

Advocacy and campaigning

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How To guide
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Advocacy and campaigning

Advocacy and campaigning are increasingly important approaches to relief and development used by NGOs.

At their best, they can make a huge difference to the lives of millions of people, tackling the root causes of poverty and disadvantage and not just its symptoms.

However, too often they are badly planned and executed, resulting in minimal impact.

Not only does this waste the precious resources entrusted to the NGO that could have been used for better things, but much worse than this it potentially blocks more effective advocacy and campaigns by occupying the limited political space and diverting public attention.

This guide gives a short overview of what advocacy and campaigning are and some of the key issues that you should address.

What is advocacy and what is campaigning?

One area of confusion is that the two terms are used differently by different people and organisations.

- Some see advocacy and campaigning as synonymous terms, both being umbrella terms for all forms of influencing (including, for example, lobbying and public campaigning).
- Some will see advocacy and campaigning as broadly the same, except that they see advocacy as being more reactive and direct, and campaigning as being more planned and proactive and involving multiple channels of influence.
- Others use the two terms very differently. For them advocacy relates

to engagement in government and inter-governmental policy processes. Campaigning, on the other hand, they equate to generating support and pressure from public audiences – an approach more accurately referred to as “public campaigning”.

This guide will use the first interpretation (ie advocacy and campaigning as words that can be used interchangeably).

What are advocacy and campaigning for?

There are also different views on what advocacy and campaigning are for and what is their scope.

The primary purpose of advocacy and campaigning can be seen to be one or more of the following:

- To influence public policy and practice
- To influence corporate policy and practice
- To influence public attitudes and behaviour
- To influence decision making processes so that affected communities are involved
- To empower affected communities to influence the decisions that affect them

In all cases, advocacy and campaigning are about promoting and trying to achieve some positive change, not just raising awareness of problems.

Where do advocacy and campaigning take place?

Advocacy and campaigning can happen at every level, from the most local situation to the global arena.

Advocacy and campaigning can take place

- in the North and in the South
- in democratic countries as well as those with authoritarian regimes
- in times of peace and stability and in times of conflict and natural disaster

However, the methods used will vary greatly in these different contexts.

Who does advocacy?

Advocacy by the people

Advocacy and campaigning can be led and undertaken by the people who are directly affected by the issue.

They are the ones who have the most legitimate voice and are in the best place to make judgments on any compromise positions that may be required.

Outsiders, including development NGOs, can have a role in supporting these affected communities to be their own advocates.

Outsiders should be very careful that they do not control the process or shape the outcome.

Leadership and decision making, wherever possible, should stay in the community.

Advocacy for the people

At the other extreme, people and organisations not directly affected by the issue, including staff and supporters of NGOs in the global North, can do advocacy and campaign on behalf of those who are affected.

In areas where human rights are not well respected, they may be in a safer

position to speak out than those affected.

They may also have greater and faster influence with powerful actors in the North, South and globally.

Wherever possible, affected communities should be consulted on both the solutions being recommended and the method of influencing being used.

A wide range of views should be sought and these differences acknowledged, not ignored.

Advocacy with the people

It may be that affected communities and others are both advocating or campaigning on the same or similar issues. It may be beneficial for there to be closer collaboration between them.

Many NGOs claim to do joint advocacy and campaigning with affected communities, but those with power (including money, status and knowledge) have to take extra care to ensure that they are not dominating the process.

The key test is whether affected communities are equal partners in decision making on the issue agenda, objectives and strategies, and are not just taking part in front-line activities organised by the NGO.

Approaches to advocacy

There is not one way to do advocacy. There is not even a best way to do advocacy. All depends on the issue you are advocating on and the context in which you are doing it.

Your choice of approach might depend on the answers to some of the following questions:

- Is the issue a technical one or is it politicised?
- Is the debate polarised or is there a well supported middle ground?
- Are there strong vested interests in a particular outcome, and how much influence do those vested interests have over the decision makers?
- How well understood is the issue?
- What capacity do you have to influence different audiences?
- What is the legal position on campaigning?

Advocacy is contested

In most cases, advocacy is contested.

There are opposing voices to what we are saying (if there were no opposition, then the changes we want would already be implemented).

In order to be effective and make an impact on people's lives, we need to adopt a rigorous and systematic planning process to analyse the context for our advocacy, understand the process of change and develop a clear influencing strategy.

