What Is Advocacy?

Background Notes

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

Advocacy includes both single-issue, time-limited campaigns as well as ongoing work undertaken around a range of issues. Advocacy activities may be conducted at the national, regional, or local level.

Within the FP/RH policy arena, advocacy efforts might address such things as enactment of a national population policy or inclusion of reproductive health services in a national health insurance plan. Operational FP/RH policies—where specific resource allocation and service delivery guidelines are formulated—are also potential objects for advocacy campaigns.

In Unit 1, the network members define advocacy for themselves and gain a thorough understanding of the concept and the strategy by exploring the various steps involved in an advocacy campaign. In addition, the participants identify the characteristics of advocacy that distinguish it from the related concepts of information, education and communication (IEC); public relations; and community mobilization.
By the end of this unit, participants will be able to
• Define advocacy;
• Identify the steps in the advocacy process; and
• Distinguish advocacy from related concepts.

2 hours and 30 minutes

• Newsprint, markers, and tape
• Copies of handouts
  III.1.1 Background Notes
  III.1.2 Sample Definitions of Advocacy
  III.1.3 Steps in the Advocacy Process
  III.1.4 Advocacy and Related Concepts
• Card template, “Steps in the Advocacy Process”

• Identify and invite a local RH specialist or advocacy expert to make the opening presentation for Activity 1. Ask the speaker to discuss the current and potential role of NGOs and other groups of civil society in the policymaking process; their role as representatives of traditionally underserved populations; the expanding role of NGOs in international arenas, such as Cairo, ICPD+5, and Beijing; and a personal account or local success story illustrating how advocacy has led to policy change. Ask the presenter to speak for no more than 30 minutes; explain that there will be time for questions and discussion.
• For Activity 3, copy and cut three sets of “Steps in the Advocacy Process” cards using the template at the end of the unit. Each set of cards should be on a different color paper or card.
• For Activity 4, draw the chart “Advocacy and Related Concepts” on newsprint.

What Is Advocacy?
Time: 1 hour and 5 minutes

Introduction (5 minutes)
Introduce the unit by reviewing the objectives and following major points:
• Advocacy is both a science and an art. From a scientific perspective, while there is no universal formula for effective advocacy, experience has shown that advocacy is most effective when it is planned systematically.
• Networks must follow and include specific steps when designing and implementing an advocacy campaign; each step requires distinct knowledge and skills.
• Advocacy is also an art. Successful advocates are able to articulate issues in ways that inspire and motivate others to take action. Successful advocates are skilled negotiators and consensus builders who look for opportunities to win modest but strategic policy gains while creating still other opportunities for larger victories.
• Artful advocates incorporate creativity, style, and even humor into their advocacy events in order to draw public and media attention to their cause.
• The art of advocacy cannot be taught through a training workshop; rather, it emerges from within network members themselves. Advocacy training provides the tools, but participants must add the spark.
• Section III of the manual is designed to teach both the science and the art of designing and implementing an advocacy campaign. The units in Section III correspond to the different steps of the advocacy process. Participants will learn how to use advocacy strategies and tools to influence decision makers and bring about more favorable FP/RH policies and programs.

**Defining Advocacy**

**Brainstorming** (15 minutes)

1. Write advocacy on the flipchart and ask participants to brainstorm words that come to mind when they think of advocacy.
2. Record everyone’s responses and include all contributions. If words or phrases are repeated, simply add a tick mark (✓) next to the repeated phrases.
3. The brainstorming activity should elicit responses such as those below.
III. THE ADVOCACY STRATEGY

1. WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

Small Groups (45 minutes)

1. Divide participants into small groups of four to five persons.
2. Instruct each group to draft a definition of advocacy. Encourage the groups to use the words on the flipchart to prepare their definitions. Allow 15 minutes.
3. Ask the groups to write their definitions on newsprint and post them on the wall.
4. Read each definition aloud and discuss the definitions by asking the group to identify the following:
   - Similarities among the definitions (i.e., words or phrases that appear in more than one definition). Circle the commonalities with a colored marker.
   - Elements that are unique to a definition (i.e., not repeated in any of the other definitions). Circle the unique words or phrases with a different colored marker.
5. Ask participants to decide whether one of the posted definitions should be the network’s agreed-upon definition of advocacy or whether they want to craft a new definition by using the common elements and ideas represented in their definitions.
6. Using clean newsprint, help the group write a definition that reflects the full group’s input; post the definition in a location where it can remain throughout the workshop.
7. Distribute Handout III.1.2 and review the definitions listed. The definitions come from a variety of sources, including international advocacy organizations and a POLICY partner network in Ghana.
8. Ask participants to review the definitions and identify points that are consistent with their own definition.

