Issues, Goals, and Objectives: Building the Foundation

Background Notes

The first two steps in any advocacy campaign are selecting the advocacy issue and developing the goal and objective. These pieces of the advocacy process make up some of the most challenging, analytic work facing an advocacy network. Completing these steps requires an ability to analyze complex environments and interrelated problems, discern a policy solution for a selected problem, envision a long-term result, and articulate a short-term objective. The quality of the network's efforts in these areas will have an important bearing on the success of the steps that follow. These elements provide the foundation for an effective advocacy campaign. Without a clear, articulated issue and well-defined goal and objective, the remaining steps of the campaign will lose focus.

An advocacy issue is the problem or situation that an advocacy group seeks to rectify. Some of the networks with which the POLICY Project works have focused their efforts around issues such as limited access to high-quality family planning services, contraceptive self-reliance, and the need for adolescent reproductive health services and education. Some global advocacy issues that have attracted international attention are the use of antipersonnel landmines; universal, safe working conditions; and widespread sexual exploitation of women and girls. In this unit, participants will select an issue that is widely felt by their constituency and begin to build an advocacy campaign around that issue.

In various settings, the terms goal and objective are used interchangeably. In some instances, an objective is broad and a goal is narrow; in others, the meanings are reversed. For the purpose of the advocacy workshop, an **advocacy goal** is the long-term result (three to five years) that the network is seeking. Participants should envision how the policy environment will be changed as a result of their advocacy efforts. Will all people of reproductive age have access to effective family planning services? Will the government draft, approve, and implement a national HIV/AIDS policy using a transparent, participatory approach? These examples represent a long-term vision for policy change. An NGO network may not be capable of achieving its goal single-handedly, but the goal statement can orient an advocacy network over the long term.

An **advocacy objective** is a short-term target (one to two years) that contributes toward achievement of the long-term goal. A sound objective is specific, measurable, realistic, and time-bound. Often, networks work on two or more objectives simultaneously in their efforts to achieve a single goal. It is important that an advocacy objective identify the specific policy body with the authority to fulfill the objective as well as the policy decision or action that is desired. Two examples of sound advocacy objectives follow: to persuade the Ministry of Health to overturn the ban on community-based distribution of FP services, and to secure funding for a pilot family life education (FLE) program in secondary schools from the Inter-Ministerial Commission on Youth.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, participants will be able to
- Select an issue as the focus of their advocacy campaign;
- Develop a long-term advocacy goal for the issue;
- Set a short-term advocacy objective to contribute to the broader goal.

TIME

2 hours and 45 minutes

MATERIALS
HANDOUTS

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Copies of handouts
  - III.2.1   Background Notes
  - III.2.2   Definition of Reproductive Health
  - III.2.3   Checklist for Selecting an Advocacy
            Objective

PREPARATION

- Write the definition of reproductive health on an overhead transparency or flipchart for Activity 1.
- Write the definitions of advocacy goal and objective on the flipchart for Activity 2.
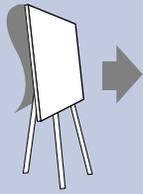
ACTIVITY 1

Key FP/RH Issues
Time: 1 hour

Identifying Issues (30 minutes)

Note to Facilitator: If participants have completed Section I of this advocacy manual, they have likely agreed on a reproductive health issue for their advocacy action. Assuming that the network has clear agreement on the issue, you can skip Activity 1 and move directly to Activity 2.

1. Review the objectives for Unit 1 and explain that participants will identify priority issues in reproductive health; select an advocacy issue; set a clear, relevant advocacy goal; and develop objectives.
2. Present the definition of reproductive health that you have written on the flipchart or overhead transparency. Read the definition aloud or ask a participant to do so. Explain that the definition of reproductive health emerged from the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo and that 179 governments reached consensus on the definition.

