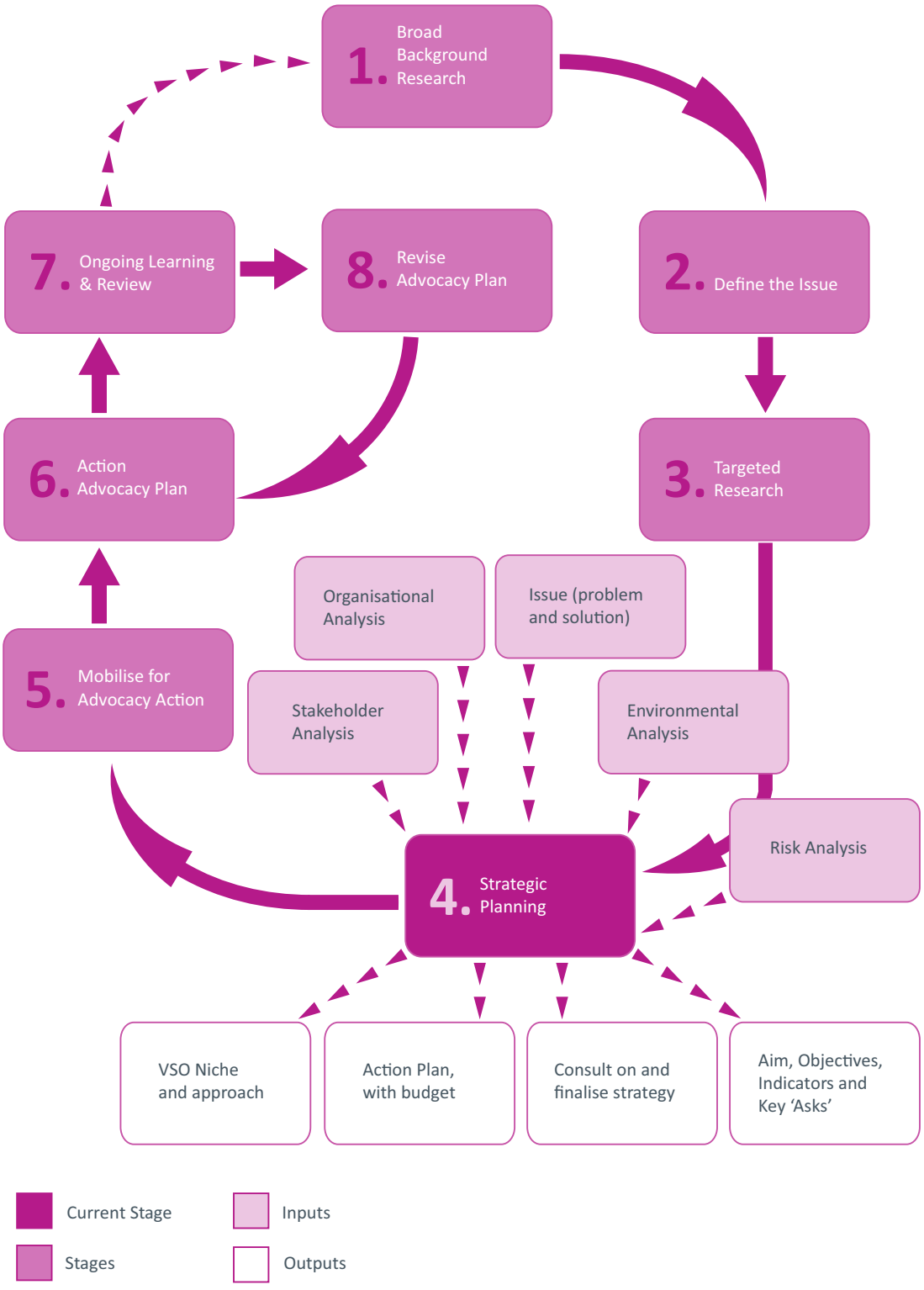
Define the organisational niche

Define aim, objectives, indicators and key 'asks'

Checklist – assessing your strategy



Strategic Planning



Advocacy strategic planning – top tips

- Keep it relatively simple – don't be too ambitious at first
- If you are new to strategic planning use a facilitator to lead a workshop
- Make your strategic planning participatory in order to gain commitment
- Map your stakeholders, deciding who to consult at each stage
- Use a variety of tools, with creative methods, to ensure that analysis includes creative thought
- Base your strategy on the research you have carried out
- The choice of policy issue should be based on analysis of the development, country and policy environment, as well as VSO's programme priorities
- Formulate your asks in order to gain maximum support for your aim
- Explore ways of joint working – networks and alliances
- Identify primary targets and ways of reaching them (messages and activities)
- Ensure your objectives are clear and focused
- Don't forget risk analysis.

Advocacy strategy explained

Strategy is concerned with deciding the nature and scope of an organisation's activities – what the advocacy will be like, where and how it will work, and how its results will be measured. The pattern of activities in strategy includes:

- the allocation of a set of available resources by the organisation
- managing the network of relationships between stakeholders
- using tailored messages to persuade target audiences.

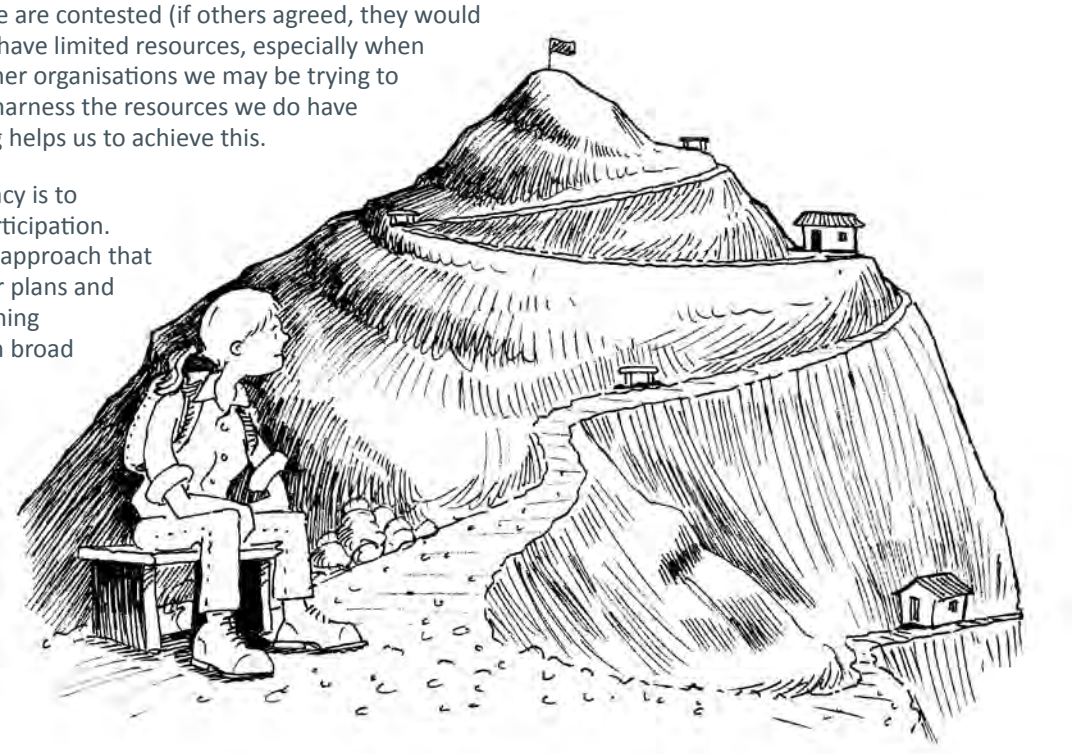
Strategy should look for your competitive advantage or 'niche', and will provide direction, which helps organisations to achieve their aims.

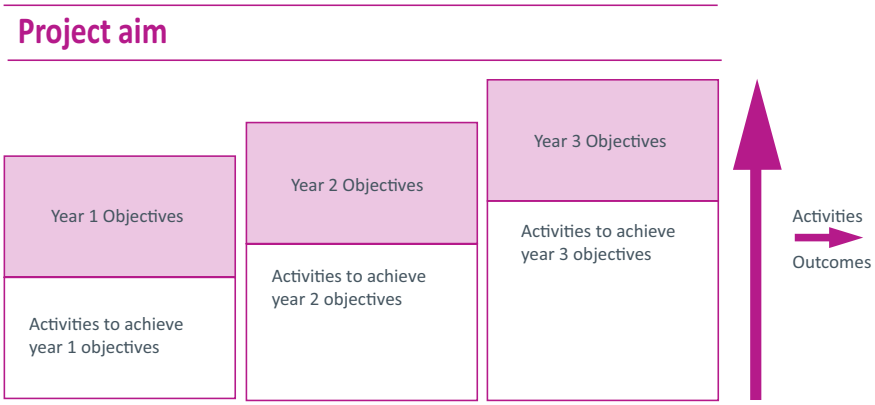
The value of strategy

Advocacy can be complicated, but a well-focused and -defined strategy can simplify things by providing a 'route map'.

The policy changes we wish to see are contested (if others agreed, they would already have been adopted). We have limited resources, especially when compared to government and other organisations we may be trying to influence. Therefore we need to harness the resources we do have at our disposal; strategic planning helps us to achieve this.

One key success factor for advocacy is to have widespread support and participation. Strategic planning is a systematic approach that enables others to be aware of our plans and to become involved. In your planning workshop you should break down broad aims into manageable steps.





The step-wise approach

See the CD-ROM for some advantages and challenges of strategic planning for advocacy.

Producing a strategy document

Usually to develop an advocacy strategy you will hold a strategy workshop – or at least a series of meetings with other colleagues. The more participatory the strategic process is (within limits), the greater the likelihood of commitment to the end strategy.

> **Tip**
>
> **Engage an expert facilitator:** If you are new to strategic planning, it may be desirable to have a facilitator to run a strategic planning workshop for you. They can design and manage the process, mediate between differing factions, and handle the varied concerns of participants. If this is not possible, share out tasks between various members of your group
>
> **Keep it simple:** Design a simple process without too many tools. Use just a few of the tools from Part 8 of this manual. Also, use simple terminology where possible, and clarify commonly used terms before beginning, to avoid misunderstanding.

Timescale to develop an advocacy strategy

There is no definitive timescale for running a process but we recommend the following as a minimum:

- **Preparation:** Background research and planning (identify stakeholders and decide on their level of involvement; examine existing situation and internal organisational experiences; external environment, designing the participative process, etc). **At least two days.**
- **Participatory strategy process:** This is the key workshop stage for strategic analysis and decision-making. Aim for as much participation as possible from key stakeholders, but within budget and resource constraints. **At least two days** (more if volunteers/partners/disadvantaged people are consulted separately).
- **Drafting:** Writing up the draft strategy. **Two days.** (Tip – do it as soon as possible after the workshop, before you forget the discussions.)
- **Consultation:** Draft strategy sent out to all those who may have some role in delivering the strategy or whose advice would be valuable. **At least a two-week consultation period.**
- **Collation:** Collate and review comments, make necessary amendments to the strategy to create final document, send out final strategy document. **One day.**

Structure of an advocacy strategy document
The following is a basic structure you can follow. Don't let it get too long or no-one will read it. If you want other parts it might be best to put them in as annexes.

- Clear Title, and Contents page
- Short Introduction and short Methodology
- Advocacy Issue
- Context Analysis – a description of the environment and what it means for the advocacy
- Problem and Solution
- Advocacy Aim
- Advocacy Objectives
- Advocacy Asks
- Risk Analysis
- Annexes, eg possibly with analysis tables, action plan, budget narrative, etc.

Strategic analysis

Introduction

The main areas that need to be analysed are:

- **The issue**
- **Environmental analysis** (external situation)
- **Organisational analysis** (the internal situation, eg skills, resources and other plans)
- **Stakeholder analysis** (eg allies, competitors, adversaries and targets)
- **Risk analysis.**

These are covered in more detail below. The order in which they are considered should vary according to individual circumstances.

Define the issue

The choice of issue was covered in Part 3. It should complement your programme work, and it should be an important theme that, if tackled successfully, will make a real difference to the lives of the disadvantaged. Ideally by the time you come to the strategic planning workshop you will have agreement for the main issue you are going to work on. But in the workshop you may change the nuance, or the sub-theme of the issue. The other purpose of the strategic planning workshop is to discuss all aspects of the issue and win support and 'buy-in' for a sustained period of work on that issue.

Tools that help determine your issue.

As well as tools described in Part 1, eg the issue choice matrix (tool 1) or problem tree analysis (tool 2) you could use:

Tool 19. Creative drawing

This tool encourages intuitive thinking about the improvement of a current situation. It is a creative envisioning tool that can help to generate a future vision.

Assess the external situation (environmental analysis)

To develop an effective advocacy strategy, you need to understand the broader environment in which the organisation operates (and to which the issue relates). Useful tools include:

Tools 6. Force field analysis

This tool is helpful to assess the driving and restraining forces of an advocacy issue (the factors that are working to promote policy change and those that are preventing this from happening).

Tool 7. PESTLE – external analysis

This tool helps to scan or review the broader environment, and to sort and analyse key factors that may affect the advocacy campaign.

Environmental analysis should also consider the question of timing, which is a vital element of strategy formulation. Key questions might include

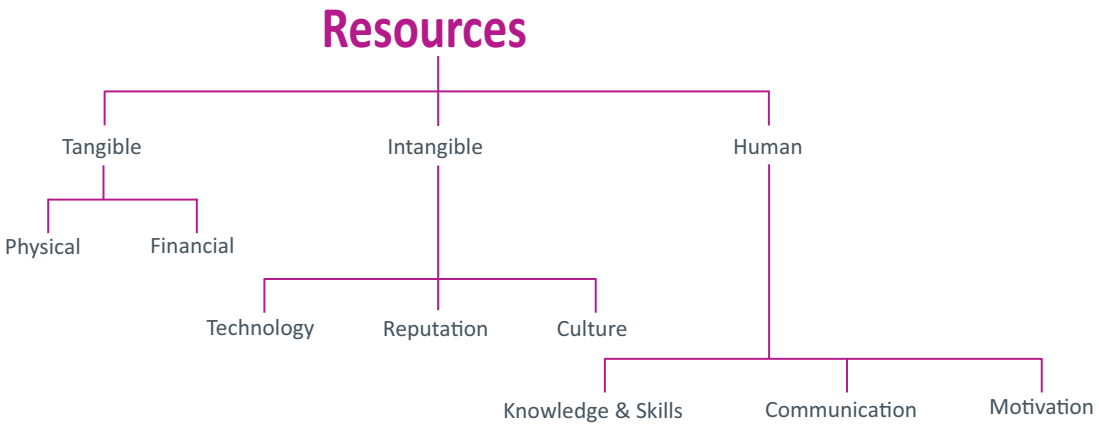
- What is the timing for the legislative process?
- When are key meetings when decisions are taken?
- Are there elections coming up? They might mess up your schedule, but might be an opportunity.

Example Working towards free healthcare

VSO believes that healthcare for the poor should be free at the point of service. DFID also works to this aim. An official in the health team at DFID has found that their major successes in influencing government policies come when the president is up for re-election. "Offering free healthcare is a very attractive policy during an election campaign." The lesson therefore is that if you are planning an advocacy strategy to the health ministry you should begin a year or so before the election date, and build up. You need to have your targets convinced at the time the election manifesto is decided.

Assess the internal situation (organisational analysis)

Your organisational resources affect your capacity to do the advocacy work, and will determine how and with whom you collaborate. An organisational skills and resources audit could include the following aspects:



In particular:

- **Resources:** Look at the financial, physical and human resources that are available to work on the advocacy project. Include the fundraising potential of the advocacy project.
- **Knowledge and skills:** Identify the knowledge and skills that are available or can be drawn upon in order to do effective advocacy. Are there knowledge and skills gaps that need to be filled? Should you do this in house, or by joining others with the expertise?

If you are looking more widely at advocacy work in an organisation, there are some deeper organisational factors that can be assessed. In particular, check that your advocacy contributes to your organisation's vision and mission, helps to fulfil your overall corporate objectives and is integrated into your broader organisational strategy.

Tools that can help with internal analysis

Tool 12. SWOT analysis
This is a commonly used tool for undertaking an organisational assessment and is used to consider the **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats relevant to the advocacy campaign.

Tool 13. Advocacy self-assessment
A tool to help with identifying strengths and weaknesses.

Tool 14. Change management iceberg
A diagram showing the essence of change – in particular, what lies beneath the surface for managers and policy-influencers seeking to achieve change.

Tool 22. Pathways of influence
A diagram that can be used as a guide when determining advocacy strategies.

Assess other stakeholders

Advocacy should be a **deliberate** process, involving intentional actions. Therefore, before choosing an appropriate advocacy strategy, it should be clear who you are trying to influence. When you have identified your issue you will be clear which individuals are affected by the issue or can influence a decision on it. These people are collectively termed 'stakeholders'.

Be aware of all the potential stakeholders. It is useful to break this large group down into smaller categories of like-minded people in order to recognise where participants fit into the campaign. These may include:

- **Disadvantaged people** – people whose lives will be improved by the policy change. Disadvantaged people are the most important stakeholder group, but they can often be passive stakeholders (whereas 'allies' are actively involved).
- **Internal stakeholders** – people within your own organisation who are involved in the advocacy project in some way eg staff, volunteers, management board, etc. Some may be only lukewarm about the advocacy project or be resource competitors.
- **Allies** – people who are 'on your side' – either because they will directly benefit from the policy changes, or because they want to bring about these changes for reasons of justice.
- **Adversaries or opponents** – people who are opposed to the policy change. They may be actively opposed to the policy change; or they may be ignorant or uninformed – these could be potential allies, given greater understanding. Adversaries could be the targets of your advocacy campaign.
- **Targets** – people whom you wish to influence. Primary targets are those with the ability to affect your objective directly. Secondary targets are those who can influence primary targets.

People can be in more than one of these categories at any one time. After listing the main stakeholders, you will have to consider how to work with them – eg whether they should be involved in the strategic planning or not. See the CD for more on stakeholder involvement in the strategic process.

Tool 9. Involvement of the disadvantaged
Assists with the process of involving disadvantaged people in the strategy process.

In addition to deciding on the involvement (or otherwise) of various stakeholders in the strategy process, the way in which stakeholders are dealt with in the campaign is a major part of the strategy process itself.

Mapping relationships between stakeholders

Stakeholder analysis can also be used to map relationships between stakeholders, avenues of influence and power relations. Power mapping is essential for planning and calculating risks. You can also then consider the feasibility of moving people – eg turning adversaries into allies.

Tools

Tool 3. Decision and influence mapping

This tool helps to map and analyse decision-makers and their sources of influence.

Tool 15. Power mapping (Venn diagram)

This tool helps to map the relative power and relationships between different targets.

Strategies for dealing with opponents and allies

The main strategies for dealing with **opponents** are likely to be:

- persuading them that your position is right, or weakening their opposition to your position
- reducing their influence (often by affecting their credibility by successfully countering their arguments)
- seeking some common ground on some issues and agreeing to disagree on others.

The main things you need to find out about your opponents are:

- Why do they oppose you?
- How actively will they oppose you? Will they be reactive (just counteracting your moves) or proactive?
- What will they do to challenge you? What battleground are they likely to choose?
- How much power do they have (money, influence, numbers)?
- What are their strategies and tactics?
- What are their policies and beliefs? Are there areas where you might agree?
- Who influences them? Who is influenced by them?

Strategies for dealing with allies

The main strategies for dealing with allies are likely to be:

- persuading the ally that your position is right
- persuading the ally that the issue is important enough to warrant action
- building alliances.

The main things you need to find out about your allies are:

- How well do they support your advocacy issue?
- Do they have any misgivings about your advocacy campaign? If so, what are they?
- What do they hope to gain from the advocacy?
- How well resourced are they in terms of the campaign?
- What are they willing to do to support the campaign?
- How involved and informed do they expect to be?
- Do they have issues with any other prospective allies?

