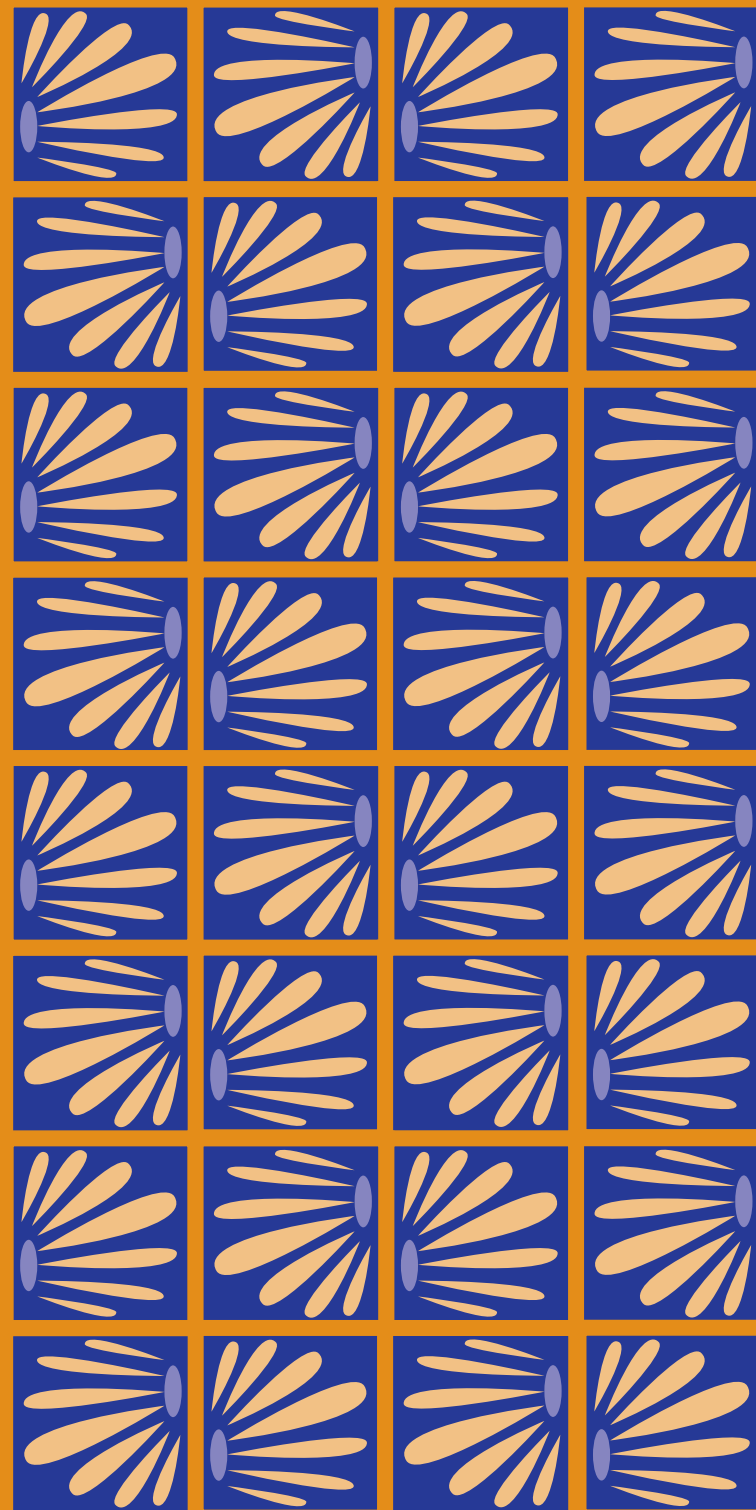


# An Introduction to Advocacy

TRAINING GUIDE

Ritu R. Sharma

Support for Analysis and Research in Africa (SARA)  
Health and Human Resources Analysis in Africa (HHRAA)  
USAID, Africa Bureau, Office of Sustainable Development