> **Reproductive Health** is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters related to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes. People are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life and they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so. Men and women have the right to be informed and have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of their choice for the regulation of fertility, as well as access to health care for safe pregnancy and childbirth.
> — Based on paragraph 7.2 in the ICPD Programme of Action, as summarized in *Action for the 21st Century/Reproductive Health and Rights for All*

3. Confirm that participants understand the definition and that it is applicable within their environment. Are any participants unfamiliar with the definition? Are any participants surprised by the components of the definition?
4. Lead participants in a brainstorming exercise to identify the reproductive health issues in their country. Ask participants to reflect on the definition of reproductive health and think about the issues they face in their daily work and the principal concerns and problems of the clients and communities they serve. Some examples are shown below.
5. Record all responses on the flipchart until everyone has had an opportunity to contribute.
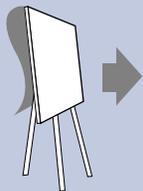
Reproductive Health Issues in _____

√ Rising incidence of STDs/AIDS
√ Lack of access to high-quality FP services
√ No youth-friendly clinics
√ Increase in domestic violence
√ Rise in teen pregnancies

Ranking Issues (30 minutes)

1. Review the list of reproductive health issues with participants to clarify ambiguity and eliminate duplications. Be certain that everyone has the same understanding of each of the issues listed.
2. Explain that participants are going to rank the issues.
3. Ask each participant to come up to the list on the flipchart and tick (✓) the three issues that he/she feels are most urgent and/or most relevant to his/her work.
4. Allow sufficient time for each participant to approach the board and tick off his/her issues.

Note to Facilitator: Before participants make their choices, ask them to take a minute to think about the issues listed on the flipchart and to try to define a policy solution for each issue. Use domestic violence as an example. One strategy to reduce the incidence of domestic violence may be to launch an IEC campaign directed at victims and/or abusers. Another solution may be to persuade the Ministry of Justice to press for enforcement of existing domestic violence laws. A third approach may be to convince the Chief of Police to initiate and fund a domestic violence training program for police officers. The first strategy is NOT an advocacy strategy because it does not involve a policy solution; rather, it seeks to increase knowledge and change the behaviors of individuals. The second two examples ARE advocacy strategies because they each involve a policy response. If any of the participants is confused or has difficulty thinking in terms of a policy response for the issues listed, refer to Handout III.1.4: Advocacy and Related Concepts.

5. At the end of the voting process, tally the ticks (✓) for each issue and write the total next to the issue. Some issues will emerge as especially important to the group.
6. Circle the three issues that received the largest number of votes.
7   Explain that the next step is for participants to choose ONE of the three issues as their highest priority for an advocacy strategy.
8. Discuss each of the three issues in detail by using the following questions as a guide and writing some of the responses on the newsprint:
    - Why is this issue important to the network at this time?
    - What are some examples of policy solutions for this issue?
    - What exactly does the issue encompass?
    - How easy or difficult will it be to build support around the issue?
    - What else is happening with respect to this issue in the external environment?
    - How does it coincide with the group's analysis of "burning issues" in the policy arena (Section II, Unit 2)?
9. Explain that the process is not intended to determine scientifically which is the most important reproductive health issue. Instead, the purpose is to determine which issue is most crucial to the work and lives of the network andits constitutes. Advocates are most successful when they feel a deep concern or passion for their advocacy issue.
10. After each issue has been discussed, help the group reach consensus on a single issue as the focus of its advocacy campaign. Remind the group that it will have the opportunity to take on other issues in the future.

Transition
Now that the network has selected an advocacy issue for its first campaign, participants will work together to develop the advocacy goal and set the advocacy objectives.

ACTIVITY 2

### Developing an Advocacy Goal
Time: 45 minutes

1. Introduce the topic of advocacy goals and objectives by sharing the definitions on newsprint or on an overhead transparency. Read the definitions aloud and make the following points:
    - It is important, at this stage, to differentiate between an advocacy goal and an objective because the definitions often vary from one country to another and from one network to another.
    - For the purpose of this workshop, the following definitions are used:
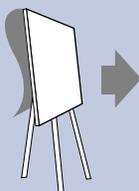
An **advocacy goal** is the long-term result (three to five years) of your advocacy effort; it is your vision for change.