The principle of **joint engagement** should come in the strategic planning stages. The potential advantages and problems of working with those identified should be weighed up before any decision is taken. Also, the following should be specifically considered for all potential partners:

- What are the strengths of the respective stakeholders (consider finances, human resources, know-how, technology, links, etc)?
- What are their weaknesses?
- What expectations do they have of working with you?
- What responsibilities would they be willing and able to take on?

Exploring more formal joint working – networks, coalitions and alliances

In addition to finding the right collaborators, consider the best way in which to collaborate. Start by finding out whether there are existing networks and coalitions to work with. There is no point in 'reinventing the wheel' if there are existing networks.

If there are no appropriate coalitions already, then you could consider bringing together a number of allies to work together on an issue. There are a number of ways in which groups can work in partnership, shown below. Choose the most appropriate based on the issue, the allies and the nature of the advocacy campaign.

Three models of joint working

- **Networks**
  Information sharing and support
  Not much joint activity
- **Coalitions**
  Joint working, often single issue or campaign
  Usually limited lifespan
- **Alliances**
  Joint strategies and implementation
  Long-term trust
  Regular consultation

There is more about joint working in Part 5, 'Mobilising support', but any strategy will require effective planning to ensure that it is used to best effect. This includes: deciding on roles and responsibilities, discussing joint planning or joint action, establishing communication channels, and considering capacity.

Tool 12. Managing coalitions

This tool gives advice about working successfully in a coalition with other organisations.

Risk analysis

There are some risks of advocacy work, such as loss of credibility if the positions are not robust, or damage to the organisation's reputation. There are also benefits: positive improvements in policy, increased visibility, and – if the advocacy is successful – increased credibility.

Before you make your final decisions on your strategy, it is important to carry out a full risk analysis of the various options. The main aspects to consider are:

- What are the **risks** of doing this advocacy work? This would include any risk of intimidation to disadvantaged people or individuals involved in the advocacy, and risks to VSO's reputation in that country. What is the level of opposition? Are there ways to minimise negative elements of the advocacy?
- What **assumptions** have been made in putting together the plan? You always make assumptions when you plan projects – the key is to acknowledge them. Assumptions need to be monitored, and any changes managed where necessary.

Tool 10. Risk analysis

This tool provides guidance on how to analyse risks in your advocacy plan.

Strategic choice

Introduction

The next phase of advocacy strategic planning is making key choices. You should now have the information necessary to make the following important decisions:

- the organisational niche
- the strategic aim, objectives, indicators and key 'asks'
- how and when you will achieve your strategy – the action plan
- budget
- monitoring and evaluation plan
- final consultation and dissemination of the strategy.

The organisational niche

Understanding an organisation's niche (comparative advantage compared to other players) will help you choose the advocacy issue and approach in which the organisation will have the best chance of being successful without duplicating the work of other organisations. You'll need to know internal information like organisational strengths and weaknesses, areas of expertise, capacity and resources, plus external information like numbers and effectiveness of organisations conducting advocacy on this subject already; and what your organisation has to offer that others don't.

An important part of the organisational niche is identifying what type of advocacy approach will be most appropriate. This will take into account the principles of the organisation and established ways of working, and the approaches already being undertaken by other organisations. You need to assess what approach will contribute to the advocacy objectives without negatively impacting on the reputation of the organisation.

Aim, objectives, outcomes, indicators, activities and 'asks'

These six words are the bones of your strategy. They form a logical chain from the grand aim to the day-to-day tasks. All analysis feeds into deciding what they are and they are ultimately what you will use to decide whether your advocacy strategy has been successful or not.

The aim, objectives, outcomes, and activities are essentially the different levels of your work. The terms used here are the words that VSO uses and recommends. If you use different words in your organisation (and especially if you receive funding, and have to report to a donor from a different country), try to be flexible. The most important thing is to have a clear understanding of the concepts – what means what, in your organisation at that time.

Overall aim (or long-term aim)

The overall aim is the ultimate, long-term improvement you want to see from your advocacy work. The achievement of an aim is dependent on many factors, of which your organisation's work is only one. The **aim** should be long-term (often two – four years) and general enough to capture the vision of the campaign but focused enough to develop an effective strategy. The aim should:

- be easily understandable and communicated
- inspire people to take action
- help build alliances and coalitions.

Objectives

Objectives describe the intended changes that you want to see in the shorter term (one to three years). An advocacy objective will be to change the policies or positions of government or institutions. The changes are specific, and contribute to meeting the general aim. When you write possible objectives, you are searching for the most effective ways of reaching your aim. There will always be a choice of objectives that need to be evaluated before final decisions on strategy are taken.

The objectives of your advocacy strategy should complement the strategic objectives of your programme work.

Objectives should be clear, concise and measurable. They can be understood as the critical success criteria – what your organisation must get right in order to succeed in its advocacy campaign. It should be possible to measure progress against an advocacy objective.

How many objectives?

Focus is a key determinant of success of an advocacy campaign. You are better off with fewer objectives rather than more. Two or three clear objectives generally suffice.

Tools to clarify your objectives:

Tool 22. Pathways of influence

Tool 36. Approaches to effective policy engagement

A table providing suggested solutions to key obstacles encountered by NGOs in policy.

Are your objectives SMART?

Toolkits about development always suggest that your objectives should be **SMART**:

- **S**pecific – for example, in stating precisely what will be done
- **M**easurable – for example, to allow programme learning and review
- **A**chievable – for example, in relation to your potential capacity and experience
- **R**elevant – for example, for your vision, mission and aim
- **T**ime-bound – for example, in relation to when the work will be done.

In the real world it may be difficult to achieve making your objectives wholly SMART. However, the exercise of trying to make your objectives SMART will always improve them. So the rule is the same as with other development tools – do your best.

A tool to analyse different strategic options:

Tool 17. Six thinking hats

Enables various options to be considered using different approaches, ranging from creative to critical, without causing acrimony and conflict.

Outcomes

Outcomes are the tangible changes that result from a set of activities, and contribute to the achievement of an objective. They may be changes in behaviour of people or organisations/partners.

Example After a year's patient advocacy work in Mongolia we can see that:

- the health ministry is now more likely to consult health workers before changing terms and conditions
- community health volunteers are better organised to give their views
- participation has increased in Community Health Councils.

Indicators

An indicator is a piece of evidence against which you can measure progress. Indicators show how far an objective or outcome has been achieved. They are necessary to achieve programme learning. You should have a variety of indicators that are measuring progress towards your objectives. Indicators are normally quantitative, ie things you can count.

For example, if your objective is to improve a law on access to drugs against tuberculosis, you might have the following indicators:

- Technical Conference held and attended by vice-minister of health
- sample paragraph submitted to the health ministry for their consideration
- three key clauses accepted in new version of the law.

Tool 11. Log frame

This tool provides a project management framework that summarises the different levels of your work, from aim to activities. It is useful both as a communications tool and as a basis for programme learning and review. The log frame is an important and often-used tool.

Activities

Activities are the detail of what needs to be done to achieve a planned outcome. Once you have set your aim, objectives outcomes and indicators you will want to think about timing and who will do what. Common activities include joining networks; forming coalitions; arranging lobby meetings, seminars and conferences; doing policy briefings; research; setting up exposure visits; making targeted use of messages; media work; campaigning events such as supporter actions or demonstrations, etc.

These activities are described in Parts 5, 6 and 7. Some will be more appropriate for your organisation and issue, and others less. Once you have decided on the main activities, you can summarise the main elements of your strategy into an action-planning table like this:

Objectives	Outcomes	Indicators	Activities	Timing	Responsibility	Resources

Making an approximate **budget** will force you to be realistic about what you can attempt. Some advocacy can be carried out without spending much money. Assess how much (if any) funds you have for the advocacy. If you have very little, you will have to rely on volunteer input for many of the tasks, and will probably be more interested in working jointly with other NGOs. If you do have some funding for the work, you will be more able to hold some public events, or print publications, to strengthen your case.

Your activities should be roughly costed and then you can assess if your plans are realistic or not. And you may decide you have to **fundraise** to have the resources you need (see Part 5).

Example A health rights NGO in Peru plans its advocacy strategy:

The advocacy **aim** is to increase the number of health workers in Peru over the next five years.
One objective is for the ministry to double the number of nurses trained each year.
Two **outcomes** are that:

- the finance ministry agrees it is affordable
- the health ministry agrees to double the recruitment.

A few of the specific **activities** are:

- to write and distribute a paper showing how to finance the recruitment
- to form a coalition with other groups who agree with our aims
- to publicise a programme in one province that has successfully increased recruitment and improved services.

The **'asks'** are short messages targeted at key actors, such as the following:
"We call on the Health Ministry to promote the rapid scaling-up of nurse training colleges over the next two years, and specifically to remove the restriction on married women entering the training programme."

"We call on the Finance Ministry to make available the necessary funds in the next budget to renovate the four disused nurse training colleges in Lima."

Key 'asks' – messages

The key 'asks' are simply your demands – the policy change that you want to achieve. They are tailored messages to persuade target audiences through selected channels. Your advocacy 'asks' come from the recommendations from issue research. Ideally you will have three to five key messages that are relevant to all stakeholders. (Other more specific messages can then be decided upon later for each of your key targets.)

Think about your issue from the perspective of your audience. What do they need to hear to make the change you want? Your message is your 'ask', and should be clear, true, and persuasive to the group you are trying to influence.

Final consultation and dissemination of plan

The strategy process provides a path to follow and results in an 'Advocacy Strategy Document' – a paper to be circulated to your colleagues. The document shows your allies what you are hoping to achieve and how. You should share the draft with other staff or stakeholders and get their feedback and comments before you finalise it. You can assess your draft strategy against the checklist below.

One common mistake is to take strategy as 'written in stone'. This is not likely to lead to success. You need to make measured adjustments when the inevitable changes arise. As the environment develops you should make changes to your strategy in order to improve the likelihood of success.

Checklist – assess your advocacy strategy

Ask yourselves the following questions:

- Likelihood of success
  Is the objective achievable? Even with opposition?
  Is there evidence to demonstrate that reaching the objective will result in real improvements?
- Potential impact of success – will it assist many people or just a few?
- Potential for alliances
  Will many people support the advocacy? Do they care deeply enough to take action?
  Do you have the alliances with key organisations needed to achieve your objective?
- Cost/resources needed
  What are the costs of the selected strategy? Will the anticipated benefits justify the resources expended?
  Do you have sufficient resources to allow completion of the strategy (human and financial)?
  Can you fundraise to raise more resources?
  Do you have the skills needed to achieve the objective? Or can these be built?
- Time it will take – realistically
- Does the objective, and the way of working, fit with your organisation's values?
- Impact upon your organisation's reputation
  Will the objective help to achieve positive publicity and profile?
  Will the objective help to build your organisation's credibility?

TIP

Four dos and don'ts for developing an advocacy strategy

- Don't make the process too complicated, with too many people or tools or stages.
- Do hold a workshop, with some participation, but write up the results as soon as you can after the workshop.
- Do write a final document but only summarise the discussions and include the main elements (aim, objective, 'asks' etc). Don't try to include everything in the document, otherwise it will be far too long and no-one will read it.

Part five: Mobilising support for advocacy

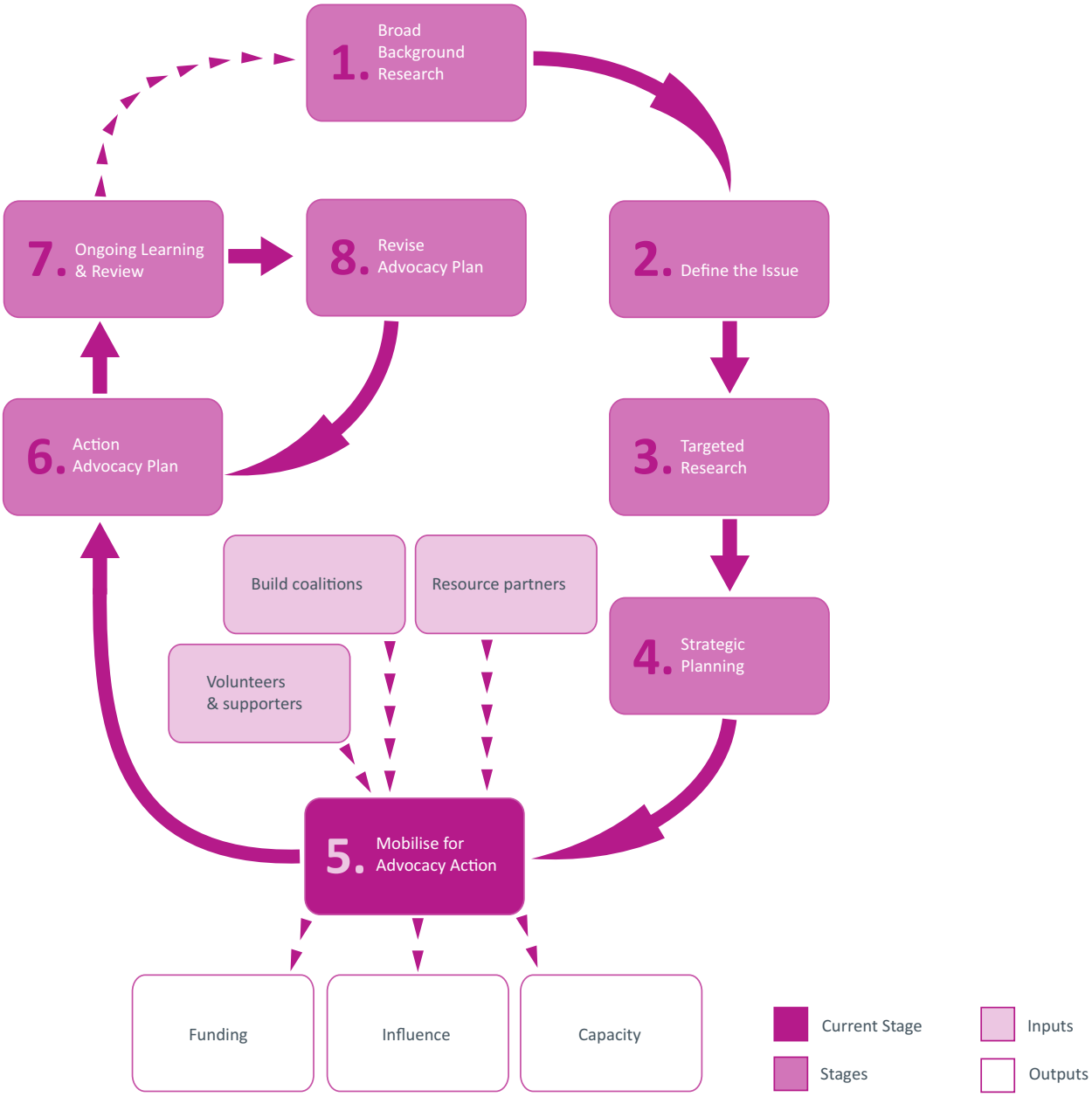
"Change happens on the inside first. Then you realise you're not the only one who needs it. Then you DO SOMETHING. Then it becomes 'social change'."

Kimberly Bock, a social activist and blogger

This section looks at various ways you can mobilise resources and support in order to influence policy.

Contents

Mobilisation



Mobilisation – top tips

- Make your advocacy work participatory, and involve the disadvantaged.
- There are both advantages and disadvantages to working in a coalition. So only take this decision after careful analysis.
- If you form a coalition, create a small steering group of leaders to run it, ensuring that those chosen are deeply committed to the issue and the coalition itself.
- Set up a coalition effectively from the very beginning – read the advice before establishing a new coalition.
- Take time to develop your supporters – educate them about your advocacy work and build them up to give their maximum contribution.
- Use the media creatively – build relationships with the media until they recognise you as an important provider of news and analysis.

Empowerment

Empowering advocacy

Advocacy can empower people to stand up and speak out for themselves. An approach that empowers disadvantaged people makes your advocacy more powerful and, ultimately, more sustainable.

Participatory advocacy should not only work with the disadvantaged to address advocacy issues. It should also seek to make the structures and systems of decision-making more inclusive.

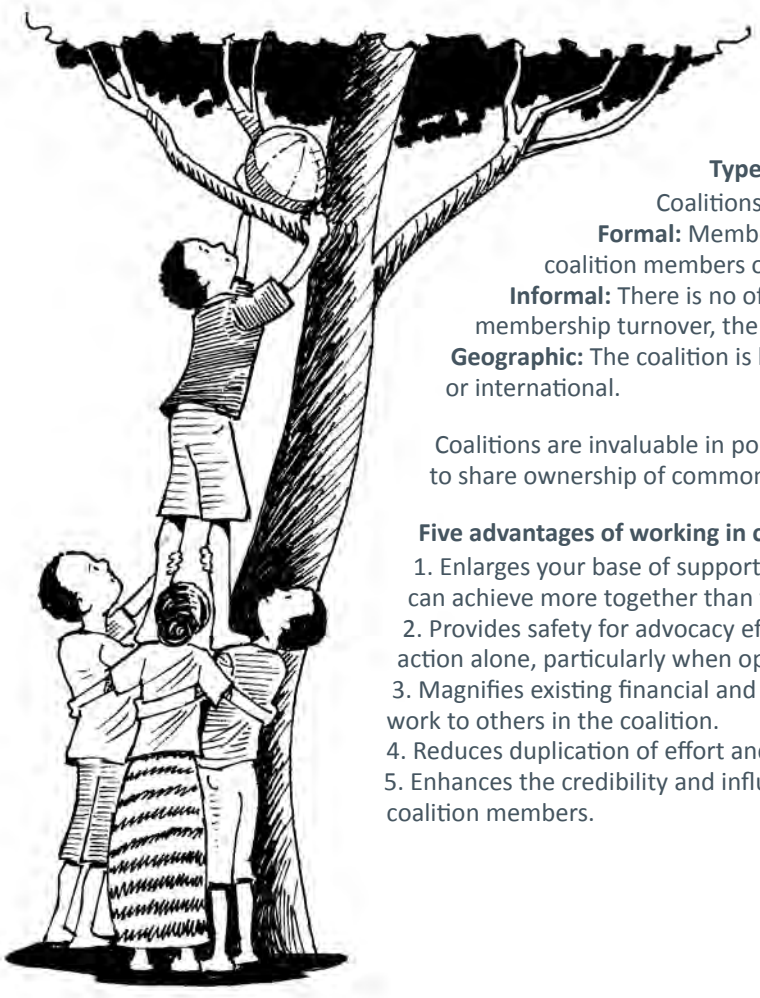
This requires working with communities to encourage them to think differently about their power relationships, helping them to build courage to challenge injustice. Advocacy can strengthen the disadvantaged through promoting social organisation, forming new leaders and building capacity. As an international NGO, VSO can also strengthen networks on the national and international level, building a collective voice.

Networks and coalitions

Joint working

Working with other organisations that have the same aim can frequently accomplish goals you could not accomplish alone. We find it useful to distinguish three main models of joint working:

- **networks**: primarily for information sharing
- **coalitions**: usually formed for a single issue or campaign
- **alliances**: longer-term strategic partnerships.



In this toolkit, we will use the term 'coalition' as the primary model of joint working for an advocacy campaign. Coalition members contribute resources, expertise and connections to an advocacy effort, and bring greater political and popular support.

Types of coalition

Coalitions can come in different shapes and sizes including:

Formal: Members formally join the coalition, pay dues, and are identified as coalition members on letterhead, coalition statements, etc.

Informal: There is no official membership, so members are constantly changing. With membership turnover, the issues and tactics of the coalition may also shift.

Geographic: The coalition is based on a geographical area. It can be local, national, regional or international.

Coalitions are invaluable in policy advocacy because they create structures for organisations to share ownership of common goals.