Transition

Now that participants have reached consensus on a working definition of advocacy, they will look at the different steps that comprise the advocacy process. Experience shows that advocacy is rarely an orderly, linear process. Some of the most successful advocacy efforts have resulted from rapid responses to needs and/or opportunities and have materialized amid chaotic environments. The ability to seize opportunities, however, does not replace the importance of a sound process and careful planning. The next activity demonstrates that looking at advocacy in a systematic way helps networks plan and implement effective advocacy campaigns.
Steps in the Advocacy Process
Time: 1 hour and 15 minutes

Sequencing the Steps (45 minutes)

1. Divide participants into three teams.
2. Distribute one set of sets of advocacy cards to each team. Be certain that the cards are NOT in the correct order when you give the sets to the teams.
3. Explain that each card in the set has one step of the advocacy process written on one side and a brief definition/explanation of the step on the other side.
4. Ask each team to read the cards and reach consensus on the order that would be followed to plan and implement an advocacy campaign. Allow 20 minutes.

Note to Facilitator: Generally, the teams order their cards to look something like the following.

5. Ask the teams to post their cards on the wall or display them on the floor so they are visible to the full group. If possible, have all three sets of cards displayed near one another so that participants can make comparisons.
6. When each team has posted its cards, ask participants to gather around the three arrangements and to identify similarities and differences.
7. Refer to the first set of cards and ask Team 1 members the following:
   • Did everyone agree on the final order?
   • Where did group members disagree on the sequence of cards and what were the areas of debate?
   • Which, if any, steps did participants have difficulty understanding?
8. Ask the other participants if they have questions for the team.
9. Repeat the process for Teams 2 and 3.
10. When all three teams have presented their work, lead a general discussion structured around the following questions:
   • Did the teams all start with the same step? Did they have the same or different ending step?
   • Were there any steps that were ordered concurrently in the process?
   • Were any important steps left out of the process?

Presentation on the Advocacy Process (30 minutes)

1. Explain to participants that the purpose of the sequencing activity was to introduce advocacy as a systematic process with distinct steps and activities. While the steps may not always occur in the same order during an actual advocacy campaign, it is important to consider each step as a critical and integral piece of the advocacy effort.
2. Distribute Handout III.1.3: Steps in the Advocacy Process or present it on an overhead transparency or flipchart.
3. Briefly explain each of the steps in the process by using the notes below as a guide. Write key words and phrases on newsprint as you go through each step. Explain that the remaining units in the workshop will address each of these steps in greater detail, but not in the same sequence as in the model. Some steps are combined in a unit (e.g., message development and channels of communication).

Steps in the Advocacy Process

I. Define the Issue. Advocacy begins with an issue or problem that the network agrees to support in order to promote a policy change. The issue should meet the network’s agreed-upon criteria and support the network’s overall mission (e.g., issue is focused, clear, and widely felt by network constituents). Ask participants to identify ways in which the network could identify issues. Include the following:
   • analysis of the external environment, including political, economic, social, and other factors;
   • organizing issue identification meetings; and
   • collecting and analyzing data about the FP/RH situation (DHS, baseline surveys, focus groups, census, etc.).

II. Set Goal and Objectives. A goal is a general statement of what the network hopes to achieve in the long term (three to five years). The advocacy objective describes short-term, specific, measurable achievements that contribute to the advocacy goal.
III. **Identify Target Audience.** The primary target audience includes the decision makers who have the authority to bring about the desired policy change. The secondary target audience includes persons who have access to and are able to influence the primary audience—other policymakers, friends or relatives, the media, religious leaders, etc. The network must identify individuals in the target audience, their positions, and relative power base and then determine whether the various individuals support, oppose, or are neutral to the advocacy issue.

IV. **Build Support.** Building a constituency to support the network’s advocacy issue is critical for success. The larger the support base, the greater are the chances of success. Network members must reach out to create alliances with other NGOs, networks, donors, coalitions, civic groups, professional associations, women’s groups, activists, and individuals who support the issue and will work with you to achieve your advocacy goals. How do you identify potential collaborators? Members can attend conferences and seminars, enlist the support of the media, hold public meetings, review publications, and use the Internet.