An **advocacy objective** is the short-term target (one to two years) that contributes toward your goal.

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2. Share the following example from one of the POLICY partner networks to clarify the differences and relationship among an advocacy issue, goal, and objective. Write it on newsprint.
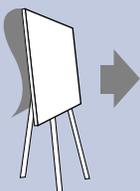
Advocacy issue – Contraceptive self-reliance
Advocacy goal – Guaranteed access to high-quality family planning services for all couples in Country X
Advocacy objective – Secure a commitment from the Ministry of Health that it will allocate sufficient funding to purchase contraceptive commodities

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3. Ask participants to highlight the difference between the goal and the objective. Include the following points:
    - The **advocacy goal** is a long-term result. It is unlikely that the network can achieve the goal on its own; therefore, the goal can be considered external to the network. In other words, the network will not hold itself accountable for achieving the goal, even though the goal is the ultimate, desired result.
    - The **advocacy objective**, on the other hand, is achievable by the network on its own. It is a short-term target that is achievable—according to the network's assessment—within the next one to two years. Success can be measured easily—either the MOH allocates the funds or not. In a sense, the objective is the network's internal target. The network plans to effect the change with its own resources, energy, and action. The advocacy objective clearly contributes to the broader goal.

4. Divide participants into three working groups.
5. Ask each group to draft an advocacy goal for the advocacy issue selected by the full group. The goal statement should describe a long-term, desired change related to the issue. Allow 20 minutes and ask the groups to write their goals on newsprint.
6. Ask each group to share its goal statement.
7. Review each goal statement by using the following questions to guide the discussion:
   - Is the goal achievable through a series of policy decisions or changes? If policy change cannot contribute to achieving a particular goal, it is probably not an advocacy goal. Often, a goal calls for policy action as well as for public awareness raising. In that case, an advocacy strategy can be used to bring about the necessary policy changes while an IEC/public awareness campaign can focus on changing public behavior or norms.
   - How are the three goal statements similar or different? Help participants combine the goals into one statement or select the one goal they like the best. If none of the statements is an acceptable advocacy goal, return to the definition and the example you shared earlier and work with participants to develop an acceptable advocacy goal.

Note to Facilitator: Before moving on to the next activity, participants must agree on a single advocacy goal as the focus of their campaign.

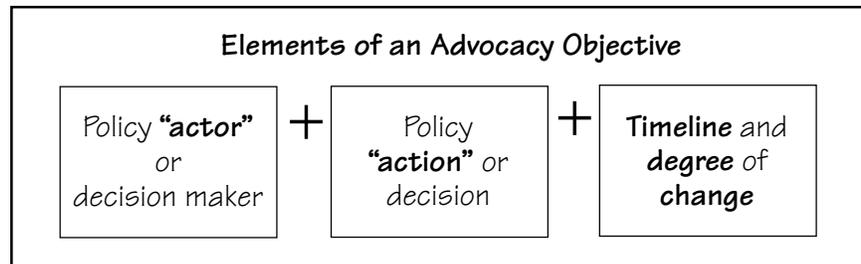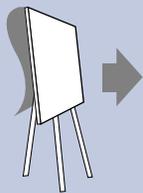# ACTIVITY 3

Setting Advocacy Objectives
Time: 1 hour

1. Ask participants if anyone has experience in establishing programmatic objectives. Explain that such experience is helpful in setting advocacy objectives. Sound objectives are essential to any planning process—whether planning a reproductive health program or an advocacy campaign. Clear and concisely written objectives can bring clarity and direction to the rest of the planning process.
2. Ask participants to list the criteria or characteristics they generally use to develop programmatic objectives and write their responses on the flipchart. Many groups mention the SMART criteria for objectives as shown below, but others may be listed as well.