Five advantages of working in coalitions

1. Enlarges your base of support, networks and connections; gives strength in numbers – you can achieve more together than you can alone.
2. Provides safety for advocacy efforts and protection for members who may not be able to take action alone, particularly when operating in a hostile or difficult environment.
3. Magnifies existing financial and human resources by pooling them together and by delegating work to others in the coalition.
4. Reduces duplication of effort and resources.
5. Enhances the credibility and influence of an advocacy campaign, as well as that of individual coalition members.

Five disadvantages of working in coalitions

1. Can be difficult to agree common objectives.
2. Managing a coalition can be time-consuming and bureaucratic. Shared decision-making can be slow.
3. May be dominated by one powerful organisation. Or larger or richer organisations can have more say in decisions.
4. May require you to compromise your position on issues or tactics.
5. You usually get less credit for your agency's work. Often the coalition as a whole gets recognition rather than individual members.

All these problems can be overcome and are not reasons to avoid coalitions – they are just things to be wary of.

See the CD-ROM for some more advantages and disadvantages.

Forming a coalition

If there is already an appropriate coalition, then you should join this and explore ways in which your organisation can add value to the work of current members. But if there is no existing coalition, then you could bring together a number of key allies to propose a new coalition covering the issue.

The main elements needed in the formation of a coalition are:

- a clear mission and purpose
- the involvement of committed individuals and organisations that share this mission
- realistic objectives and tasks
- agreed participatory management, or decision-making structure – a **joint steering group** may be useful from an early stage.

Mission and purpose

The first meeting should work towards achieving a common understanding of mission and purpose. This must be clearly stated, so that organisations that join will comprehend the nature of their commitment. Coalition members should also acknowledge any differing self-interest, so as to recognise differences but promote trust and respect among the members. A name will also have to be agreed, and a common 'ask' which each member agrees to respect.

Member skills and resources inventory

The steering group should ensure that the strengths of each partner in the coalition are used. Ask each potential member to assess their skills, resources and contacts to determine what they would be willing to contribute to the coalition.

The strategy should allow each group to contribute its unique approach, with different groups taking different angles and approaches. But it is important that groups work together on agreed priorities, rather than all functioning independently. Also, core messages – including the 'ask' – must remain consistent.

What does your organisation bring?

Establish roles and responsibilities

Coalition tasks and responsibilities should be clearly defined and assignments equitably distributed on the basis of the members' areas of expertise. At the heart of every successful coalition, there should be a small group of leaders who are deeply committed to both the issue, and to ensuring that the goals of the coalition take precedence over the narrow interest of individual member organisations. Regular meetings should allow members opportunities to report on their progress.

Decision-making and communication channels

The coalition's structure and decision-making processes should also be agreed, since issues like the level of contributions, involvement in decision-making and leadership can sometimes cause dissent. More democratic methods, such as rotating leadership, can help, although they may slow down decision-making and management.

Establish regular communication. Make sure that all coalition members are updated regularly on what other members are doing, what needs to be done, and what progress has been made.

If the coalition is well organised early on, unnecessary problems can be avoided. Everyone involved must understand and sign up to the coalition's mission, structure, operating procedures, and tasks – as a bare minimum. A coalition's power lies in its ability to present a united front.

Managing a coalition

Tool 12. Managing coalitions

This tool provides advice on managing coalitions.

Advocacy requires hard work and a long-term commitment. It is easy for people's enthusiasm to wane. The synergy that comes from people working together productively on an important issue can sustain efforts, even through difficult times. Coalitions exist to enable their members to cooperate and work together. They take energy to develop and maintain because they involve building trust. Many advocates find this aspect of their work to be both the most challenging and the most rewarding.

See the CD for tips on how coalition leadership can be shared and suggestions for the key roles of the coalition leadership.

Fundraising

Fundraising for advocacy

The most important resource needed for most advocacy is time, not money. Even with no funds, if you have staff time, or volunteer time, then your agency will be able to write letters to decision-makers, meet officials, attend coalition meetings and raise your issues in a number of ways with the people who have power.

However, the availability of some funds will make your advocacy much easier. You will be able to carry out more serious research, and produce communications materials of a higher quality.

If you need to raise funds externally then the fundraising aspect should be included in your strategic planning. The availability of funding may even affect your choice of issue and the approach adopted. For example, advocacy based on mass communication (billboards, newspaper adverts, posters, etc) would be very expensive.

Fundraising methods

Any NGO or organisation will have procedures for raising funds. When considering possible funding sources for your advocacy, you should first of all talk to other colleagues or senior staff to find out the previous history of your group and what fundraising has been done before.

The 'Three Pillars model' (see CD) shows there are three broad possible ways of raising funds:

- participatory fundraising (eg a collection after church)
- mass fundraising (eg a mailshot appeal to a large number of individuals)
- institutional fundraising (grant applications to trusts or foundations).

Of these the one most commonly used by community-based organisations is participatory fundraising. The one most commonly used by NGOs is fundraising applications to donor agencies and trusts.

The following advice should be helpful for anyone who sees the need for fundraising:

Work closely with fundraising staff
In most NGOs or even community-based organisations there is a member of staff or a member of the group responsible for raising funds. You should always work through the existing channels, which provide coordination.

Identify local opportunities
A local shop or firm may provide sponsorship for an event. The local council may provide some funding for an activity. It is sometimes easier to get funds in your local vicinity.

Provide the right information, on time
For institutional fundraising, your group will have to fill in an application. You will have to provide the fundraisers with the information they need. If they need a two-page summary, don't send five. Donors usually have their own formats and their own deadlines. Don't miss deadlines!

Provide a clear description of your aims
You may be able to send a proposal for advocacy funding to a variety of trusts and foundations, or also to an embassy, government departments, companies or other institutions. The first step is to write a short clear summary of the advocacy work, to capture the main points and enable fundraisers to identify the right donors to approach.

Also include a summary of the advocacy work itself and a budget clearly showing the costs involved and timelines. This is sometimes called a 'concept note'.

Don't be an 'add-on'
A common mistake in many development agencies is that the main service delivery or development projects are designed, and fundraising staff raise funds for these. Then later someone suggests an advocacy element. Because the two elements are not united, it is difficult to raise funds for the new element. A better model is that an advocacy component is embedded in any development project, so the budget is united and one fundraising proposal covers both advocacy and non-advocacy elements of a united project.

For VSO staff and volunteers – the approach is as described above. The same fundraising approaches and procedures should be used for advocacy projects as for other development projects. An advocacy element should be incorporated in the annual programme area plan budget. Advocacy activities should be costed and shown.

As soon as you are clear what advocacy activities you want to engage in and how much they will cost, you should inform your programme manager who will liaise with the regional programme development and funding adviser (RPDFA) so that they can help guide you to appropriate funding sources and communicate to the rest of the organisation.

There is more advice on fundraising and a sample concept note on the CD-ROM.

Part six: Action

Implementation

Planning the advocacy

Managing advocacy effectively

Lobbying

What is lobbying?

Ways of lobbying

Building policy influence

Gathering support and neutralising opposition

The lobbyist

Campaigning

What is campaigning?

Campaign strategy

Devising your preferred tactics

Campaign materials

Communication and negotiation

Effective communication

Communication skills

Face-to-face communications

The art of negotiation

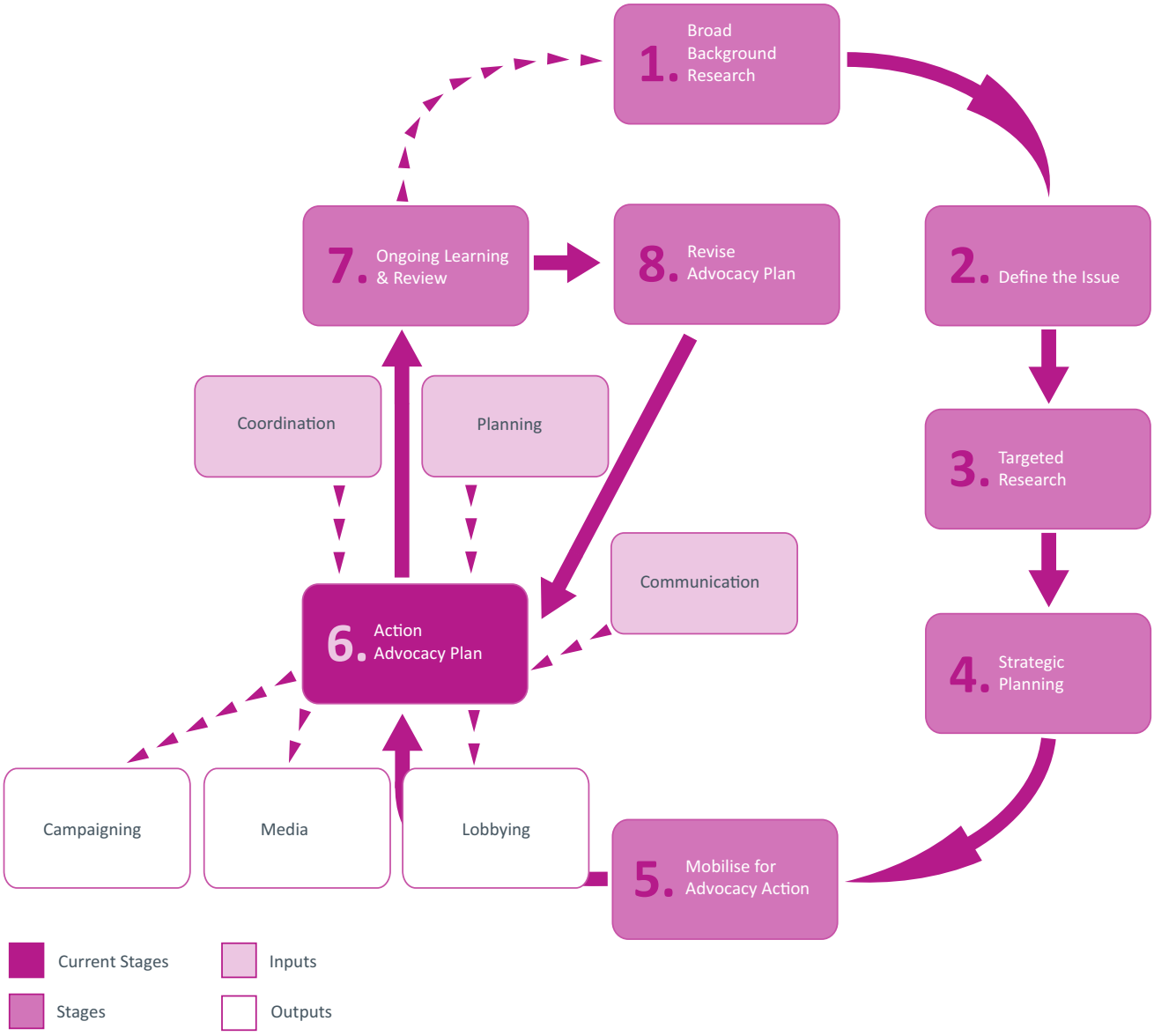
Use of the media

Media strategy and planning

Obtaining coverage

New media and internet mobilisation

Action



Action top tips

- Make an action plan that shows the activities, with timings, responsibility, budgets and resources needed.
- Decide whether you will be lobbying, campaigning or using a mix of both approaches.
- Decide on the most effective ways of lobbying, given your country and issue.
- Identify your targets and the most effective ways of influencing them.
- Include campaigning if you need to demonstrate public support for your advocacy issue.
- Use a range of tactics and actions to keep your campaign interesting.
- Use a range of targeted campaign materials to support your campaign.
- Develop a communications plan, including a clear 'ask'.
- If yours is a large, ambitious project, consider carrying out a smaller-scale version – a 'pilot project' – in order to test the project and methodology.
- Consider the potential risk of an approach as well as the benefit, and if possible take measures to ameliorate any risk.

"Vision without action is daydream. Action without vision is nightmare."

Japanese proverb

Implementation

Planning the advocacy

Every plan will be different, but most contain a combination of various elements of advocacy:

- **research to provide evidence** – which was covered in Part 3
- **lobbying** – face-to-face meetings with decision-makers
- **campaigning** – activism by supporters and the public
- **media** work or communications work.

You do not have to include all these elements – it is up to you and your situation in-country. In some countries, NGOs need to be very cautious, so your advocacy will more likely be high-level lobbying and discreet influencing. In others civil society is very active and publicity-conscious, so your advocacy will more likely include public campaigning as well.

Different elements can be brought together in your advocacy action plan. It is important that the elements complement each other. For example, a campaign event could be developed just before an important policy meeting, in order to provide a backdrop of publicity and lend weight to lobbying efforts. Different teams working on the issue should meet regularly and work to support each other towards a common goal.

Hard or soft campaigns?

One important consideration is whether to make the campaign hard-hitting or soft and appealing. The choice will depend on both the type of your organisation and the campaign aims and targets. Sometimes the urgency of the issue and the ghastliness of it demand a hard-hitting approach.

However, in some countries, a hard-hitting approach would be counterproductive. Going public with your advocacy may be perceived as being too critical or confrontational. Quiet and constructive advocacy can sometimes be the most effective.

Another way of describing this decision is 'insider advocacy or outsider advocacy'. Insider advocacy implies, for example, you are inside the ministry, with the decision-makers, sitting at the table. It often means you have technical expertise and ministry officials respect your experience. Your quiet lobbying is designed to achieve incremental changes.

Outsider advocacy implies you are outside the decision-making institutions, 'in the street'. Your influence will come from your weight of numbers. You are likely to have short simple messages. Your campaigning needs to be noisy to attract attention. You need if possible to attract the attention of the media, because decision-makers pay attention to public opinion.

In the real world, you may combine elements of both approaches.

Example You don't always need to go public

In one country, VSO wanted to support a campaign on the rights of ethnic minorities, run by a coalition of civil society groups. But after a risk analysis, staff decided that it would be tactful to keep a low profile. The government could easily block VSO's core purpose (providing volunteers for the education ministry) by denying work permits. Therefore VSO provided a volunteer to the coalition to teach communications skills, and also lent a venue for a key strategic planning workshop. But VSO has not publicly supported the campaign, and neither staff nor volunteers attend public meetings or sign communiqués in the press. The Country Director believes this is a 'happy medium', whereby VSO supports the campaign but does not put at risk the key purpose.

Managing advocacy effectively

Implementing an advocacy project is the same as implementing any other project – you need good management to be aware of deadlines, budgets, stress-points and so on. There is a lot of material on management on the CD. The following tools are useful for managing your advocacy efficiently:

Tool 11. Log frame
Project management framework

Tool 24. Critical path analysis and programme evaluation and review technique (PERT)
Help you to schedule and manage complex projects

Tool 10. Risk analysis
Provides a risk analysis framework

Lobbying

What is lobbying?

Lobbying means trying to influence decision-makers on a particular issue. This means engaging with your target, eg the mayor, a legislator or a company chief – in a way that will bring about policy change. Your lobbying strategy should be backed by thorough research – you can only influence successfully if you understand the people involved and their motivations. You need to be clear who you are targeting, and how you will reach them.

Effective communication is the essence of successful lobbying. Lobbying needs to be carried out by people who know their subject. To lobby well you need to be an expert in your field, or at least be confident you know your facts.

Lobbying is a vital part of the move towards social change. It can bring improved legislation, and more effective enforcement. Unlike campaigning, which aims to reach large numbers of activists or the general public, lobbying is an activity to reach a small number of key decision-makers on a specific issue.

Tip
It can make your case more difficult if you target policy-makers with more than one 'ask' at any time.

Ways of lobbying

There are various ways of lobbying: trying to influence policy-makers from the inside (working together with them on your issue), conferences, public meetings, lobbying in face-to-face meetings, and written or telephone communications.

Working with policy-makers ('insider advocacy')

It is possible to exert considerable policy influence if you are able to work inside the system. You can develop this relationship through service delivery work on the issue, or through involvement in advisory forums (eg government committees or working groups). As your organisation develops its expertise, you will begin to be recognised and accepted as experts, and as a resource by policy-makers. Working 'on the inside' enables you to get to know policy-makers, and thus to influence them more effectively.

Example Working with the ministry in Tajikistan

A VSO social work volunteer was invited to join a national-level committee led by the Ministry of Social Welfare. The committee includes ministry officials, European Comission experts and other specialists in developing social work standards in Tajikistan. The volunteer has presented reports and recommendations based on her experiences and these are influencing the development of national policy.

However, insider advocacy is not without possible drawbacks. These include:

- **tokenism** – representation is sometimes given to provide a veneer of democracy, but your opinions are not taken on board. If this happens, some advocates decide to withdraw from their insider position, rather than being used as an excuse for inaction and maintenance of the status quo.
- **conflict of interests** – fear of losing your insider position could prevent you from being a powerful advocate for your cause
- **co-option** – there is a danger of becoming co-opted (peer pressure brings you to become 'one of them').

You need to choose the right representative for any dealings with policy-makers, but this is particularly true of insider lobbying: your representative should be a recognised expert, but also have a strong personality, and commitment to your issue.

Example Achieving access to teaching jobs in India

VSO partners use advocacy as a core part of many programmes. The government has passed progressive legislation in favour of marginalized people, but often it is not put into practice. For example at least 3% of teaching jobs should be reserved for qualified people with disabilities. VSO partners saw that visually impaired (VI) candidates could not compete equally because their disability was not taken into account. After a series of meetings with senior officials, now VI candidates are provided with a 'scribe' to write for them. And they are given slightly longer to complete the exam. This has resulted in high quality employment for blind and partially sighted people.

Consultations

In many countries there are now many NGOs or interest groups who have an opinion on a policy issue. The government may launch a 'consultation' to gather opinions and views on a topic. Try to be present at these consultations or feed in your views by sending a short, well-written document. An important advocacy skill you should develop is the ability to analyse and comment on strategies, policies and legislation. This is helped by relevant policy knowledge, and knowing your issue thoroughly from a practical perspective (so you understand the impact of the provisions on the ground).

Working in networks or coalitions, you may get the chance to feed the views of a number of agencies to the 'target'. It is advantageous if your agency is chosen to represent a coalition because you get to meet the decision-makers face-to-face.

VSO working at different levels

VSO is often in a strong position to take an active part in consultations, because we have volunteers working on an issue at different levels. This 'multi-layered approach' gives VSO legitimacy to make recommendations on policy. For example, in The Gambia's education programme VSO has volunteers at community school level, in district ministry offices, in the central ministry HQ, and with civil society groups active in education work. Therefore VSO can influence education policy with high credibility because we know the situation at community, secondary and tertiary levels.

Programme managers in all VSO countries can increase their lobbying access by deliberately building a multi-layered programme portfolio.

Written and verbal representations

You can lobby using written representations, but if possible these should lead up to face-to-face meetings. You can present your views to decision-makers by using:

- reports or position papers
- meetings with decision-makers
- detailed follow-up letters
- follow-up telephone calls.

In this scenario, you have prepared a report which you send the decision-maker to get their attention – then ask for a meeting to discuss the report. Try to get to the target to agree to some of the recommendations. After the meeting you will want to put in writing what was agreed, and, if necessary, follow up to ensure there is some movement towards implementation.

Example Remind and remind again

The UK Member of Parliament Angus MacNeil volunteered in Cambodia with education civil society network NEP. His job was to raise the profile of the 'Valuing Teachers' report, which calls on the Cambodian government to improve terms and conditions for teachers.

"The state salary being paid to teachers in Cambodia isn't enough – as a result, many teachers have second jobs or have to be 'creative' in the way they raise the balance of their salaries. NEP arranged for me to visit schools and meet with teachers, unions and teacher trainers. That meant I knew what I was talking about when we met the education minister. We put the points to him of the need for an increase in teachers' salaries. He had read the 'Valuing Teachers' report and said he would try to make improvements. To make sure his promises come about, I'm following up with him with a letter, and I'll send another in six months."