V. **Develop the Message.** Advocacy messages are developed and tailored to specific target audiences in order to frame the issue and persuade the receiver to support the network’s position. There are three important questions to answer when preparing advocacy messages: Who are you trying to reach with the message? What do you want to achieve with the message? What do you want the recipient of the message to do as a result of the message (the action you want taken)?

VI. **Select Channels of Communication.** Selection of the most appropriate medium for advocacy messages depends on the target audience. The choice of medium varies for reaching the general public, influencing decision makers, educating the media, generating support for the issue among like-minded organizations/networks, etc. Some of the more common channels of communication for advocacy initiatives include press kits and press releases, press conferences, fact sheets, a public debate, a conference for policymakers, etc.

VII. **Raise Funds.** Advocacy campaigns can always benefit from outside funds and other resources. Resources can help support the development and dissemination of materials, cover network members’ travel to meet with decision makers and generate support, underwrite meetings or seminars, absorb communication expenses, etc. Advocacy networks should develop a fundraising strategy at the outset of the campaign to identify potential contributors of financial and other resources.
VIII. Develop Implementation Plan. The network should develop an implementation plan to guide its advocacy campaign. The plan should identify activities and tasks, responsible persons/committees, the desired time frame, and needed resources.

On-going Activities

Collect Data. Data collection supports many of the stages of the advocacy process shown in the model. Advocacy networks should collect and analyze data to identify and select their issue as well as develop advocacy objectives, craft messages, expand their base of support, and influence policymakers. Data collection is an ongoing activity for the duration of the advocacy campaign.

Monitor and Evaluate. As with data collection, monitoring and evaluation occur throughout the advocacy process. Before undertaking the advocacy campaign, the network must determine how it will monitor its implementation plan. In addition, the group should decide how it will evaluate or measure progress and results. Can the network realistically expect to bring about a change in policy, programs, or funding as a result of its efforts? In specific terms, what will be different following the completion of the advocacy campaign? How will the group know that the situation has changed?

4. In closing, remind participants that advocacy activities are often carried out in turbulent environments. Frequently, networks do not have the opportunity to follow each step in the advocacy process according to the model presented here. Nevertheless, a systematic understanding of the advocacy process will help advocates plan wisely, use resources efficiently, and stay focused on the advocacy objective.

Advocacy and Related Concepts

Time: 45 minutes

Note to Facilitator: After reviewing the various definitions of advocacy and the steps in the advocacy process, participants should have a clear sense of the meaning of advocacy. Nevertheless, advocacy is often confused with other concepts that share common elements—IEC (information, education, and communication), public relations, community mobilization, and social marketing. It is helpful to describe these other concepts to reduce any remaining confusion.

1. Explain that Activity 4 is designed to compare and contrast advocacy with related concepts.
2. Show participants the chart you have prepared on newsprint.
### Advocacy and Related Concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept/Approach</th>
<th>Target Audience</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>How Do You Measure Success?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IEC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Relations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Mobilization</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3. Help participants fill in the chart, beginning with IEC. Ask the group the following questions:
   - Who has managed or implemented an IEC campaign?
   - Who is the target audience of an IEC campaign? (Possible responses include women, men, youth, residents of a predetermined geographic area, etc. While audiences vary from one IEC campaign to the next, they typically constitute a particular population defined by sex, age, geography, etc. Write participants’ response in the appropriate box on the chart.)
   - What is the objective of an IEC campaign? (Responses should include “raise awareness or change behavior.” Write behavior change in the appropriate box.)
   - How do you measure the success of an IEC campaign? In other words, what objective indicators of change will tell IEC campaign organizers that their campaign has succeeded? (Responses will vary according to the campaign’s objective, but write several examples in the box, such as the percentage of youth using condoms, number of women who request family planning services, number of condoms sold.)

4. Continue to complete the chart for Public Relations (PR), adapting the questions listed above. Ask the group to think about a local business and to consider how the company uses public relations and advertising to promote its services or products. Using the local example, complete the PR row of the chart. An example from a workshop in Mexico follows:

   **Business**
   Aeroméxico, a large Mexican airline  
   **Target Audience**
   Mexican consumer  
   **Objective**
   To promote company image and boost sales  
   **Measure of Success**
   Increased ticket sales; percent increase of new passengers
5. Now, help the group think about an advocacy campaign. Repeat the same questions and fill in the answers on the chart. Common answers for the advocacy questions follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Target Audience</strong></th>
<th>Policymakers (the decision makers with the authority to affect the advocacy objective)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective</strong></td>
<td>To change policies, programs, or the allocation of public resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Measure of Success</strong></td>
<td>Adoption of a new or more favorable policy/program; percent shift in resource allocation; new line item in a public sector budget, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Finally, ask the group to think about the concept and practice of community mobilization and then complete the chart. Use the following example to help guide the discussion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Target Audience</strong></th>
<th>Community members and leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective</strong></td>
<td>Build a community’s capacity to rank its needs and take action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Measure of Success</strong></td>
<td>A community problem is solved or a need is met. Increased participation in and ownership of the problem-solving process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Summarize the activity by moderating a discussion organized around the following questions:

- What characteristics do all four of these approaches share? Among the range of answers, participants might note that all four approaches include strategies for promoting change and are most effective when planned systematically.

- How does advocacy stand apart from the other approaches? Advocacy always seeks to change a policy, resource allocation, or operational policy. Advocacy efforts usually include an IEC component to raise the awareness of key audiences, but advocacy does not stop with awareness raising. The advocacy process is complete when a policymaker implements the prescribed policy action. While the general public may be one of the audiences for an advocacy campaign, the public is targeted to engender support and pressure policymakers. If the network focuses on the objective of its approach, it will be able to distinguish advocacy from related concepts.
III. THE ADVOCACY STRATEGY

1. WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

Advocacy must be defined within each national or regional context, particularly when the term is translated into another language. With its focus on policy change, however, advocacy is universal and easily distinguishable from related concepts such as IEC, public relations, community mobilization, etc. Furthermore, networks must approach an advocacy campaign as they would any strategic exercise, by systematically addressing key steps and activities. **Distribute handouts for Unit 1.**

The first step in the advocacy strategy is selecting the issue. In the next unit, participants will carry out a brief analysis to identify and rank their own FP/RH issues for advocacy as a prerequisite to developing goals and objectives.
Handout  III.1.1

What Is Advocacy?
Background Notes

There are as many definitions of advocacy as there are groups and networks advocating. However, each definition shares common language and concepts. Advocacy is first and foremost a process, occurring over unspecified amounts of time, sometimes brief and often lengthy. Advocacy is also strategic and targets well-designed activities to key stakeholders and decision makers. And lastly, advocacy is always directed at influencing policy, laws, regulations, programs, or funding—decisions made at the upper-most levels of public or private sector institutions. Advocacy includes both single-issue, time-limited campaigns as well as ongoing work undertaken around a range of issues. Advocacy activities may be conducted at the national, regional, or local level.

Within the FP/RH policy arena, advocacy efforts might address such things as enactment of a national population policy or inclusion of reproductive health services in a national health insurance plan. Operational FP/RH policies—where specific resource allocation and service delivery guidelines are formulated—are also potential objects for advocacy campaigns. In Unit 1, the network members define advocacy for themselves and gain a thorough understanding of the concept and the strategy by exploring the various steps involved in an advocacy campaign. In addition, the participants identify the characteristics of advocacy that distinguish it from the related concepts of information, education and communication (IEC); public relations; and community mobilization.

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

1. WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

Handout III.1.2

Sample Definitions of Advocacy

The definitions below reflect how various organizations understand and operationalize advocacy.

“Advocacy is the act or process of supporting a cause or issue. An advocacy campaign is a set of targeted actions in support of a cause or issue. We advocate a cause or issue because we want to

- build support for that cause or issue;
- influence others to support it; or
- try to influence or change legislation that affects it.

— International Planned Parenthood Federation, IPPF Advocacy Guide

“Advocacy is a process that involves a series of political actions conducted by organized citizens in order to transform power relationships. The purpose of advocacy is to achieve specific policy changes that benefit the population involved in this process. These changes can take place in the public or private sector. Effective advocacy is conducted according to a strategic plan and within a reasonable time frame.”

— The Arias Foundation (Costa Rica)

“Advocacy is speaking up, drawing a community’s attention to an important issue, and directing decision-makers toward a solution. Advocacy is working with other people and organizations to make a difference.”

— CEDPA, Cairo, Beijing and Beyond: A Handbook on Advocacy for Women Leaders

“Advocacy is defined as the promotion of a cause or the influencing of policy, funding streams or other politically determined activity.”