> **Criteria for Setting Objectives**
>
> **S** – specific
> **M** – measurable
> **A** – achievable
> **R** – realistic
> **T** – time-bound
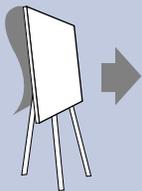
3. Now ask participants the following questions:
   - Do the SMART characteristics also apply to advocacy objectives?
   - What, if any, other criteria or elements should be included in an advocacy objective?
4. Explain that an advocacy objective should be SMART but that it should also include several other elements. Write the following on the flipchart and give a brief description of each element:

Elements of an Advocacy Objective

Policy **"actor"** or decision maker	$+$	Policy **"action"** or decision	$+$	**Timeline** and **degree** of **change**

   - Policy actor or decision maker is the individual with the power to convert the advocacy objective into action (i.e., Minister of Health, Parliamentary Finance Committee, etc.).
   - Policy action or decision is the action required to achieve the objective (i.e., adopt a certain policy, allocate funds to support a specific program or initiative, etc.).
   - Timeline describes when the objective will be achieved. Advocacy objectives should be achievable within one to two years. Some advocacy objectives also indicate the **degree of change**—or a quantitative measure of change—desired in the policy action. For example, degree of change could be expressed as redirecting 25 percent of the regional family planning budget to target adolescent services.
5. Divide participants into three working groups and ask each group to draft an advocacy objective that
   - responds to the advocacy issue;
   - contributes toward achieving the advocacy goal; and
   - meets the criteria and elements listed on the flipchart (SMART, etc.).
6. When the groups have completed the exercise, distribute and review Handout III.2.3: Checklist for Selecting an Advocacy Objective. Ask the groups to assess their draft objectives according to the nine criteria listed on the handout.
7. Invite each group to read its objective and present the results of its analysis. Ask the full group for comments or suggestions and be sure that the policy actor and policy action are clearly identified in each objective.
8. After the presentations and discussion of each objective, encourage the three groups to refine their objectives if they would like. Explain that the three objectives will be the basis of the upcoming work on audience analysis and message development.

SUMMARY

An advocacy campaign coalesces around an issue or problem that responds to the interests of the network and is of concern to members' constituents. The network, in turn, develops a long-term goal that addresses the issue and sets advocacy objectives that define the policy actions sought to support achievement of the goal. The issue, goal, and objective form the foundation of the network's advocacy campaign and provide the framework within which to design advocacy activities. **Distribute handouts for Unit 2.**

MOVING AHEAD

The advocacy process is off to a sound start. Participants begin to design and tailor strategies for advocacy actions in the next unit as they identify and analyze their target audiences through power mapping.

Handout III.2.1

Issues, Goals, and Objectives:
Building the Foundation

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Handout III.2.2

Definition of Reproductive Health

Reproductive Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters related to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes. People are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life and they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so. Men and women have the right to be informed and have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of their choice for the regulation of fertility, as well as access to health care for safe pregnancy and childbirth.

—Based on paragraph 7.2 in the ICPD Programme of Action, as summarized in Action for the 21st Century/Reproductive Health and Rights for All

Family Care International (FCI), 1994

Checklist for Selecting an Advocacy Objective

This checklist is taken from SARA/AED *Advocacy Training Guide* and adapted from the Midwest Academy's *Organizing for Social Change*. It is designed to help advocacy groups develop and choose sound objectives for policy change.

Criteria	Objective 1	Objective 2
1. Do qualitative or quantitative data exist to show that the objective will improve the situation?		
2. Is the objective achievable? Even with opposition?		
3. Will the objective gain the support of many people? Do people care about the objective deeply enough to take action?		
4. Will you be able to raise money or other resources to support your work on the objective?		
5. Can you clearly identify the target decision makers? What are their names or positions?		
6. Is the objective easy to understand?		
7. Does the advocacy objective have a clear time frame that is realistic?		
8. Do you have the necessary alliances with key individuals or organizations to reach your advocacy objective? How will the objective help build alliances with other NGOs, leaders, or stakeholders?		
9. Will working on the advocacy objective provide people with opportunities to learn about and become involved with the decision-making process?		