Face-to-face meetings

Face-to-face meetings play an important role in lobbying. These may take a long time to arrange – be persistent. Once you have a meeting with a decision-maker prepare well. It is usually good to go with one or two colleagues, and each of you should have a role. For example, one may do introductions, another describe the research, another give personal testimony.

It will probably be a short meeting. Try to make a timetable and stick to it. Have a small number of points you want to make and make sure you say them. Don't get diverted.

Making presentations on your issue can help to influence various policy audiences. This may be with photos, or a poster, but nowadays is more likely with a computer. Therefore in your group you need someone who can speak eloquently, and someone who can make a short presentation on the computer. (PowerPoint is the best tool.) This will depend on the meeting – be sure beforehand what is expected, how formal it will be, how long, and who will be there.

Example

The Karonga District Education Network (DEN), a VSO partner in Malawi, investigated a shortage of textbooks in its district. They discovered that some schools had a surplus and others had none. They met with the District Education Manager, who explained that because of a lack of transport he had poor access to information about the numbers of pupils in each district. DEN stated politely that this was not good enough, then offered to help by collecting the numbers. With this information, the correct number of books was soon distributed.

The District Education Department appreciated DEN's concern and support. The positive outcome has encouraged them to continue monitoring and demanding services from the government. Now a proper system has been put in place so that every term the Education Department collects the pupil figures from the headteachers.

National conferences and public meetings

You can lobby on your issue at any relevant conferences, seminars or workshops. This has the big advantage that key policy thinkers on your issue will come and be present in the same place, discussing the issues. Three ways to go about this are:

- You can organise a conference yourself on your issue. The advantage is that you control the agenda, but it is usually a costly and time-consuming job. It is expensive to hire a venue for a day or two and difficult to ensure key decision-makers will come.
- You can attend conferences organised by others on a subject close to your interest. Sometimes you will have to 're-frame' your issue in terms of the broader policy issues under discussion at some of these forums. Re-framing simply means presenting your issue in a way that makes it relevant to the interests of that particular audience.
- You could also arrange for a coalition of partners to organise a conference to explore your issue. This way you share the workload and cost, but still have a good input into setting the agenda.

Example Rwanda National Conference on Volunteering[4]

In August 2009 VSO helped organise a key conference to promote the establishment of a legal framework to support volunteering in Rwanda. The event gained significant media coverage and has successfully moved forward the volunteering 'agenda'. Some of the aspects that helped the success of the conference were:

- One of the featured speakers was very close to government thinking. This gave the event prestige and encouraged other people to come.
- Speakers from Kenya and Burkina Faso, along with the VSO chief executive, shared their experiences, so the event was interesting and brought new ideas to the debate.
- There was a mixture of approaches: presentations from speakers in the morning, and small group discussions in the afternoon. So everyone had the chance to participate.
- It was a lot of work to organise, but the costs and workload were shared with other allies such as UNV and national volunteering organisations.

4. There are many case studies of successful advocacy on the CD-ROM

International conferences: abstracts and calendars

If you can arrange it, attend global conferences where key practitioners and policy-makers get together. An example is the international HIV/AIDS conference, held every two years and attended by up to 20,000 politicians, practitioners and activists. VSO staff and partners from England, the Netherlands, China and seven other countries all attended the 2008 conference in Mexico and presented in different sessions. At such events it is important to collaborate beforehand to agree on key messages and a common approach. For most VSO partners, to attend an international conference you would probably want to be sponsored – ie speak at the conference and have your costs covered. To do this you should do two things:

- Make a calendar of key events coming up over the year or next two years. Big conferences take a long time to organise and you have to apply well in advance if you want a space.
- Look out for 'calls for abstracts'. This is where the organisers ask for short written submissions. They use these abstracts to decide if your work is interesting enough to invite you to attend. If your abstract is accepted then you will be able to present to one of the sessions. Make sure you submit your abstract exactly in the way requested. The length, the font size, the subject matter must be exactly as they request, otherwise your work will not be considered.

Of course to be able to write a good abstract you will need to have good programme work 'on the ground', ie good experience to share, or good research. In your organisation or group you will need to develop the habit of assessing your work, and learning from your experiences, so that you can share your new learning.

Demonstrating the problem or possible solutions

Apart from conferences, there are other ways to share your issues with policy-makers. You can take them – or their advisers – to see the problem at first hand, meeting with those directly affected. Alternatively, you can record the evidence (video, photographs, reports, case studies, etc) in order to demonstrate the human impact of the problem.

Legal challenges

Some NGOs use the law to further their cause, for example:

- testing dubious provisions
- pressing breaches
- enforcement complaints.

This can be done through a variety of means, including: judicial review, using the ombudsman, advertising standards, the courts, enforcement authorities, etc. To engage in any legal advocacy you need to have staff members (or experts) who know what they are doing. If you plan carefully you may find that VSO can recruit a volunteer with legal experience to assist you.

Example Anti-discrimination legislation in Peru

Since the time of colonisation, indigenous peoples in Peru have been subjected to injustice and discrimination.

APRODEH (Pro Human Rights Association) is a Peruvian NGO dedicated to setting to rights these wrongs. They requested two CUSO-VSO volunteers with experience in human rights research, with particular interest in issues of race.

With the help of the volunteers, APRODEH researched the causes of discrimination. They were then able to develop practical actions, such as anti-discrimination training for the authorities and the police, and high-profile community-based events to raise awareness such as a cooking competition with human rights themes, and a street carpet festival (a traditional cultural activity). This helped to raise APRODEH's credibility as well as public awareness, and pave the way for the most important result of all: the passing of local anti-discrimination legislation.

APRODEH designed a draft law that could be passed by the Apurimac regional government. This was then discussed and amended in many forums and gradually won support from key decision-makers. The legislation has now been passed, and makes discrimination on the basis of ethnicity illegal.

The legislation was so successful that similar measures have now been adopted by other Andean provinces. By 2009, 38 Municipalities or Regional Governments had approved similar legislations.

Building policy influence

By using a combination of the methods shown you will be able to build policy influence. You need influence in order to build political will in favour of policy change. But, whilst evidence is important to establish your credibility there is more to influence than evidence. You need to establish what is important to the battle for influence in your country. Then you can use your resources in your country to achieve the maximum influence. There has been some interesting research in this field that may help you in this task.

The Top **'Ways in Which Organisations Seek to Influence Policy':**

- networking with other organisations
- providing training to key people
- commenting on draft policy documents
- organising policy seminars
- publications on policy issues
- providing services and sharing good practice
- articles in the media
- pilots of alternative policy approaches
- insider lobbying
- websites
- newsletter to policy-makers
- work on projects commissioned by policy-makers.

For more on this see Kornsweig 2006, at www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/160.pdf

Gathering support and neutralising opposition

Two tried and tested ways of gaining policy influence are to:

- build up your support base – gather allies
- neutralise your opposition – weaken your opposition (strategically or tactically).

Use Tool 9 – Force field analysis, to draw visually the strengths of the actors who support change and those who resist change.

Build up your support base

Formal linkages with other organisations (networks and alliances) can strengthen the 'force' on your side of the argument. But there are other ways to show the size of your support base:

- obtain messages of support from influential individuals
- persuade other organisations to take your issue on board (even if this is not their primary issue, and they are not interested in joint advocacy)
- persuade donors to raise your issue in negotiations with the decision-makers.

It is often easier to obtain this sort of support if your issue is high-profile and popular. Media coverage can raise its profile, and thus its support base. Celebrities and high-profile individuals might be keen to be associated with the 'issues of the day', as this will help their popularity.

Weaken your opposition

To partly neutralise your opponents, you need to know them well – their motivations, weaknesses and limitations. You can neutralise by:

- exposing falsehoods (destroying arguments)
- refuting their points (answering arguments).

Both of these can be done verbally or practically (eg by using pilot studies). You can also make the opposition a target of your advocacy, trying to convert them to your solutions.

Arguments

A range of arguments can be used in support of different issues, eg:

- altruistic: for the sake of those affected
- moral/ethical: it is morally right
- international acceptance: particularly useful when there are international standards
- democracy: the 'people want it'
- social/humanistic: failure to act could have an adverse impact upon society, sectors of society, or the country's individuals
- public health: protecting public or animal health
- ownership/responsibility: encouraging responsibility
- economic: economic costs of inaction.

NB: Although the higher arguments hold more moral force, the lower arguments often hold more sway, as they directly affect vested interests.

Exploiting weakness/roles

When you research your targets and opposition you may come across weaknesses that can be exploited in order to gain influence. These might include:

- elected politicians – ego and vanity (use their desire for profile, publicity)
- politicians' aides – influence (use their skill at politics and influencing)
- bureaucrats – lethargy (use their desire to find ways to save effort)
- opposition – the 'ethical watchdog' (use their role of watching and exposing government).

Of course, these are simple generalisations. It is preferable to know individuals, rather than making broad assumptions.

As far as political influence is concerned, remember that election time is 'crazy season'! Prospective politicians will agree to much more if they feel it will be beneficial to their election campaign. But consider very carefully before you make deals with politicians. You need to be committed to your cause for the long term, and with credibility. Make sure that any short-term deals do not bring risks to your work.

Countering prejudices

You will come across various prejudices as you try to influence others on your issue. These may include the following:

- your issue seen as marginal
- your issue is low-priority (to be tackled 'later')
- your issue is seen as a luxury consideration.

Possible ways to overcome these prejudices are:

- opinion surveys to demonstrate popular support
- show that the situation can improve without substantial cost
- show the potential costs of inactivity
- refer to neighbouring countries where the issue has been addressed – use national pride ("Our country is lagging behind").

Example

Rwanda now has the largest number of women members of parliament in the world. NGOs campaigning for gender equality elsewhere in Africa can point to Rwanda now and say "we should be doing that".

The lobbyist

The lobbyist needs to:

- know their issue well
- know the political context (structures, processes and systems)
- have good interpersonal and communication skills.

A lobbyist should also have the right attitude:

- unswerving belief in the cause
- loyalty to their organisation or coalition
- optimism and perseverance
- always be a tough opponent – you will not be respected for giving in too readily!
- persuasive, not argumentative
- understand opponents' views, but don't be won over!
- never concede anything too early in negotiations.

Lobbying is a combination of psychology and legal/political knowledge. You need to know the legislation and the policy context. But equally important is to know the people involved – both their positions and power bases, and their personal attributes.

Tool 13. Top tips for lobbying

This tool contains advice on effective lobbying.

Timing and focus

Timing is a vital element of lobbying strategy. Key questions include:

- What is the timing for the legislative process?
- Committee dates?
- Meetings when decisions are taken?
- Elections might mess up the schedule, or be an opportunity?
- Government sittings?
- Recesses and holidays?

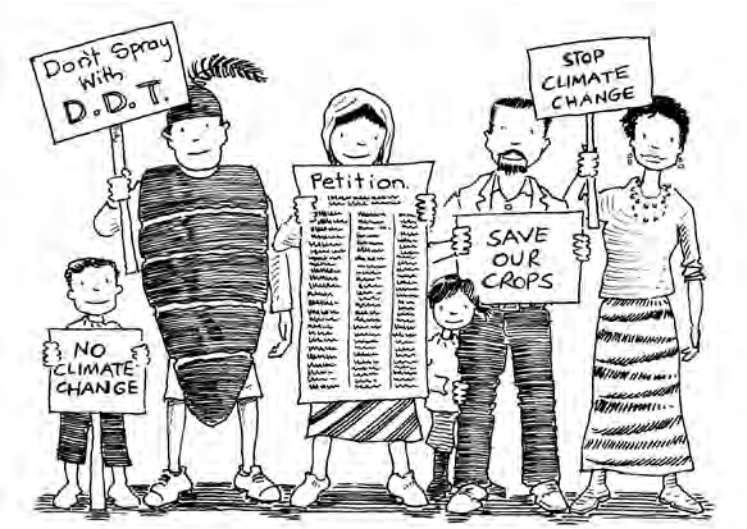
You also need to focus for maximum impact. This means having just one agreed priority at any time (which should take most of your time and effort).

Lobbying errors

Some corporate lobbyists have given lobbying a bad reputation.

They take any opportunity to speak to the media, and get 'profile' even if they don't know the real facts. They like to spend time with major 'figureheads', and like to wine and dine. But often they do not know the policy issue in any depth.

We believe that effective lobbying for NGOs is not about status and influence: it is about changing the 'hearts and minds' of government and legislators – using information, communication, public pressure and engagement, to benefit the poor and the disadvantaged.



Campaigning

What is campaigning?

Campaigning is mobilising public concern in order to achieve a social, political or commercial aim. It is a series of activities designed to influence the policies and practices of public or private bodies (eg governments, institutions, companies).

Campaigning helps demonstrate that members of the public, voters and consumers are concerned about the issue. A successful campaign is one that demonstrates the concern of large numbers of the public. This public opposition could damage the government's reputation (and thus its chances of re-election) or the company's market share (and thus its share price).

Campaigning both educates the public about your issue and motivates them to act in support of change. Once you achieve critical mass in support of your issue, then you have the chance of lasting change.

Example Rwanda campaign success.

In Rwanda, the VSO-led Global Campaign for Education (GCE) had a massive success with its campaign on the poor living and working conditions for teachers. This resulted in the Rwandan Ministry of Education announcing that it would be almost **doubling secondary school teachers' salaries**.

Central to GCE's success were:

- joining forces with DFID (Department for International Development) Rwanda to lobby together on common concerns
- using an unprecedented bout of campaigning to raise awareness and put pressure on the government.

Campaign events focused on why teachers are so vital to communities and development. They included a 'Celebration of Teachers' held in Rwanda's National Stadium. A march of a thousand people behind a 'Universal Education Bus' led up to this. The bus was decorated with pictures of the many children who struggled to get 'on the bus', as a way of representing the children who were not able to go to school. A marching band and traditional dancers stopped traffic throughout Kigali. The celebration went on to illustrate the challenges facing teachers in Rwanda, to politicians and education officials who were then asked to sign pledges of commitment to Education for All, and support for teachers.

From these events, materials were produced and displayed at a 'Big Hearing' in Kigali, during the GCE Action Week. One of these pieces of evidence was a short documentary about the conditions suffered by teachers in Rwanda.

VSO AND CAMPAIGNING

Few VSO programme offices directly carry out public campaigning to a large extent, partly because most programme managers do not have the time or budget to run a campaign. Instead, VSO is normally in a support role to other civil society groups in the country. Usually it is national civil society groups that run a public campaign.

In some cases, VSO POs will be part of a coalition that runs public campaigns, such as the UN Millennium Campaign.

In the North, VSO does often run public campaigns, on issues such as access to HIV drugs, 'Women Matter' or climate change.

Education alone is not enough

'Raising awareness of an issue' is not the same as advocacy to change things. For example, 'raising awareness' of the HIV virus does not necessarily make people change their behaviour.

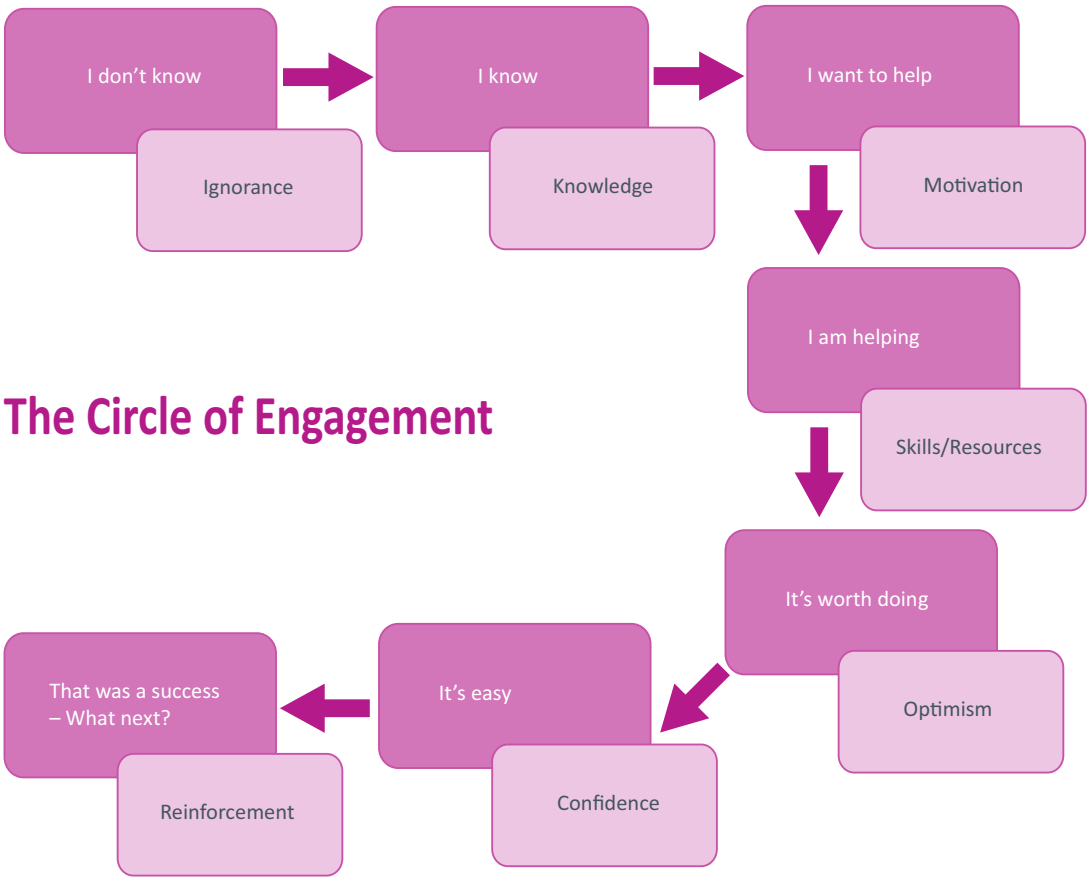
Campaigning is a motivational exercise. It narrows the focus of attention in order to get people to do something that will lead to change. **Awareness** of the issue is just the first step. Many people are already aware, but simply do not think the issue important enough to act on it. To make a difference to people's lives, you have to create a sense of urgency and need for change, and to help them to visualise a new future and empower them to play a part in the movement for change.

Once you have a level of awareness you need to **motivate people to act** on your issue. The public are beset with concerns and issues, so you need to make them feel that your issue is both important **to them** and urgent. Then give them **tangible actions** that demonstrate their concern.

You may need to provide skills and resources that people will need in order to act on your issue. For example, you could provide training for activists, effective background notes, briefing before any meeting, specimen letters that they can adapt, a petition that they need to sign, or a list of activities that they can carry out.

Then you build their **confidence** by sharing and celebrating successes, showing progress, saying 'thank you' and explaining the value of their contribution. Supporters need to know that it is possible to succeed.

This is shown diagrammatically below, in the 'seven-stage model for engagement':



Campaign strategy

It is vital for a campaign to have both a final aim and interim steps along the way – both to build towards the final aim and to provide motivational 'high points' to maintain interest.

Successful campaigns include both a strategically planned path and the ability to take advantage of key opportunities along the way. There is sometimes a tension between planning and opportunity taking. There are two main ways of helping the process:

- When charting the campaign, ensure that time and resources are allocated for meeting unexpected opportunities along the way.
- Always have the 'big picture' in mind, and judge any emerging opportunities against this.

You can campaign through either:

- your members and supporters – they know you and your issue
- the general public – you have to reach them and tell them about your issue.

In either case you will want to show decision-makers that your issue has public support:

- If your members are close to your target, you can ask them to meet with them to make their views known or attend public meetings or events.
- If they are distant from the target, you may ask them to write letters or send petitions.