Different approaches to influencing include:

- Participation in policy consultation processes
- Participation in policy networks outside of the decision-making process
- Lobbying of decision makers and their immediate advisors
- Gaining or mobilising support from those who can influence the decision making process

- Changing the wider climate of opinion about the issue
- Mobilising supporters and activists to express their concern to decision makers or others

Insiders and outsiders

Insiders prioritise building relationships of trust with decision makers and their advisors, whereas outsiders prioritise generating pressure on decision makers from external actors, including media and the public.

You can do both, but it is possible that effective external pressure will damage the relationship needed for effective insider influence.

The “seven deadly sins” of advocacy and campaigning

1. **Unclear aims and objectives**
2. **Activity planning happening before (or without) developing an influencing strategy**
3. **Action plans that run to an internal timetable**
4. **Lack of innovation**
5. **Messages that do not get noticed and move people**
6. **Poor monitoring and evaluation**
7. **Failing to focus**

Approaches to advocacy

Consultations

Responding to established consultation processes can be an important way of making your case and influencing the final outcome.

However, there are risks of spending time and resources on a process that may achieve little or is even just intended to deflect or delay criticism from NGOs.

Before responding to a consultation process, you should be clear about how it fits into your strategic priorities and how the potential benefits outweigh the risks.

Policy networks

Engaging in policy discussions with other NGOs and agencies can help to refine positions on complex issues and result in more robust and authoritative arguments.

However, they may only result in the adoption of a compromise “lowest common denominator” position.

Every minute that is spent talking with allies is a minute that is not being spent talking to opponents and persuading them to agree with you.

Lobbying

Lobbying – face to face meetings with individuals to persuade them on the merits of a particular course of action – are opportunities to present your case and to hear the position of the person you are lobbying.

They are best seen as negotiations,

drawing on power and influence that has been generated using other strategies before the lobby meeting.

Engaging influential audiences

Many individuals and groups have a direct or indirect influence over the decision making process.

Some may be sympathetic to your arguments but not motivated to use their influence, whereas others could be undecided, neutral or opposed to what you are calling for.

It should not be under-estimated how much time and effort it will take to persuade these audiences.

A robust stakeholder analysis is needed to help make the best strategic choices of target audience to achieve the maximum impact.

Public opinion

Changes in public opinion on an issue can influence the actions of governments – whether in democratic countries or in totalitarian states.

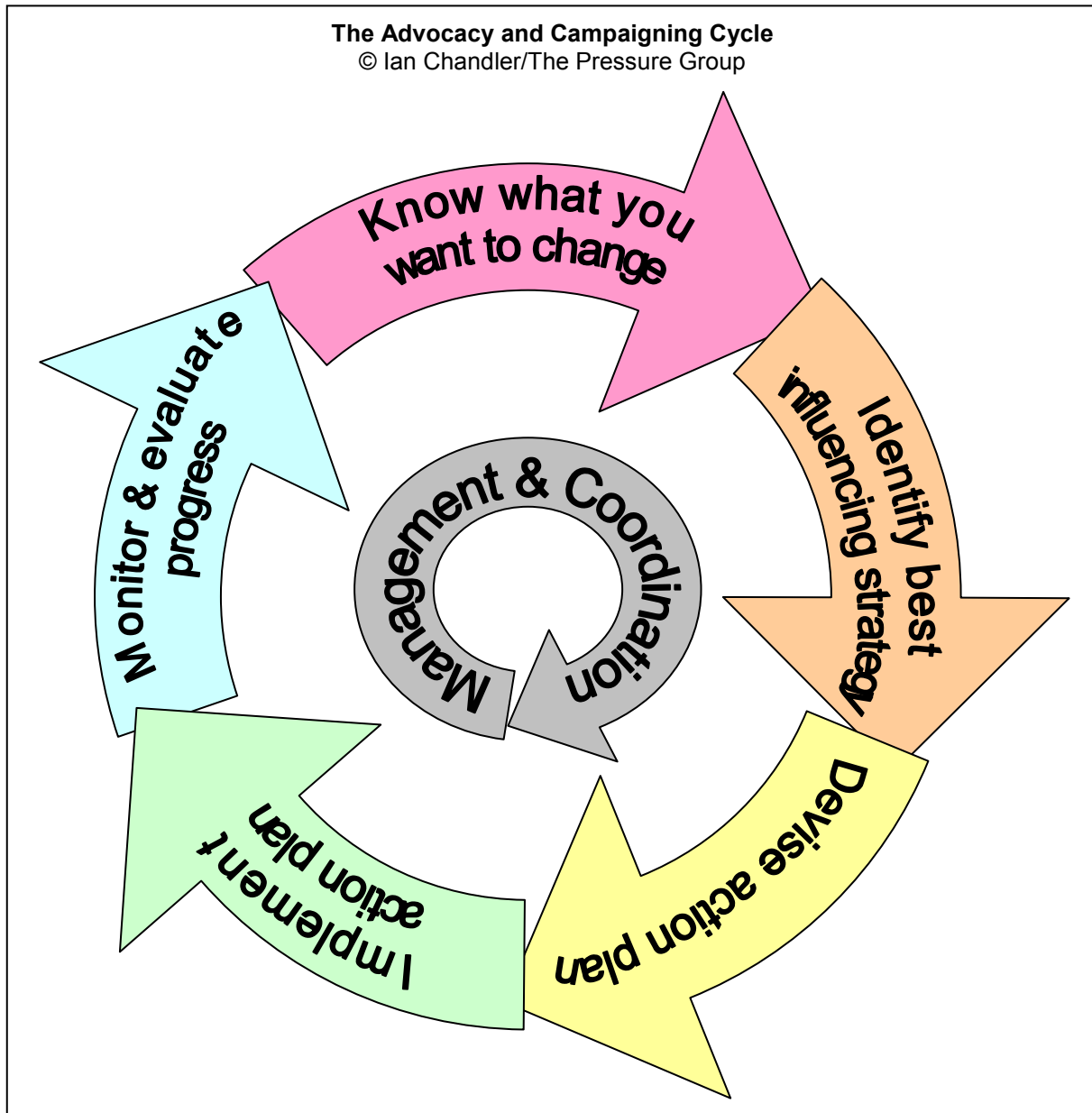
The political dynamics at that time and in relation to that issue will determine the scale of opinion shift that is needed to have an effect, and which particular segments of the public have the most influence.