— Advocates for Youth, Advocacy 101

“Colleagues in India describe advocacy as an organized, systematic, intentional process of influencing matters of public interest and changing power relations to improve the lives of the disenfranchised. Other colleagues in Latin America define it as a process of social transformation aimed at shaping the direction of public participation, policies, and programs to benefit the marginalized, uphold human rights, and safeguard the environment. African colleagues describe their advocacy as being pro-poor, reflecting core values such as equity, justice, and mutual respect, and focusing on empowering the poor and being accountable to them.

— Institute for Development Research, Advocacy Sourcebook
“Advocacy consists of different strategies aimed at influencing decision-making at the local, provincial, national and international levels, specifically:

**Who decides** – elections, appointments and selection of policy-makers, judges, ministers, boards of advisors, managing directors, administrators, etc.

**What is decided** – policies, laws, national priorities, services, programmes, institutions, budgets.

**How it is decided** – accessibility of citizens to information and the process extent of consultation, accountability and responsiveness of decision-makers to citizens and other stakeholders.

Policies and decisions are solutions to concrete problems. Effective advocacy requires sharp understanding and analysis of a concrete problem, and a coherent proposal for a solution.”

— InterAction, Women’s Advocacy Workshop materials

Advocacy is the art of influencing individuals or collective decision- or policy-making to effect a positive change in an issue or situation.

— POLICY Project workshop participants, March 1997, Accra, Ghana
Advocacy Process

- Issue
- Goal and Objectives
- Target Audience
- Building Support
- Message Development
- Channels of Communication
- Fundraising
- Implementation
## Advocacy and Related Concepts

The following chart illustrates the difference between advocacy and several related concepts. Advocacy can usually be distinguished from other approaches in that the objective of advocacy is policy change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Actors/Organizers</th>
<th>Target Audience</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Measuring Success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information,</td>
<td>Service providers</td>
<td>Individuals Segment of a community (women, men, youth)</td>
<td>Raise awareness and change behavior</td>
<td>Sorting by audience Mass media campaigns Community outreach Traditional media</td>
<td>Change in knowledge or skills (behavior change) Process indicators Focus groups Service statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>(IEC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Relations</td>
<td>Commercial institutions</td>
<td>Consumers</td>
<td>Improve the company’s image and increase sales</td>
<td>Large-scale advertising (radio, TV, print media) Public events Sponsoring a “charity”</td>
<td>Improved public perception Increased sales Increased market share</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Community members and leaders</td>
<td>Community members and leaders</td>
<td>Build a community’s capacity to rank needs and take action</td>
<td>Door-to-door visits Village meetings Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)</td>
<td>Issue-specific process and outcome indicators Quality of participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobilization</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>NGOs/networks Special interest groups</td>
<td>Public institutions and policymakers</td>
<td>Change policies, programs, and resource allocation</td>
<td>Focus on policymakers with the power to affect advocacy objective High-level meetings Public events (debates, protests, etc.)</td>
<td>Process indicators Media scans Key informant interviews Focus groups Opinion surveys</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III. THE ADVOCACY STRATEGY

1. WHAT IS ADVOCACY

**Issue**

The problem that requires a policy action.

**Goal**

A statement of the general result you want to achieve.

**Objective**

Incremental steps toward achieving your goal that are:
- specific
- measurable
- realistic
- time-bound
Target Audience

The policymakers you are trying to influence to support your issue, e.g., parliamentarians, local officials, ministry officials.

Building Support

Building alliances with other groups, organizations, or individuals who are committed to support your issue.
III. THE ADVOCACY STRATEGY

1. WHAT IS ADVOCACY

Steps in the Advocacy Process—Card Template

- **Message Development**
  - The means by which a message is delivered to the various target audiences, e.g., radio, television, flyers, press conferences, meetings.

- **Channels of Communication**
  - Statements tailored to different audiences that define the issue, state solutions, and describe the actions that need to be taken.
III. THE ADVOCACY STRATEGY

1. WHAT IS ADVOCACY

Steps in the Advocacy Process—Card Template

Identify and attract resources (money, equipment, volunteers, supplies, space) to implement your advocacy campaign.

Carry out a set of planned activities to achieve your advocacy objectives (action plan.)

Fundraising

Implementation
Data Collection

Monitoring and Evaluation

Steps in the Advocacy Process—Card Template

Gathering, analyzing, and using quantitative and qualitative information to support each step of your campaign.

Monitoring: A process of gathering information to measure progress toward your advocacy objectives.

Evaluation: A process of gathering and analyzing information to determine if the advocacy objectives have been achieved.