To mobilise the general public you will probably have to use the media. It can help to sign up celebrities or other advocates to act as 'role models' or influencers.
The major elements of a campaign are:

- **research and investigations** – exposing injustice and disadvantage
- **timetable** – how much time do you have? Map out the key moments
- **tactics** – developing a range of actions and events
- **communications** – refine a short sharp message: reaching the masses as well as the 'converted'
- **materials** – produce a range of campaign materials (eg posters, publications, etc)
- **media** – to reach the general public and create a backdrop of support.

If you study other successful campaigns in your country or around the world you will gather useful ideas for your own campaign. But remember that campaign ideas should be **adapted**, not **adopted**. What may have been done in London or Manila might not be appropriate in your country. Brainstorm a range of ideas and then make sure they are appropriate to your situation.

Example VSO UK supporter campaign – Help Women Help The World

VSO UK encourages supporters to take actions that influence decision-makers. The 2009 campaign was Help Women Help The World, which calls for a new UN Agency for Women to help end the discrimination that prevents women from going to school, accessing healthcare and earning a living.

The campaign used a variety of tactics to build support:

- VSO UK supporters wrote to their Member of Parliament, asking the UK minister in charge of the UN to support a new agency.
- VSO UK brought Stephen Lewis (former UN envoy on AIDS) to the UK to meet politicians of all the main parties.
- This speaker tour generated media coverage in major newspapers.
- The campaign utilised various communications channels – direct mail to supporters, and 'e-based' campaigner capture techniques such as Facebook.

Devising your preferred tactics

In devising your tactics for the campaign, always bear in mind:

- The target audience – the tactics must be right for the audience and culture.
- Whether the campaign is to be 'hard-hitting' or 'softer'. A hard-hitting campaign might 'name names' or overtly criticise officials. A softer campaign might rely on more friendly messages, music, fun events.
- Developing messages – refine the 'ask' into a few key points to make and develop communications to reach large numbers of people.
- Accompanying lobbying. A public campaign will also have behind-the-scenes meetings with decision-makers. So understand the power politics, and plan the path of greatest influence.

Tool 36. Campaign tactics
Contains advice on a variety of ways to run a successful campaign.

Campaign materials

Various types of campaign materials can be used to reinforce the campaign visibility, and messages. You should also assess if you need to raise funds from some of these materials:

- posters or billboards
- banners and placards
- campaign T-shirts/caps, etc
- car stickers
- a campaign newsletter – paper or email
- website – and provide articles for other websites
- newspaper or magazine articles or letters (no cost)

- paid advertisements (TV, radio or written media)
- campaign videos or DVDs
- music CDs
- reports – fully researched, with all the background facts about your campaign
- leaflets, brochures or factsheets
- FAQs – answers to most frequently asked questions
- campaign postcards, badges or calendar
- photos (for magazines, newspapers, etc) eg photo CD
- petitions – aim to get as many signatures as possible
- action pack – to encourage activists to play an active part in the campaign
- flyers – listing all campaign resources.

Petitions and postcards

Petitions and postcard campaigns are a popular means of sending representations from a large number of supporters. You only have to produce one short, simple product, then get many people to sign it. They are cheap and easy to run. Handing over a pile of petitions is also a media opportunity. One disadvantage is that decision-makers generally treat mass-produced postcards less seriously than individual letters. And a petition is not worth giving to the target if you only have a few signatories.

New technology

Newer communication technologies are increasingly used for mobilising support for advocacy campaigns. These include:

- electronic petitions
- internet/websites
- SMS (texts)
- email lists are widely used to activate collaborators and supporters. Email is becoming an acceptable form of communication with policy-makers, at least in the North.

This aspect of campaigning should be constantly reviewed and updated. See more on this below, under Media.

Tool 29. Carrying supporters along the path to social change

Helps you decide how to move passive supporters to become more active

Communication and negotiation

Effective communication

The purpose of communication is to get your message across to others clearly and unambiguously.

Tool 34. Audience analysis

This tool will help you to analyse your audiences.

A communication plan should be developed, which aims to produce tailored messages to persuade chosen target audiences through selected channels. It will include:

- the ‘ask’
- messages
- primary targets and secondary targets
- method of delivery (messengers or channel)
- stakeholder communication (including feedback of advocacy progress to supporters)
- communication and liaison with allies.

You need to be clear on your targets and channels before deciding on your tailored message. Remember that policy-makers (particularly parliamentarians and high-level bureaucrats) are bombarded with information. How can you make your message more relevant and memorable?

Formulating a straightforward, persuasive message is the key to organising an effective advocacy campaign. The message is the theme of the campaign. The main elements of your advocacy message should be:

- a statement of the problem? Why you are lobbying
- evidence – include statistics, comparisons, etc
- an example – give a human face to the problem
- a call to action. Demonstrate a clear solution, and say what action you are asking from your audience (the 'ask')
- the benefits of action and the impact of doing nothing.

Keep it short and simple (KISS)

- Try to keep messages as short and simple as possible.
- Be direct, straightforward and memorable.
- The job of the campaigner is to translate complex policy messages into simple and emotive messages.
- Have recognisable soundbites, if possible in the campaign name/slogan.

The one-minute message: Statement + Evidence + Example = Action Needed

Ideally, there should be only one main point communicated or, if that is not possible, two or three at the most. Do not lose impact by complicating your message. If in doubt, test your message with a representative of your target.

Adding impact to messages

- Develop a strong, clear message and stress its urgency.
- Tie your message into urgent political and social concerns.
- Repeat your message through a variety of channels and messengers.
- Creativity helps – use humour, metaphors, popular expressions, etc.
- Communicate in pictures too – 'one picture is worth a thousand words'.

Reinforcing your message

Do not just send your message once and then forget about it! If it does not receive a positive response, reinforce your message. This can be done in a number of ways:

- Re-send the message but in a new way

Do not bombard your target. Try asking others to write along the same lines, or bring in new information or angles, referring back to your original communication. If you agreed to follow up on any aspects, restate your message when following up.

- Deal with any problems

If your target raised any concerns that could hamper progress, then find out the answers to these and deal with them (eg providing evidence, costings, pilot projects, etc). It may be necessary to involve new experts to deal with these.

- Raise the profile of the issue

Organise media coverage or rally grassroots, celebrity or expert support. Start a petition or postcard messages to reinforce support for your 'ask'.

Communication skills

The ways in which messages are communicated make more difference to their impact than their content. There is a variety of communications options used in advocacy. The following are the most commonly used:

Policy report

This will be a detailed and credible report on your issue using the research you carried out. It should be presented well so as to enhance its readability and credibility. A research report may be lengthy (eg 30/40 pages) and would be expected to have a shelf life of at least a couple of years (ie it remains useful for that time).

Policy or position paper

This paper outlines your position on the issue. It is submitted to your target (either as part of a consultation process or after meetings). It should be as short as possible – between two and four pages long (as policy-makers are too busy to read lengthy documents). It should start with a brief summary (including your 'ask'). It will summarise the problem and your proposed solution and should contain brief information on your organisation or your coalition and its membership, and its mission.

A good policy paper should:

- define your policy issue within the current policy framework
- outline the policy alternatives – the possible ways in which this issue can be addressed
- assess the probable outcomes of these options based on evidence from the current policy framework
- give a strong argument why your preferred alternative (policy recommendation) is the best possible policy option.

Briefing note (for 'internal' use)

A briefing note is written for your allies, to provide background on your advocacy issue in order to ensure that those working together on this are able to 'sing from the same song sheet'.

It will include:

- facts, arguments, the 'ask' and messages
- the main aspects of your strategy, including any relevant policies and ways of working, your objectives, and agreed tactics
- 'soundbites' that can be repeated
- other aspects that will be helpful to allies, such as which demands are non-negotiable
- frequently asked questions (FAQs) and guidance on handling any difficult issues.

Other communications materials

Depending on your target audiences, you may want to produce other materials aimed at them. These might include posters, leaflets, videos, etc. When you produce a piece of communications material, you should always aim it at a particular target audience and be clear about its purpose in your advocacy campaign.

Letters

Letters are frequently used to make representations to decision-makers on a particular issue. Although other means of communication (such as email, fax or telephone) are becoming more common, if you are contacting a high politician or official, it is always preferable to write formally.

Letters should be brief (preferably no longer than one page) and persuasive. They should contain the main elements of your advocacy message and request the policy-maker to take specific action. The following advice may help:

- Use organisational (or coalition) letterhead.
- Be sure to get the name, title, address and other details correct.
- Ask for a reply – and include specific questions.
- Never use a threatening tone – be courteous.
- Ensure that the letter arrives well before any vote/decisions.
- Always say 'thank you' for any meetings, advice or action.

Letter-writing campaigns are also used to demonstrate popular support for an issue. These can either use a stock letter (which uses the same version for all letters – with just the sender's details added), or a

list of 'points to make', that can be incorporated into individual letters by supporters. Individually drafted letters have more impact with policy-makers, but the extra work in crafting an individual letter may deter some supporters from writing. Elected policy-makers will pay attention if a large number of people write to them on an issue. However, the simpler (and less individual) the means of representation, the less weight they will give these.

Telephone calls

If it is not possible to meet key policy-makers, telephone communication is another option. The telephone can be used to convey the advocacy message, and can be followed up by written communication (indeed, any points of agreement must be confirmed in writing). It does not lead to the same level of personal relationship that face-to-face meetings can provide, but is preferable to writing alone.

Telephone calls should be brief and persuasive, and need to be thoroughly prepared and rehearsed.

Face-to-face communications

Where the policy-maker is receptive, face-to-face meetings are probably the most effective way of advancing your advocacy campaign. Their main advantage is that they enable you to build a personal relationship with your targets.

Communication

Opportunities to meet with decision-makers are usually rare. Therefore preparation (and practice) is essential to make the most out of limited time with decision-makers.

Tools for communication

Tool 26. Communication tips for public speaking or negotiating

Gives advice on verbal communications

Making presentations

Presentations can be an effective way of influencing others on your issue. But you need to ensure that you make the most of any opportunities to present your case. When planning a presentation, the following need to be considered:

- your purpose
- your audience (and how best to reach them)
- length of talk
- key issues to cover
- talk structure (beginning, middle, end)
- use of audio-visual equipment
- other activities that can be included
- balance, so you are not seen as an extremist
- whether questions will be taken and, if so, format and timing.

Tool 27. Making presentations

Gives advice on making presentations, including preparation and talk aids

The art of negotiation

Negotiation is a careful exploration of your position and the other person's position, with the aim of finding a mutually acceptable compromise that gives you both as much of what you want as possible. People's positions are rarely as fundamentally opposed as they may initially appear.

There are different styles of negotiation, depending on circumstances. A **win–lose** negotiation is where you push through what you want, winning the immediate battle. This is not recommended if you want to maintain the relationship – or if you want the agreement to be lasting. It leaves the losing party feeling resentful and uncooperative. The same is true about the use of tricks and manipulation during a negotiation. Honesty and openness are the best policies.

Ultimately, both sides should feel comfortable with the final solution if the agreement is to be considered **'win–win'**. Good negotiating is about both sides leaving feeling they got what they wanted or at least better off than when they went in.

The main things you need to consider before any negotiation are:

- What do I ideally want out of this?
- What would I be willing to compromise on?
- What must I not give way on (my 'bottom line')?

Negotiation communication

- Use simple, explicit and descriptive language.
- Avoid blame and personal remarks.
- Speak your opponent's language (avoid your own jargon).
- Use open questions.
- Include questions about emotions/feelings – because each party's emotional needs have to be met in a satisfactory solution. But try to discuss these in an unemotional way.
- Use 'active listening' – try to really understand what they want from this.
- Repeat key phrases that the other contributes (so as to build rapport and check understanding).
- Double-check any statements that are unclear (eg 'do you mean that…).
- State your own needs, beliefs, feelings, concerns, etc – be concise, non-emotional and clear.
- Review and sum up.

Tool 26. Negotiation technique tips
This tool gives useful advice on successful negotiation.

Using the media

Mass communication is needed if you want to spread your advocacy message widely. The media is usually the most effective way to do this.

- **Popular cultural communication** (eg popular music) can transmit your message if you can find a 'star' who will include your message in their songs.
- **Religious leaders** may agree to transmit your message in church, temple or mosque. Therefore these spiritual leaders may be one target for your lobbying.
- **Celebrities** can support campaigns. However, it is quite an investment to bring a celebrity on board, and there are certain risks.

For most NGOs, **using the media** is the most feasible way to reach a broad audience base, and we therefore concentrate on this method in this toolkit. You can reach the public, potential supporters, and policy-makers because the media want your stories. Every day they need news to fill their pages and programmes. The media is a powerful force in any society – it influences the way in which people view the world, and shapes public opinion. It can play a role in social change. In many cases, without the media, any social change movement would be largely reduced to 'preaching to the converted', and so lack growth.

Traditional media outlets: newspapers, magazines, television and radio
Modern media: internet, websites, social networking sites, blogs, mobile telephones, etc

Policy-makers and groups involved in political processes pay close attention to the press, so using the media can help you to advance your policy issue.

'Legislators note organisations that the media quotes'

In some cases, criticism in the media of the government's position can also have an enormous impact – but this can be positive or negative. Like any advocacy approach, use of the media also carries certain risks. The coverage of your organisation may be unfavourable or inaccurate, or it might mobilise any opponents against your cause.

The best way to ensure that media coverage will advance your advocacy goals is to think and plan ahead. Understand how the media works and be in control of the process as much as possible.

Media strategy and planning

You can work with the media proactively and/or reactively. Effective forward planning can help you use the media for your own advocacy purposes, rather than be used by the media to fit their agenda. Proactive approaches include:

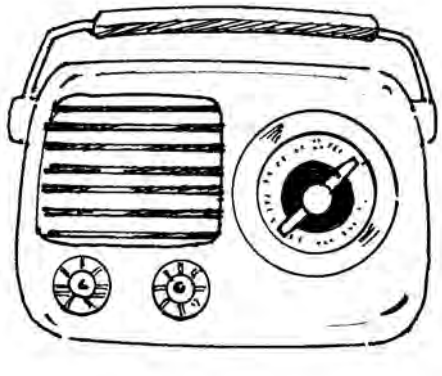
- using research to encourage and cooperate with in-depth investigative programmes
- writing feature articles and letters
- planning press conferences, events, campaign actions, photo-calls, celebrity occasions, etc, specifically to attract the media.

Reactive media work can also be useful – eg if you see an article in the press today you can write in to support it or argue your own position. However, priorities need to be established and resource constraints considered.

What you want to achieve by getting your message across in the media is to:

- set an agenda
- put decision-makers 'on notice'
- stimulate debate and awareness of your issues
- build support for your issue
- turn concern into desire to act.

The media differs from country to country. In some countries there are few media outlets; in others they abound. In some countries journalists face issues that limit their freedom of expression, such as censorship and manipulation. You need to know and understand such limitations in your media.



In some countries, it is appropriate to work with newspapers, in others with TV, and in others with radio stations. Generally, TV coverage is more difficult. Radio coverage is easier. There are many national and local FM radio stations. These stations broadcast news and other programmes in local ethnic languages, and their coverage reaches rural and disadvantaged people, as well as the wealthy and urban elite.

Example Timing and targeting media work for change

VSO collaborated with Oxfam and The Global Campaign for Education to investigate a wage cap on public sector salaries imposed by the IMF in Zambia, which had resulted in severe teacher shortages. The research was published in a report 'Undervaluing Teachers', which formed the basis of lobbying and media work. The report was given to media who attended the annual meeting between the IMF and the World Bank. The economics correspondent of *The Guardian* then used our briefing as a basis for the questions he asked at their press conference. *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* both ran articles about the story, as did the national press in Zambia. The IMF then asked VSO for a follow-up meeting. Subsequently, negotiations between the Zambian Government and the IMF led to a relaxation of the wage freeze to allow an increase in the education budget.

Clarifying your message

Before you use the media, you need to have a clear main message, and know who your target audience is. Then you can research the most appropriate media to deliver the message. There are often specific media outlets that are influential with policy-makers. You also need to consider:

- What media do your target audiences have access to? What publications do they read? Do they own TVs? Radio? Phones? Computers?
- What skills are necessary to operate in a certain medium? What process is required to convey a message through a particular medium?
- Who should deliver the message (who would be influential)? Would they be willing to be a spokesperson? Are they competent and available?

Top tips for planning your media work

- Think about media aspects even at the research stage.
- Give special attention to the most relevant media, eg quality national newspapers that are read by those in power, publications related to your issue (eg health publications are read by health professionals), etc.
- Plan so the media has regular, varied and not too frequent approaches.
- Prepare and maintain a media contacts list.
- Carefully plan the time and place of press conferences and media events (such as a peaceful march, campaign actions, photo-calls, celebrity occasions, etc).
- Include a photo-call for press photographers (eg an event in a historic location, with a politician or celebrity, or an unusual photo that will make a novel picture).
- Link to major world events (eg Climate Change Day, International Women's Day, etc).
- Link to major events such as the opening of parliament or a major conference.
- Watch media articles, in order to react and bring your issue into coverage.
- Use supporters as part of your media strategy – particularly to reach local media. This is very possible for example with returned volunteers.
- Consider the advantages and disadvantages of using a local 'celebrity'.

Obtaining coverage

How you get the media interested in your issue depends on the nature of your country's media. What will hit the headlines in one country will make no impact in another. Many organisations fall into the trap of thinking that everybody will find their issue as compelling as they do. Sadly, that is rarely the case. Is there an aspect of your story that is news? Do you have dramatic or controversial new information that would be of public interest? When dealing with the media, we always have to get over the 'so what?' factor, particularly for issues that are already known to the public.

It may be worth remembering that the media formula is fairly limited. These are the type of stories that tend to make it in to the media:

- 'We reveal the startling facts' – using shocking or incredible facts and figures.
- 'Underdogs win' – eg where the disadvantaged win their case over those in power.
- Human interest stories – a story that shows the sad reality of an individual affected by the issue.
- 'Shock statement' – a quotation or statement that will shock audiences.

Unfortunately few NGOs can or would want to produce these sort of stories. You need to be innovative and look for opportunities to place the sort of story you want. To increase your chances of being covered in the media, you need to build relationships with the journalists responsible for covering your issue. You should aim to build your organisation into a resource for them – so they come to you for information and comment on your issue. This means you will have to familiarise yourself with the position of key media, identify the right person on the editorial team, and develop useful resources and expert knowledge on your issue.

The following tools are available for working with the media. And in the CD-ROM there is additional advice about running a press release and tailoring your messages.

Tool 14. Successful media coverage
Contains advice on obtaining successful media coverage

Tool 31. Writing a press release
Contains advice on preparing an effective press release

Tool 32. Letters to editors and opinion articles
Contains advice on writing letters to editors and opinion articles

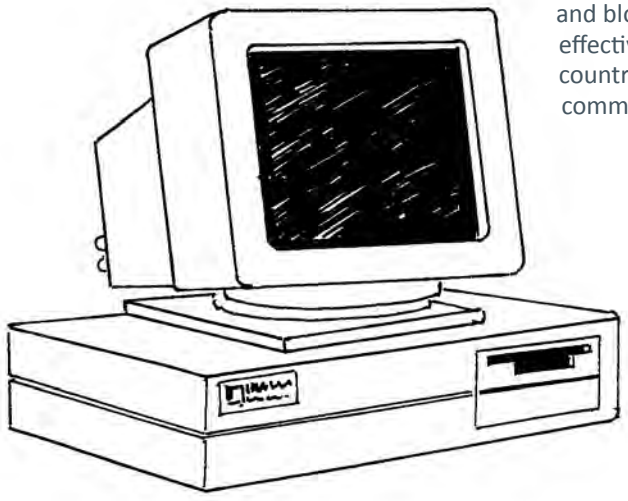
Tool 33. Media interviews
Contains advice on effective media interviews

Example

The National Education Partnership in Cambodia was able to gain significant radio and television coverage of its report on 'informal school fees' and teacher salaries, with the support of VSO volunteer, Julia Lalla Maharajh. Through persistence and networking Julia was able to get coverage on the BBC World Service radio, and BBC World News television channel. The TV report also won the 2008 Amnesty International Human Rights Press Award, which gave the story additional exposure.