Activism

Supporters can be mobilised to take many different types of action.

They can demonstrate their concern directly to the decision makers, or they can engage with other audiences to win their support and publicise the issue.

Supporters will have different levels of commitment and willingness to campaign, and engagement with them and the actions that they are asked to do will need to reflect this.



The advocacy and campaigning cycle

The Advocacy and Campaigning Cycle sets out the key phases that should be followed in order to plan and deliver effective advocacy and campaigning.

Each phase can be broken down into a number of key steps, and for each step there are a variety of tools and approaches that can be used.

For more on the advocacy and campaigning cycle come to the Bond training course on *Introduction to advocacy* (see page 8).

Further reading

If you are mainly working in international development and advocacy, then you should probably start with *A New Weave* or *Advocacy for Social Justice*, as these provide an accessible overview of advocacy planning and implementation.

The Good Campaigns Guide provides a clear approach to planning campaigning and advocacy, and its related publication *Is your Campaign Making a Difference?* is probably the best book around on the monitoring and evaluation of advocacy and campaigning.

All campaigners should read *The Tipping Point*, which is very easy to read and is full of useful insights.

Going into more depth and with more supporting evidence but just as easy to read is *Influence – The Psychology of Persuasion* and its shorter cousin *Yes!*

The planning of campaign communications is very well covered in *How to win campaigns*.

A New Weave of Power, People and Politics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation

Written by Lisa VeneKlasen with Valerie Miller, published by World Neighbours, Oklahoma USA.

Advocacy for Social Justice: A global action and reflection guide

Written by Oxfam America and the Advocacy Institute, published by the Kumarian Press (USA), distributed in the UK by Oxfam Publications

How to Win Campaigns – 100 steps to success

Chris Rose, published by Earthscan, London

Influence – The Psychology of Persuasion

Robert B Cialdini

Is your campaign making a difference?

Jim Coe & Ruth Mayne, published by NCVO Publications, London

The Good Campaigns Guide – Campaigning for Impact

By Tess Kingham & Jim Coe, published by NCVO Publications, London

The Tipping Point

Malcolm Gladwell, published by Abacus

Yes! 50 secrets from the science of persuasion

Goldstein, Martin & Cialdini, published by Profile Books

Find out more from Bond

Training courses

This guide will put you on the right path, but to really get to grips with the subject you need to attend:

- **Introduction to advocacy** with Ian Chandler

This course is part of Bond's regular open programme of short training courses, which also includes:

- **Inspiring supporter action** with Ian Chandler
- **UK corridors of power** with Jonathan Ellis
- **EU corridors of power** with Costanza de Toma

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