New media and internet mobilisation

The internet has revolutionised the way advocacy is done in some countries around the world. It has made the dissemination of information inexpensive, efficient and easy. In countries that have high access to internet technology, it can be an effective way of mobilising geographically dispersed activists around an advocacy issue. Email, websites, newsgroups, list servers, chat rooms, and blogs can all be used. Mobile telephones (cell phones) are also an effective means of campaign communication and mobilisation. In many countries, mobile phone use is fast becoming the universal means of communication.



Example

In the 2008 US election, Barack Obama used the internet to organise his supporters in a way that would in the past have required an army of volunteers and paid organisers. Obama used a combination of television, the internet, and social media to recruit volunteers and supporters, and cement relationships with them. He asked supporters to supply their cell phone numbers, and sent out regular text message 'blasts' (SMS), even announcing his selection for vice president using a text message. Using a custom social networking site, supporters were able to log in and find lists of people they could call, or whose doors they could knock on, to try to persuade others to vote for their candidate.

Obama's campaign also took advantage of the video site YouTube for free advertising. These videos were more effective than television advertisements because viewers chose to watch them or received them from a friend, instead of having their television shows interrupted.

How will this affect advocacy techniques in my country?

Every country is different and you will need to consult local experts for what is possible in your country. The Arab Spring was an outpouring of mobilisation in Egypt, Libya and other countries in 2011 which showed the power of citizen journalists and bloggers to organise protests and document human rights abuses. You too can use social media to strengthen your campaign activities in your country. But the key will be to discuss, with others, what works in your culture and your society.

Social networking sites such as Facebook are very popular in the North, and becoming popular in many countries of Asia and Africa. In India and Brazil, Orkut is an equivalent to Facebook. These can be a way to reach people and give publicity to your cause – especially among young people. Sites such as Twitter can share short pieces of news very quickly, and you can attach links to your key messages or videos. YouTube (www.youtube.com) is a site where you can upload (at no cost) short videos and send the link to your supporters.

Maybe the new technology most appropriate in many countries is SMS or text messages. An ever-increasing percentage of people in Africa and Asia now have a cell or mobile phone. Simple packages can allow you to send regular messages to thousands of people. For example, in VSO's Livelihoods programme 'Making Markets Work for the Poor' some partners are now using SMS to share live information about commodity prices. This allows poor farmers to avoid unscrupulous middlemen paying unjustly low prices.

SMS can also be used to collect information from all over the country, even from remote rural areas. This 'crowdmapping' can help you to carry out research quickly and at low cost. One example was during the 2007 election violence in Kenya. The Ushahidi crowdmap was able to log examples of violence from rural areas – the crowd in this case being Kenyans across the country texting reports of violence from their mobile phones. Ushahidi (www.ushahidi.com) means witness in Swahili: the reports were added to an online map, and within days all those individual witnesses had together compiled a more complete picture of the violence than any one organisation.

In India VSO supports another project that uses SMS messages to compile information. South Orissa Voluntary Action (SOVA) and other partners in Orissa state can potentially reach up to 200,000 people, who can send in requests for freedom of information. A population that is able to access previously hidden information is more likely to demand that government provide the basic rights they are entitled to.

In East Africa, VSO works with Twaweza (www.twaweza.com). Twaweza means "we can make it happen". It is a citizen-centered initiative, focusing on large-scale change in East Africa. Twaweza believes that lasting change requires bottom-up action. It aims to expand opportunities through which millions of people can get information and make change happen in their own communities by holding government to account. To learn more on Social Media for Social Change watch a short video called 'Ten Tactics' (www.informationactivism.org). Then talk to others in your country about who can give advice and support.

There is great potential in web-based campaigning – but don't get carried away. In many countries the internet is still not accessible in rural areas. Face-to-face communication is still a stronger way of changing behaviour in many societies. Web-based campaigning will mainly reach the better-off in society – not the disadvantaged. Disabled people, ethnic minorities, girls out of school, people in fragile states – they are the least likely to have access to any new technology. Traditional methods of advocacy may still be the most appropriate. The best approach is to use a variety of methods – traditional and modern – and win supporters to your cause from all sectors of society.

Part seven: Ongoing learning and review

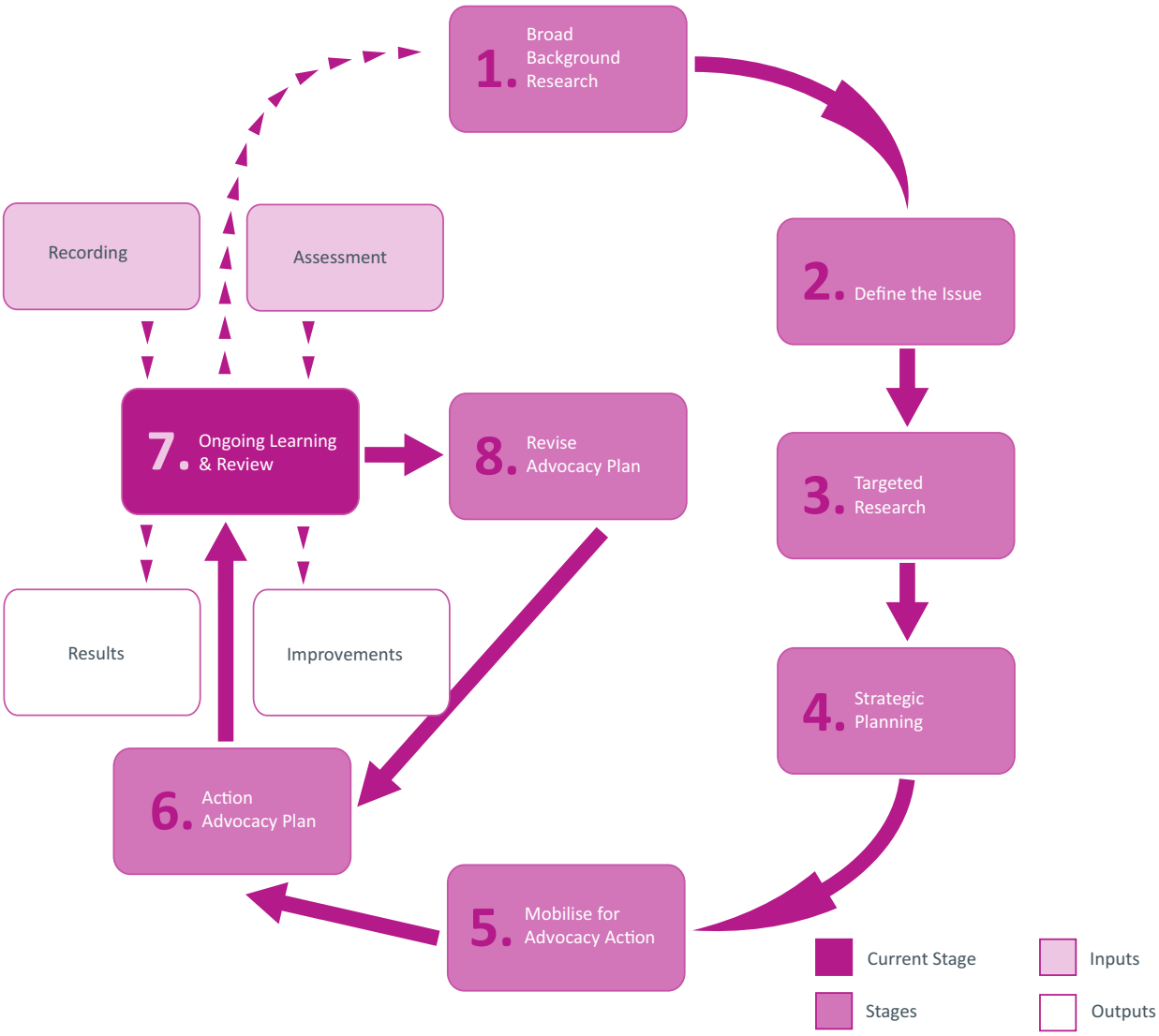
"Without learning, the wise become foolish; by learning, the foolish become wise."

Confucius (Chinese philosopher 551–479 BC)

This section provides guidance on integrating advocacy activities into the ongoing learning and review of your programme, so as to promote learning and improvement.

Contents

Ongoing learning and review



Planning and review – top tips

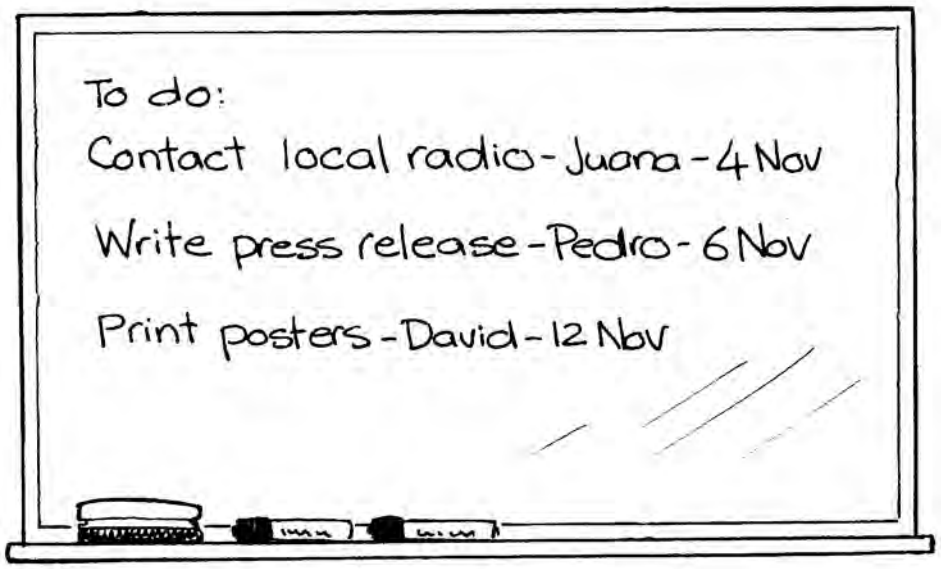
- Be clear about the changes you are trying to achieve.
- Develop your own, locally appropriate system of learning and review, and build this into your advocacy plan.
- The log frame can be a very valuable tool for summarising your objectives (see Tool 27).
- The purpose of evaluation is to enable you to review experiences and to use this learning to improve your work – this means that honesty and transparency are valued.
- Design a simple monitoring system to ensure that your activities contribute to your agreed objectives.
- Record and discuss all your outcomes – both the intended and unintended.
- Develop your indicators carefully to reflect the real value of your advocacy work. Assess what is really important to you – it might be policy change, or increased profile, or capacity building, or empowerment…
- Assess any relevant changes in the external environment, and think about what your response to these changes should be.
- Within VSO there are specific monitoring and review processes such as the annual partnership review and the programme area review. Staff and partners should review advocacy achievements and lessons learned in an integrated way with the rest of the programme achievements.

Planning and review

Any NGO should have a system for 'planning and review'. Even a small community group should take time out sometimes to assess progress and review the work plan. Ongoing monitoring systems help us to:

- learn from experience
- adapt plans to respond to events
- improve the effectiveness of future advocacy work
- be accountable to colleagues and our supporters or members
- report to funders and partners
- share learning with other organisations
- ensure that your resources are used in the most effective way.

Planning and review of advocacy activities



First review your activities. Did you achieve these?

The review of advocacy 'success' is more difficult than for other programme work or capacity development work.

- Sometimes the results of advocacy work are intangible.
- Often the causes of a policy changes are unclear, and come from many influences.
- The timescales are often lengthy before any change is seen.
- When you work in a coalition there is the difficulty of attributing complex social and political changes to the advocacy work of one organisation.
- Your advocacy may lead to positive spin-offs, which you hadn't intended. These may be in terms of rights awareness and empowerment of your supporters, capacity-building, and a higher overall profile for the organisation.

These difficulties do not make ongoing learning less important for advocacy than for other programme work. Indeed, with advocacy, the environment is often changing rapidly, so it is crucial to ensure ongoing learning.

Lessons can only be learned and applied, therefore, if your work is reported and analysed, and if these analyses are used to inform decisions. Honesty and transparency are essential in our analysis of progress. Do not attempt to hide errors, because it is through these that we learn.

Ongoing learning and review should be built into your advocacy plan, and designed in a way that fits into your existing management systems.

Learning and review processes within VSO
The standard VSO planning and review process involves two key learning mechanisms: partnership reviews and programme area reviews. Please refer to the Programme Area Review Guidelines and Annual Partnership Review guidelines (available on the VSO intranets or from any member of the Programme Learning and Advocacy team).

There is a Planning and Review overview on PORT.
Log in to www.vso.org.uk/vision, click PORT icon and then follow links:'Programming'⇨ 'Programme Planning and Review'.

Where a programme office is carrying out advocacy work with a partner or supporting a partner to undertake research, this should be included in its **partnership review**. And all relevant advocacy work should be included in your **programme area review.**

Where programmes also have partnerships with organisations that do not employ volunteers, a review is optional. However, where you expect to see changes for the organisation and/or other stakeholders as a result of the relationship with VSO, there should ideally be a review (eg for an advocacy coalition that VSO belongs to, even if it does not have a VSO volunteer), especially if the staff member involved has committed a significant amount of time to the partnership. If this is the case, the outcomes of work of the staff member(s) need to be reviewed, celebrated and learned from in the same way as other interventions are reviewed and reported on.

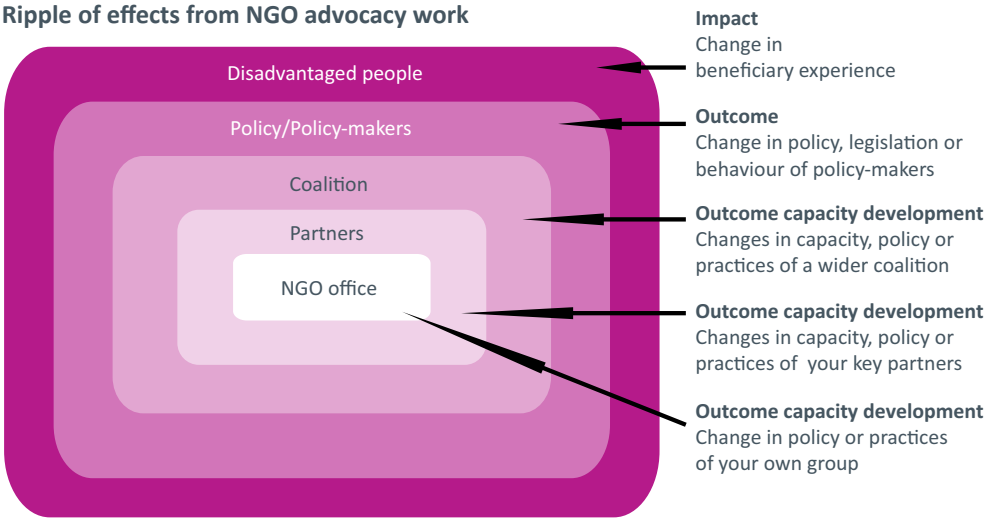
What should be monitored?

The sort of information to be monitored could include:

- record of planned activities that have been implemented
- record of lobbying meetings and communications with targets
- significant communications received
- use of your advocacy materials, reports, arguments, etc
- coalition development (eg coalition meetings or development of the coalition)
- partnership development (eg the building of capacity to carry out advocacy)
- advocacy materials produced and distributed
- public speaking engagements on the issue
- media monitoring (press releases sent out, media coverage, etc)
- mass campaign events or activities, eg petitions
- any changes in your target's actions, opinions or attitudes
- any policy changes on your issue.

In each case it is the outcome of the activity that is important, and in particular the impact on disadvantaged people. The various outcomes and the final impact can be seen in the following diagram which shows the specific set of 'ripples' for advocacy-related change.

Ripple of effects from NGO advocacy work



It is recommended that advocacy activities are always monitored to ensure that they keep on track. This is part of good programme management and is particularly important where new advocacy activities are carried out. For example, if you develop a new communications material (say a poster, or a newsletter) you should monitor to see if you get more phone or mail responses from new supporters.

How should you monitor?

Tool 35. Advocacy outcomes and achievements
This tool can be used as a guide to the evaluation of your advocacy outcomes and achievements.

Tool 15. Advocacy case study
This tool is an example of an advocacy case study.

If you are in receipt of external funding for the advocacy activities, you may be required to report in a specific way to the donor providing the funds. This is often a problem because the policy change you are working for may come well after the period of funding. If you have an understanding donor, it is worth asking for them to fund a separate review or evaluation a year after the project finished, to assess if the change has been made and if progress is sustained.

Assessing policy change

Even after a successful policy change it can take some time for the new law, or policy, to be implemented, and even more time for any impact to be felt by the disadvantaged. So it may be necessary to carry out periodic reviews. You may achieve an improvement in the law in 2005, but by 2009 you realise the new law is being ignored.

There are three different stages to effective policy change:

1. Getting the issue on the agenda
2. Achieving policy change
3. Achieving change in practice

Your monitoring and evaluation needs to assess progress on all three. Don't stop at stage two.

Within VSO the Programme Learning and Advocacy Team has developed an Advocacy Success Scale for use in the impact assessment work being undertaken as part of VSO's Programme Partnership Agreement with DFID. The scale sets out the stages needed to achieve policy change, policy implementation and ultimately positive impact on disadvantaged people. In reality of course the process is never as linear as this. Staff and volunteers may enter the process at any one of the different stages on the scale, and may jump back and forth along the scale. However, the scale is a useful framework for conceptualising which stage you are at in your advocacy work or policy initiative.

To sum up…

- Evaluating advocacy work is more challenging than evaluating most development programmes, because many factors affect policy change, not just your work.
- But regular planning and review enables you to assess your work and change your strategies if necessary.
- Having read this toolkit you will know that much advocacy work is long-term.
- You can usually achieve more by working in coalition with other allies.
- Be sure that your hard work is contributing to a better society.
- So don't forget to celebrate your successes.
- And keep up the good work.

Part 8 – Selected tools

1. Issue choice matrix
2. Problem tree analysis
3. Decision and influence mapping
4. Allies and opponents matrix
5. Power mapping (Venn diagram)
6. Force field analysis
7. PESTLE – external analysis
8. SWOT analysis
9. Involvement of the disadvantaged
10. Risk analysis
11. Log frame
12. Managing coalitions
13. Top tips for lobbying
14. Successful media coverage

There are 40 other useful tools, on an array of subjects, on the accompanying CD-ROM.

The benefits of discussive tools

It's difficult for one person on their own to think of all the factors that may help or hinder advocacy. It's best to have a group of colleagues who can brainstorm and discuss ideas together.

These tools are not scientific – they don't have to be followed exactly. They are simply suggestions to get you thinking. They can be changed or adapted. The tools have been used and adapted by development practitioners like Robert Chambers and many others. You can be flexible and adapt the tools depending on, for example:

- how many of you there are
- how much time you have
- whether your colleagues are literate or not
- whether your colleagues have experience in advocacy or not.

A facilitator is useful but not essential. If you are lucky enough to have a facilitator then their role is to prepare the session, mind the time, and use open questions to check the reasons and logic for the group's decisions.

Top tips for small group discussions using these tools

- If possible use flipchart paper to record your work. Stick it on the wall so everyone can see and take part.
- Make sure everyone participates. In some cultures women are reluctant to speak in public. Some group members may be shy. Make sure you encourage them to speak up, and respect all contributions.
- If there are more than five of you, break into smaller groups at times.
- Use 'stickies' (Post-it Notes) where possible. This is better than writing on the flipchart paper, because you can move them around, so the group can discuss and make changes. Only later write on the flipchart, when the group is all in agreement.
- In a brainstorm, everyone's opinions are good. Don't make fun or reject outright any of the suggestions. The point of a brainstorm is for all to give ideas. Later you can narrow them down, decide which are useful and which not.
- When using flipcharts make sure the results are legible.
- If you need to record the results, type up the main information quickly. It is very easy for the flipcharts to get lost or you forget what was meant.
- Lastly, these tools are not a one-off step that you do at the beginning of your advocacy planning and then forget. You can re-look at the tools a year later, or when your advocacy is getting 'stuck'. You can go through some of the tools with a different group, or when you have more experience – this will give you fresh thinking to move forward.

1. Issue choice matrix

This is a tool for analysing the best choice of advocacy issue. It works by rating each issue against given criteria.

Method

1. Prepare a flipchart beforehand with the table below. Stick it to the wall where everyone in the group can see it.
2. Agree upon three possible pieces of advocacy you might want to work on. Write these possible policy issues at the top of the three columns.
3. Discuss the first policy issue and go down the whole list of criteria. How likely is it to be successful? How closely does it fit with your area of expertise? Etc. Rate each issue on each criterion using a positive ranking of 1–5 (with 5 being the maximum). After discussing all the points you can add up the numbers at the bottom. In theory the policy issue with the most points, is the one you should prioritise to work on.*

Adapt the tool according to your organisation's priorities and needs. Feel free to change rankings to reflect major priorities (you might want to give double points to the most important criterion – eg the likelihood of success)

Criteria	Policy issue 1	Policy issue 2	Policy issue 3
Likelihood of success			
Potential benefits to the poor and disadvantaged			
Potential for your group to make a difference (or is the area overcrowded?)			
Fit with your area of expertise			
Potential to build a coalition (ie relationship with relevant allies is strong)			
Possibility to involve those directly affected by the issue			
The issue is something you care passionately about			
Insert more criteria here as necessary			
More criteria …			
TOTAL			

The criteria should be amended according to your own situation and perceived level of importance. As with all tools, it should be adapted where necessary to achieve the most relevant results for your organisation. For example, if this is your first advocacy initiative you may want to start with a small, limited-time advocacy issue to build aptitude and confidence.

* In theory you just add up the points. But in practice it is the discussion that is crucial, not the numbers. It shouldn't be a mechanical process where you just add up numbers. Ideally the group as a whole will decide the most important issue, by consensus.

2. Problem tree analysis

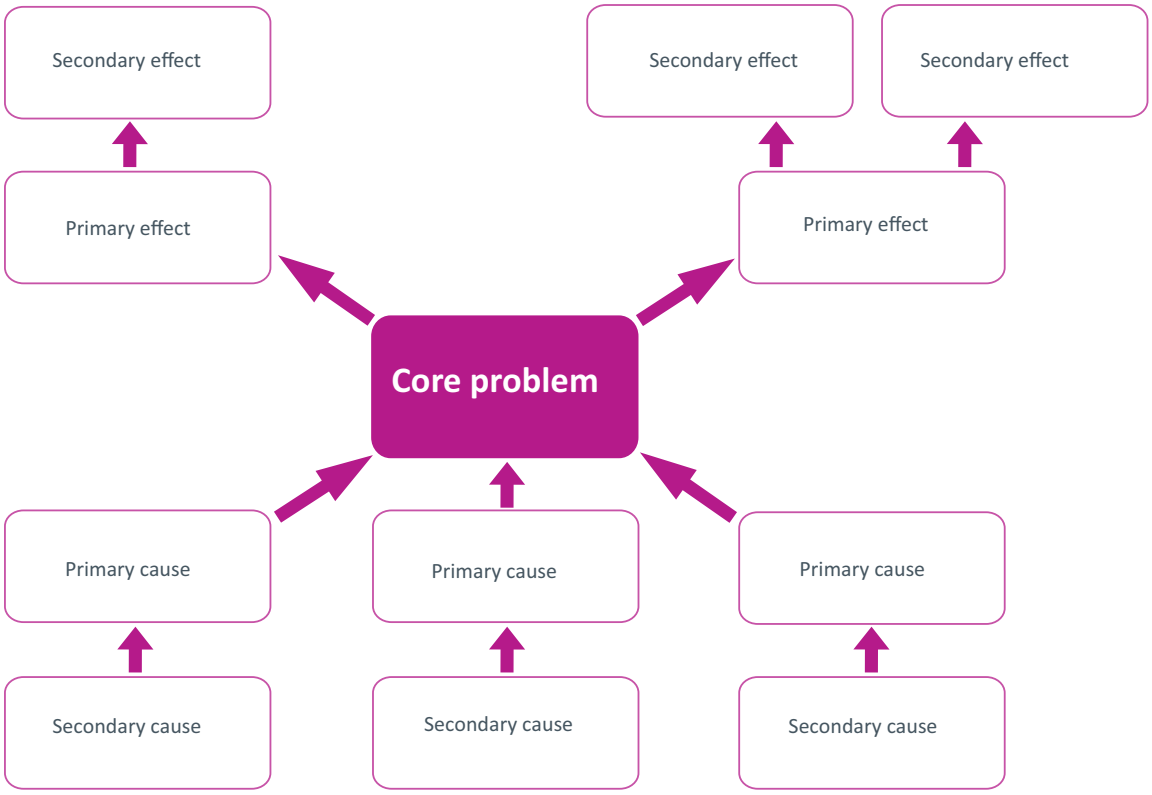
This tool helps you dissect a problem and discover its root causes, so you can target your efforts more accurately. It is widely used when designing development projects of all types.

Method

1. Draw a tree on a large piece of paper. It should have multiple roots and branches.
2. Agree between you on what the 'main problem' is. Write it on the trunk of the tree.
3. Decide between you what the effects of the problem are. Write them on Post-it Notes and stick them onto the branches. Find out what people know about each root cause and each effect of the problem. Details and reasons may reveal further causes and effects.

It is best to use 'Post-it' slips because they can be moved around as the process unfolds. For example, 'causes' may later be identified as 'root causes'.

4. Then think about what are the causes of the main problem. Write them on Post-it Notes and stick them onto the roots. The facilitator can ask 'but why?' or 'what causes that?' at each stage when seeking the root cause.
5. Negotiate the relationships between the Post-its and how they should be placed. The tree can be re-framed by making one of the causes or effects into the core problem, and readjusting the other cards around it. You may want to do this to refocus your issue to one that you can better influence.



Notes

- Discussing the problem causes will help you assess whether new policies are needed or whether existing polices are not being implemented effectively.
- If you want to, take the exercise into a second stage by 'reversing' the problem tree into a solution tree. Draw a new tree, but turn all the negatives (problems) into positives (solutions). At the end of the exercise you should find that your tree is showing you the solutions to your problem, and the positive effects that will follow if you can achieve it.
- In the course of doing the problem and solution trees, you may realise that there are gaps in your knowledge that need further research. That's fine – it's another benefit of using a tool.

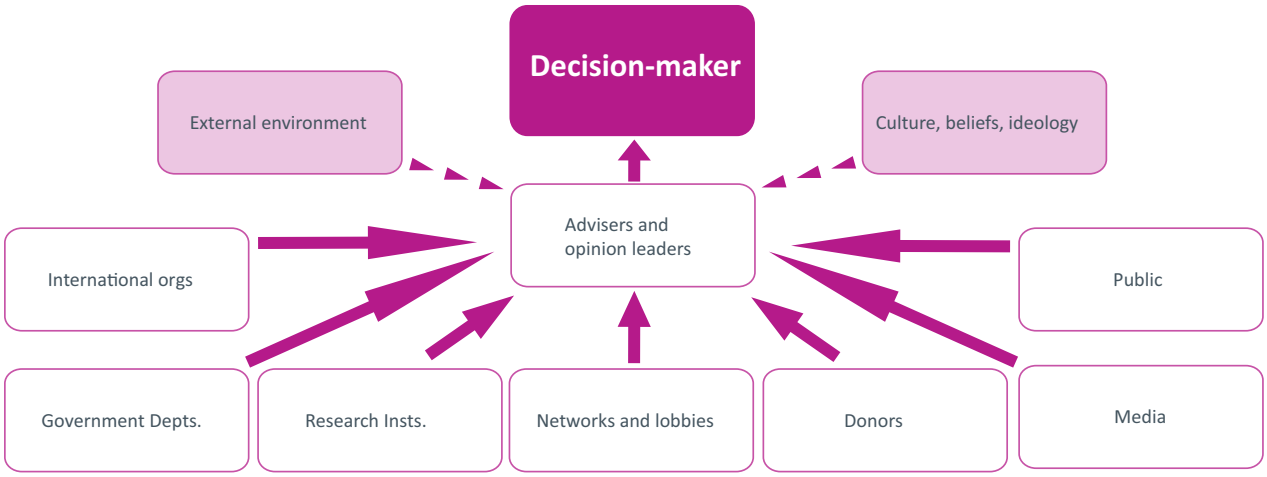
3. Decision and influence mapping

This tool helps to map and analyse decision-makers and their sources of influence. Influence mapping links to stakeholder analysis (Tool 1 on the CD-ROM).

Method

1. Before beginning, you need to be clear about the policy issue being analysed.
2. Identify the decision-makers who have the actual responsibility to make the decisions. Then identify their opinion-leaders who can influence them.

   Every policy-maker depends on a group of advisers or specialists without whom they cannot operate. They make decisions dependent on advice they receive, the political regime around them, and their own beliefs and ideologies. They may also listen to interest groups, constituencies and lobbies. Further, they may be influenced by the information they receive in the media, and more importantly, how it is reported.
3. Map the information as a pyramid of actors and influences:



4. Once the key 'actors' have been identified, the group should analyse their position on the topic, their key motives and their accessibility. Are they a supporter, an ally or uncommitted? What are their motives for a particular position on the issue? What is their agenda, either stated or implicit? What drives them to take this position, and what constraints do they face that might make it difficult for them to move from this position. These may be ideological or personal, cultural or social. They might be financial (eg for monetary gain) or political, based on the views of their supporters, patrons and voters.
5. Assess how easy it will be to gain access and present the evidence or case. Which actors or influences would be difficult to convince on your issue, and why? Which may be easier to approach, and could be effective influences? Bring out interesting and new angles and approaches – for example, by linking your issue with their priority concerns.

If you need to, try brainstorming the key individuals and institutions that carry the influence (eg specific people, newspapers, churches, elders, etc). Do you know any of them personally? This would give the initial access.

You may also find it useful to record the following information for each of the major agencies involved.

Main institutions, or agencies	Most important decision-makers	Their beliefs on issue	Their interests and agendas	Major sources of influence	Scope for positive

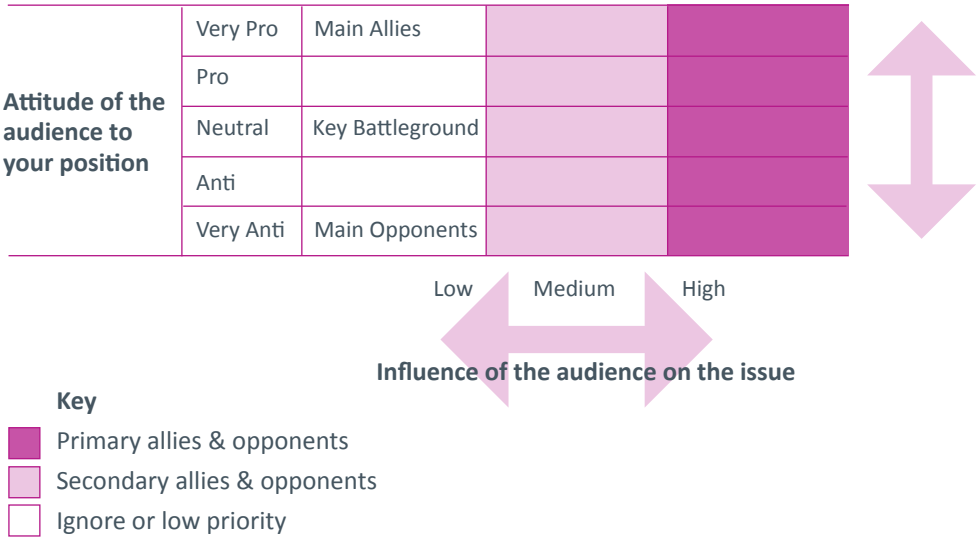
Adapt the criteria to suit your own purposes, if necessary.

4. Allies and opponents matrix (or 'Johari's window')

This is a matrix used to categorise supporters and opponents of your advocacy issue. It helps to identify allies, opponents and those whose neutral position makes them a target.

Method

1. Brainstorm all the agencies or institutions that have an interest in your issue and write each on a Post-it Note. Meanwhile one of your group should draw the chart below on a large flipchart.
2. Categorise the allies and opponents of your advocacy issue using the following matrix. Stick the organisations on the chart according to your perception of their attitude towards and influence over the issue you intend to advocate on.



Notes

- 'Opponents' are individuals or organisations who may oppose the advocacy campaign.
- 'Allies' are people who will support your advocacy, either because they will directly benefit, or because they have sympathetic concerns and similar values.
- You need to assess **how much influence** each stakeholder has over the issue. Someone who is very opposed to your issue but has no influence is not worth worrying over.
- Use this sorting process as a vehicle for discussion. You can use the matrix to discuss whether the assessment of main allies, targets, and opponents and neutral players is correct, and move your Post-it Notes around accordingly. There may be factors that influence this analysis (eg reasons behind neutrality that would make it a waste of effort to try to influence).

After completing this exercise you can identify which of the following five influencing strategies may be most appropriate:

- build alliances (with allies)
- persuade the stakeholder that the issue is important (eg for allies with high influence but low interest)
- persuade the stakeholder that your position is right (eg for influential neutrals, targets and soft opponents)
- help to increase the influence of the stakeholder (eg for allies with low influence)
- reduce the influence of the stakeholder (for opponents with high influence).

You will need to prioritise the stakeholder groups you can target, and plan strategically according to available human and financial resources. Don't try to do everything.

5. Power mapping (Venn diagram)

(Also called systems mapping or Chapatti diagram)

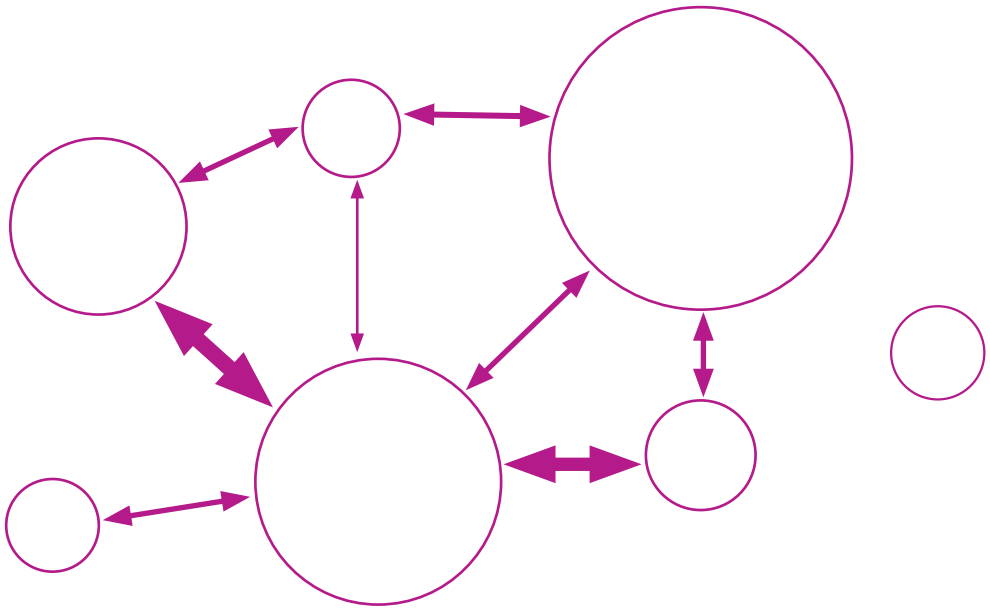
This is a stakeholder-mapping tool that shows the key organisations and individuals involved in an advocacy issue, together with their relationships.

Method

1. Ask the group to identify key organisations and individuals involved in the advocacy issue. Record them on a list.
2. Discuss how important each institution is.
3. Draw a circle for each organisation or individual, or cut out circles and stick them on the wall. Bigger circles indicate more important stakeholders.
4. Put the main target of your advocacy in the centre of the diagram. So if your issue is centred on government policy, then you make the relevant ministry a central block of the diagram.
5. Identify the degree of contact between each circle. For example, note where one institution can ask another to do something or if they have to cooperate in some way. Draw in arrows where you think there is influence.

Arrange as follows:

- isolated circle: no meaningful contact with other stakeholders
- thin arrow: limited contact (eg information passes between institutions)
- thick arrow: some cooperation in decision-making
- major arrow: considerable influence.



Notes

- Draw the diagram first in pencil, so you can adjust the size or arrangement of circles until the representation is accurate. Generating a rich discussion within your group is important. Secondary sources, group interviews or key informants can be used to validate information.
- Afterwards, make a reproduction of the circles for a permanent record. When you write it up, you can add colour-coding to indicate allegiances or categories.

You may want to come back to this tool after you have been doing your advocacy for a year or so. By then you will have new insights and much greater knowledge.

6. Force field analysis

Description and purpose

Force field analysis is an excellent tool for assessing and visualising the driving and restraining forces of an advocacy issue. This helps you target your advocacy resources to best effect. The tool assumes that for any proposed change there are some stakeholders in favour and some against. To win the advocacy issue you need to change the strength of forces on each side.

Method

1. Describe in one sentence the current situation (the issue you wish to change).
2. Describe the desired situation (the policy change you are seeking).
3. List about four to six of the major forces driving and restraining change.
4. Discuss the list: do you all agree, is it valid? What are the critical items?
5. Assign a rough score to each force, from weak to strong.
6. Draw a diagram showing the forces for and against change. Indicate relative strengths using different size arrows.

Notes

- Discuss the diagram to see how you could change the balance of forces for and against the campaign issue. From the analysis you can plan to strengthen the forces supporting a change, and reduce the impact of opposition to it. You may be able to determine:
  - how change can be made (by strengthening driving forces and weakening restraining forces)
  - given limited resources, which forces should be priority targets
  - whether change is viable and likely to be sustainable.
- Bear in mind that as each force changes, it may trigger a reaction from other forces.
- In particular, fighting against restraining forces (instead of strengthening driving forces or weakening restraining forces) may promote counter-attack.
- From this tool, you can see your allies and opponents, and work out who your target audience is for each step of the advocacy campaign.

7. PESTLE – external analysis

The PESTLE analysis is a commonly used tool that sorts and analyses key factors from the external environment that could impact upon the advocacy campaign. PESTLE stands for:

- **P**olitical
- **E**conomic
- **S**ociological
- **T**echnological
- **L**egal
- **E**nvironmental.

Method

1. List the environmental factors that could affect your advocacy campaign using the following categories.

   Political – The relevant political factors and trends in the country (including the government, legislature, judiciary and other government bodies, as well as other political movements and pressure groups).

   Economic – The economic factors and trends in the country (including GNP, debt schedules, sources of government income, main private sector employers, income distribution, etc).

   Sociological – The relevant sociological factors and trends in the country (including demographic information, education and health statistics, employment rates, land ownership, media, etc). Consider including factors contributing to disadvantage and the overall situation in the country for disadvantaged people.

   Technological – The technological factors and trends in the country (including information technology infrastructure, access to telecommunications and broadcast media, etc).

   Legal – The legal factors and constraints that are relevant to your advocacy work.

   Environmental – Any relevant environmental trends in the country (including deforestation, pollution, drought/flooding, agriculture, etc).

2. Identify which of these may be most significant to your work – either as opportunities or threats.
3. From these factors, identify five key trends that you consider most important for your issue. You can do this by ranking and sorting, voting, or by discussion and agreement. Bring these five into your strategic analysis, particularly into analysis of 'critical issues' at the beginning of the 'strategic choice' stage. You may need to do more research on some issues.

8. SWOT analysis – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

SWOT analysis is a commonly used matrix tool that can provide an objective and critical self-assessment as a background to strategic planning. SWOT stands for:

S = Strengths
W = Weaknesses
O = Opportunities
T = Threats

It looks at both the external and internal factors of an organisation: Strengths and Weaknesses are internal to the organisation, Opportunities and Threats are external.

Method

1. If you are a small group, draw a matrix of four squares as in the example below, and do the whole exercise together. Label the fields as Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. If there are enough of you, divide into four small groups and each take a flipchart and do one box, then discuss your results together.
2. Begin by brainstorming (listing) all strengths and weaknesses of the organisation that impact on the ability to carry out your advocacy. Include any factors that will help or hinder your work.

Strengths – key strengths, skills, resources, contacts competencies or advantages ('Unique Selling Points')
Weaknesses – things the organisation does less well and/or cannot cope with

Then do the same for Opportunities and Threats that may arise during the timespan of your advocacy, eg it might be over the next one to three years

Opportunities – opportunities that may arise for the organisation
Threats – potential threats to the organisation and its work (eg from clients, partners/competitors, or the external environment)

Strengths Positive characteristics and advantages of the issue, situation, or people	**Weaknesses** Limiting characteristics and disadvantages of the issue, situation, or people
Opportunities Possible chances to change things for the better	**Threats** Things that stop positive change from happening

Research and/or brainstorming can be used to generate the factors. If there is a facilitator, they encourage discussion and analysis. In identifying strengths and weaknesses, it is essential that an organisation's reflections are comprehensive and honest.

3. The main part of the exercise is the discussion that follows. Discuss for example the following questions:
    1. How can **strengths** be employed to take advantage of **opportunities**?
    2. How can **strengths** be used to counteract **threats**?
    3. How can **weaknesses** be overcome to take advantage of **opportunities**?
    4. How can **weaknesses** be overcome to counteract threats?
4. Select options for action and assess them according to their feasibility and potential benefit. Discuss the results and agree actions.

9. Involvement of the disadvantaged

This is a tool for analysing the most appropriate approach to the involvement of the disadvantaged in your advocacy work. It considers the pros and cons of three options as a basis for discussion and decision-making.

What is the issue?

On many occasions throughout history, well-meaning educated people have carried out advocacy on behalf of the disadvantaged. But most examples show that advocacy is much more effective if it is led by – or at the very least has a strong involvement by – the people affected by the issue.

Method

In groupwork, consider the question of how to involve the disadvantaged in your advocacy, and what is the role of 'allies'.

To take an example, the Senegal Federation of the Blind is advocating for braille to be used outside polling stations on election day. Some of the advocacy is led by visually impaired people, and they are being helped by various sighted volunteers, their 'allies'. Many of the tasks are easier for the sighted volunteers. But what should be the role of each?

Three approaches that can be considered are:

- Advocacy **for** the disadvantaged
- Advocacy **with** the disadvantaged
- Advocacy **by** the disadvantaged

Use a table like this one to have an honest discussion about the pros and cons.

For	With	By	
Advantages			
Disadvantages			

There is no one correct approach – each has advantages and disadvantages.

If you have greater skills and resources than the disadvantaged people, then doing advocacy for them can be more efficient. Sometimes it is safer for an outsider to be an advocate than the people themselves, who may suffer intimidation or retribution if they speak up.

Supporting disadvantaged people themselves to be their own advocates (advocacy by the disadvantaged) can be a more sustainable approach. It will continue after you have left. It also has the advantage of being more authentic and representative of the needs of disadvantaged people. This is VSO's preferred approach.

Advocacy with disadvantaged people, as in the Senegal example above, can be a happy medium between the two other positions. Many NGOs claim to follow this approach. However, it is not as simple as it sounds. For it to be genuine, disadvantaged people should be involved in choosing the issue, setting the objectives and deciding on the strategy, as well as sharing responsibility for putting the strategy into practice.

In addition to these practical considerations, how you see advocacy in this dimension will depend on the political culture in your country at present.

10. Risk analysis

This helps you carry out a risk analysis on your strategy or action plan – ie to assess what problems you might encounter, and how you may mitigate these.

Method

Preparation:

Provide participants in advance with copies of your draft strategy or action plan, and any important documents about your external environment (eg PESTLE), internal organisation (eg SWOT) and any information you have about the plans of your opponents.

Ask them to examine your draft strategy and consider any potential risks or threats (using both the documentation and their own knowledge and experience).

Meeting:

1. As a group, brainstorm any risks or threats that could jeopardise your plan. Put them on Post-it Notes.
2. Group and categorise these according to whether they are 'internal' or 'external'.
3. Discuss what steps you could take to mitigate the risks, either by changing your plan or integrating the risks into this plan. If there are any serious risks that would mean you have to change your plan, make sure everyone agrees.
4. Break into two groups – one to consider 'internal' risks and one to consider 'external' risks. Each group should be asked to categorise the risks, entering them on the table below, together with their thoughts on the action to be taken to mitigate these risks.
5. Each group should report back to the main meeting with its recommendations. The other group should then critique their analysis and suggestions, and add any agreed changes.

Risks Possible threat	**Probability** Likelihood of occurring (1=low, 5=high)	**Importance** (1=low, 5=high)	**Total Risk Level** (importance x likelihood)	**Mitigation** Steps to mitigate
Internal risks				
External risks				

At the end of this exercise it is important that the results be shared with the leaders of your organisation.

11. Log frame (or 'logical framework')

A log frame is a management tool that is often used in development work (both for service delivery projects and for advocacy projects). It provides a short summary framework for programme learning and review.

A good log frame ensures you have defined clear objectives. The framework encourages you to move away from being 'activity-driven' (which can lead to being 'busy going nowhere') and towards being 'result-driven'.

Method

The following framework is used to record your advocacy aim, objectives, outcomes and activities. The indicators of success mean it can be used as a project-monitoring tool.

Log frame

Overall Aim of the Advocacy: Date of this version:

Objectively Verified Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions	
Objectives 1 2 3			
Outcomes • • •			
Activities • • •	Inputs needed		

The log frame works on the following propositions:

- If these Activities are implemented, and these Assumptions hold, then the Outcomes will be achieved.
- If these Outcomes are achieved, and these Assumptions hold, then the Objectives will be achieved.
- If these Objectives are achieved, and these Assumptions hold, then the objectives will contribute significantly to the overall aim.

Unfortunately different agencies and donors sometimes use different words. But the concepts are the same. VSO uses the terms shown here, explained briefly below:

The **Overall Aim** is the long-term development impact or policy change you are aiming for. This will be achieved through your work and the work of many others.

The **Objective** is something you plan to achieve. Typically you should have two or three objectives only, and they are the medium-term results that your work will achieve. It is more specific – and shorter-term – than an aim.

Outcomes are the tangible results (changes, products or services) that the work will deliver.

An **Activity** is the detail of what is done to achieve the outcomes. Activities are building blocks that will contribute to the objectives.

Indicators are the evidence that shows how an objective or outcome has been achieved. They need to be measurable, as they provide a target against which progress may be measured. They should be objectively verifiable and define the performance standard required to achieve the objective.

Indicators may be defined by quality, quantity, location, and time. They can be qualitative or quantitative.

Means of Verification (MOV) tell us where we get the evidence that the objectives have been met and where the data necessary to verify the indicator can be found.

The framework is based on a set of **Assumptions**. Inherent in all plans are a series of risks. Assumptions are the conditions that must exist if the project is to succeed but which are not under the direct control of the project. They are included in the log frame, if they are:

- important for the project success
- quite likely to occur.

Assumptions influence the next higher level of achievement in the log frame, eg, the objective will be achieved, if the outcomes are carried out and the assumptions occur.

Thinking through your assumptions leads you to consider risk management and the contingency planning needed. Assumptions that are almost certain to occur should not be included in the log frame. Assumptions that are most likely **not** to occur and which **cannot be influenced** by alternative project strategies are called 'killer assumptions'. They will jeopardise the project success. When killer assumptions occur the project must be re-planned.

The logic is that if you carry out the activities these will result in the expected outcomes. If these outcomes are successful you should achieve your objectives. The successful accomplishment of the objectives should contribute towards successful completion of the final aim.

Fill in the log frame with the objectives, outcomes, activities, etc that you decided on during the strategic planning workshop. A log frame can never hold all the details of your project. It is partly a communications tool, partly a management tool. Try hard to keep your log frame to one page, or at the most two pages. If it goes over two pages then you have put in too much detail.

You should consult the log frame during monitoring and review times, to assess if your work is on track.

12. Managing coalitions

These are tips for working successfully in coalitions with other like-minded organisations.

Method

Read the advice, and apply it whenever applicable to your work with coalitions.

- Establish a steering group to guide and monitor implementation of the work, and make adjustments regularly. Try to be democratic, or at least participatory, in this.
- Establish a clear decision-making process that enables each coalition member to be involved. Members should not be left out of key decisions.
- The coalition should formulate a clear plan for how to achieve the advocacy objectives.
- Establish a clear operating structure. Vertical, hierarchical structures are rarely appropriate for developing coalitions – consider a more fluid horizontal structure, based on teamwork and rotating responsibilities.
- Define the following things up front: management responsibility, how finances are raised, how resources are distributed, how members are expected to participate, the consequences for members who fail to uphold their commitments to the coalition.
- Set up a fair division of roles and responsibilities to manage the workload.
- For specific tasks and activities, it might be beneficial to form subgroups. Subgroups should report back and be accountable to the larger coalition.
- When conflicts or disagreements arise, it is important to deal directly and openly with these. It is helpful to establish dispute procedures in advance (possibly use a mediator).
- Establish a clear communication system. Member organisations should be kept aware of developments and changes in the coalition on a regular basis.
- Fill expertise gaps by recruiting new members or upskilling current ones.
- Network to broaden the coalition's base of support (cooperate with other coalitions and alliances, or broaden the coalition to gain a wider base of support).
- Plan events incorporating credible spokespersons from different partner organisations.
- Create a member database (name, organisation, type and focus of organisation, contact details, etc).
- Plan well ahead – coalition action can be cumbersome.
- When the coalition has successes, celebrate and spread the glory. Motivation keeps coalitions going.
- If the coalition is going well, consider the pros and cons of creating a 'secretariat' (an office, with a paid coordinator or other staff).

13. Top tips for lobbying

This tool gives tips for effective lobbying.

Method

Consider the following and try to incorporate any approaches that are suitable for your national situation.

Planning and preparing

- Make a lobbying plan: WHAT is the case, WHO makes the decisions, WHEN do we approach our targets, HOW do we approach them, WHY is each action necessary?
- The objective must be realistic. Ask yourself: can we make this a proposition a decision-maker can say "yes" to?
- Always think: why should you want to know me, deal with this, read this? Put yourself in their shoes.
- Do less but do it better. Most lobbying is done to too many people in not enough depth.
- Good research is the base of your lobbying: source every statement or fact, anticipate the arguments against you and deal with them there and then.
- Some parliamentary monitoring is useful, but high-quality intelligence is more important (ie actively obtaining views on policy formulation, feedback on representations, attitudes towards your organisation, etc).

Building relations

- Make sure there is a point to every contact. The system only has so much patience.
- Assess the right level of seniority of official to build a relationship with.
- If necessary, use directories or consultants to help identify officials with interests similar to yours.
- In most cases you need to target officials and ministers, not political parties. For example in 90% of UK cases Parliament changes nothing. Only a few cases are genuinely political.

Winning and losing

- Never crow about your victories.
- Do not surprise the system. Brief officials before you meet ministers, brief frontbench researchers before meeting opposition spokespersons and advise officials before any announcement relevant to them.
- Never get "no" on the record – it is better to withdraw and fight again.
- It's never won until it's won. There are many cases where issues were changed at the last minute.

14. Successful media coverage (13 top tips)

This tool gives advice on obtaining favourable media coverage for your issue

Method

1. **Keep it short**
   Strip your message to the bare bones. People hardly have time to read these days. Put any detailed information in a 'fact page' at the end.

2. **Think headlines**
   If the crux of your message cannot be expressed in a few impactful words or one sentence then it's unlikely to be successful.

3. **Use consistent slogans/'soundbites'**
   This is the best way to make your campaign instantly recognisable, especially over an extended period. Make sure these summarise the central points of your message.

4. **Do it regularly**
   Regular communication is essential to build a loyal constituency.

5. **Be positive**
   Do not use a message that is totally negative. Offer a practical solution to the problem. This can inspire people.

6. **Set the agenda**
   Redefine the problem to fit your solution.

7. **Be visual**
   Pictures are much more effective and memorable than words, especially if they reinforce emotions. Forget the intellectual high ground. You are more likely to attract television attention if you can supply visual material in advance. Think photos, think YouTube, short DVD footage, or create a news event that will provide good pictures for TV.

8. **Appeal to emotions in news stories**
   Themes like conflict, fear, triumph over adversity (especially 'David and Goliath' stories).

9. **Entertain**
   Think of the media as theatre – it is primarily for entertainment. Recruit celebrities, leaders, or influential figures as a spokespeople. Devise creative ways of using celebrities for entertaining.

10. **Match the medium**
    Where possible, tailor the message to fit different media and different publications.

11. **Limit the campaign**
    Keep campaign segments to less than three months, otherwise everyone forgets the message, people lose interest and the campaign loses momentum.

12. **Use events to boost your release**
    Events can help to get media attention. Think about them from the media's point of view. It takes a lot to get journalists away from their desks. Make things interesting, eg a senior government minister or celebrity will interest the media (if they've got something to say). A huge pile of letters dumped on the lawns outside your parliament will make a good picture. An unknown person handing a politician a petition is unlikely to get the cameras rolling.

13. **Develop your theme over time**
    Try to get regular feature coverage with magazines, newspaper features, 'magazine'-style TV and radio programmes, etc. Journalists do not generally want you to write the stories for them, but they do like you to feed them story ideas and background information. This is best done on a one-to-one basis, eg by email or over the telephone. Don't harass them, but keep in regular contact.

Further advocacy resources

1) A selection of VSO materials and links

The main location for advocacy materials on the VSO International website is:
www.vsointernational.org/what-we-do/advocacy

START – The Simple Toolkit for Advocacy Research Techniques
www.vsointernational.org/Images/START_tcm76-21106.pdf

Two examples of VSO International Advocacy reports:
Managing Teachers, The Centrality of teacher management to quality education. 2008
http://www.vsointernational.org/Images/managing-teachers_tcm76-22721.pdf
Walking The Talk: putting women's rights at the heart of the HIV and AIDS response
http://www.vsointernational.org/Images/Walking_the_Talk_(English_version)_tcm76-21032.pdf

Two examples of VSO national advocacy reports:
Increased Male Involvement in Home-based Care to Reduce the Burden of Care on Women and Girls. By VSO-RAISA, Southern Africa, 2008
http://www.vsointernational.org/Images/raisa-increased-male-involvement-in-home-based-care_tcm76-23208.pdf
How Much is a Good Teacher Worth? VSO Ethiopia, October 2009
http://www.vsointernational.org/Images/how-much-is-a-good-teacher-worth_tcm76-24190.pdf

VSO Federations – Campaigning. See the website of each federation for their different campaigns and active citizenship.

2) Materials from other organisations

Addressing the Health Workforce crisis – A Toolkit for Health Professionals. By the Health Workforce Advocacy Initiative. 2008
http://www.healthworkforce.info/advocacy/HWAI_advocacy_toolkit.pdf

Advocacy for Social Justice: A global action and reflection guide. Oxfam America and the Advocacy Institute. Published by the Kumarian Press. 2001.
http://www.amazon.co.uk/Advocacy-Social-Justice-Global-Reflection/dp/1565491319

Advocacy in Action. A Toolkit to Support NGOs and CBOs. International HIV/AIDS Alliance. 2003.
http://www.aidsalliance.org/custom_asp/publications/view.asp?publication_id=142

Advocacy Manual for Gender and Water Ambassadors. Gender and Water Alliance. December 2002.
www.genderandwateralliance.org

'A' Frame for Advocacy, Population Communication Services, Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, USA. Available at: http://www.jhuccp.org/pr/advocacy/index.stm

Amnesty International Campaigning Manual. Amnesty International Publications, London. www.amnesty.org

A New Weave of Power, People and Politics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizens.
Just Associates, 2002
http://www.justassociates.org/tableofcontents.pdf

Change Your Life With Human Rights. A Self-Advocacy Book for People With Disabilities. Harvard Project on Disability. 2008. www.hpod.org

Creating Campaigns that Change the World. Interaction. http://www.interaction.org/library/

Critical Webs of Power and Change. Resource pack for planning, reflection and learning in people-centred advocacy. Action Aid International. 2005. www.actionaid.org.

FIGHT GLOBAL WARMING NOW: The Handbook for Taking Action in Your Community.
Bill McKibben, 2008
http://www.amazon.co.uk/FIGHT-GLOBAL-WARMING-NOW-Community/dp/0805087044/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1257702752&sr=8-2

Global Health Advocacy Manual. Global Health Council.
www.globalhealth.org

Human Rights. Yes! A human rights curriculum for people with disabilities.
www.humanrightsyes.org

News for a Change: An Advocate's Guide to Working with the Media. Sage Publications,
http://www.amazon.co.uk/News-Change-Advocates-Guide-Working/dp/0761919244

Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Paulo Freire. September 2000.
http://www.amazon.com/Pedagogy-Oppressed-Paulo-Freire/dp/0826412769

Policy Engagement: How Civil Society can be More Effective. Overseas Development Institute. 2006.
www.odi.org.uk/rapid.

Policy Players: A Power Map for Advocacy Planning. Susan Aradeon. UNFPA. 2000.
http://www.un.org/popin/regional/asiapac/fiji/advocacy.htm

Practical Techniques for Effective Lobbying. Hawksmere Special Briefing. Charles Miller. http://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/product/1854180894/ref=olp_product_details?ie=UTF8&me=&seller=

Sexual Assault Advocacy Guide. The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence.
http://www.naesv.org/Resources/AdvocacyManual030708.pdf

The Good Campaigns Guide. By Brian Lamb. Published by NCVO Publications. 2005.
http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/publications

Tools for Policy Impact: A Handbook for Researchers. Overseas Development Institute.
Daniel Start and Ingie Hovland. 2004.
www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Publications/Documents/Tools_handbook_final_web.pdf

Understanding Advocacy. HIV Advocacy from the Ground Up: A Toolkit for Strengthening Local Response (Asia and Pacific). APCASO. 2008.
www.apcaso.org.

Working for Change – A Handbook for Planning Advocacy. Save the Children.
http://www.campaignforeducation.org/resources/Jul2001/SCF_Handbook01.pdf

3) Websites from other organisations

Action for Advocacy
http://www.actionforadvocacy.org.uk/

Advocacy and Lobbying Toolkit
http://www.ctnonprofits.org/pages/NonprofitResources/Advocacy_Lobbying_Toolkit.asp

AidsMap Advocacy Resources
(http://www.aidsmap.com/en/docs/

Amnesty International – Lobbying
http://www.amnesty.org.uk/

Hearts and Minds – Effective Lobbying
http://www.heartsandminds.org/links/lobbylinks.htm

The Advocacy and Leadership Centre.
http://www.iscvt.org/what_we_do/advocacy_and_leadership_center/

ISBN 978-1-903697-17-7

Carlton House, 27a Carlton Drive
Putney, London, SW15 2BS, UK

+44 (0) 20 8780 7500
www.vsointernational.org

Published February 2012

VSO Bahaginan
www.vsobahaginan.org.ph

VSO Ireland
www.vso.ie

VSO Jitolee
www.vsojitolee.org

VSO Netherlands
www.vso.nl

VSO UK
www.vso.org.uk