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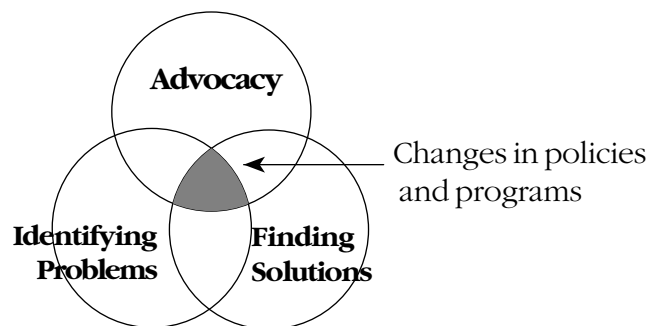
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# Foreword

## Why an Advocacy Training Guide?

Over the past few years, the SARA Project has worked with several African institutions and partners to generate research findings and present information to decision makers in appropriate forms. Recognizing that this has not been enough to change policies and programs, a SARA study, ***Knowledge Utilization and the Process of Policy Formation***, reviewed the process of policy change, and identified the three activities that converge to produce changes in policies and programs: identifying problems, finding solutions, and advocacy. While defining problems and exploring alternative solutions have long been used to promote change, the need for systematic and iterative advocacy in this process has been less well understood. The diagram shows that the advocacy process is critical in precipitating changes in policies and programs.



Recently, researchers, managers, NGO personnel, and other concerned groups and individuals have found it necessary to become advocates, but they often have little knowledge of or training in the subject. As we and our colleagues in Africa recognized more fully the need for advocacy, we looked for introductory materials that could be easily adapted and used at low cost in different local settings, but found few.

This ***Introduction to Advocacy Training Guide*** provides the tools for people to start engaging in the advocacy process, and is thus designed to:

- ◆ inform a diverse audience of potential advocates about advocacy and its methods;
- ◆ build some basic skills in advocacy;
- ◆ increase the use of available data to inform the advocacy process;
- ◆ give confidence to those who are embarking on advocacy efforts;
- ◆ encourage the democratic process by providing people with the skills to make their voices heard.

## Who will find the *Guide* useful?

The ***Guide*** should be useful to people in all sectors who wish to improve policies and programs through advocacy. Potential users may be:

- ◆ professional institutions, associations and networks;
- ◆ researchers interested in promoting their findings;
- ◆ program managers who wish to influence their agencies and/or the public;
- ◆ NGOs or community organizations;
- ◆ ad hoc groups that may form to address particular issues;
- ◆ training institutions or groups that work with potential advocates.

## How can the *Guide* be used and adapted?

Although the ***Guide*** is written primarily for use in training sessions, it can also be used by potential advocates as a tool to help them start their own advocacy work.

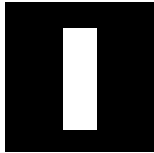
- ◆ Selected chapters can be used for one or two-day sessions that can be added to meetings or conferences to give a general orientation on advocacy.
- ◆ Institutions, networks, or associations can use it with their staff and members as a guide to help plan particular advocacy campaigns.
- ◆ Researchers can use it to plan the dissemination of findings on particular issues.
- ◆ It can be used for pre-service training, using simulated issues for advocacy.
- ◆ Any or all examples in the Guide can be replaced by examples from other sectors.

We hope that this ***Introduction to Advocacy Training Guide*** will enable diverse groups in Africa and elsewhere to participate more effectively in the challenge of making policies and programs more responsive to the changing needs of individuals, families and communities.

Suzanne Prysor-Jones  
SARA Project Director

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# What is Advocacy?

Africa is a changing continent with much promise for the future. New systems of government and new organizations are evolving. People have more opportunities than ever before to become involved in the decision-making processes which affect their lives. Although it may not be possible to practice every aspect of advocacy discussed in this guide, the act of advocating itself can open new spaces for participation in the development process.

This training guide aims to present advocacy in a broad sense. Although there are many different ways to conceptualize advocacy, this guide will focus on **advocacy directed at changing the policies, positions or programs of any type of institution**—a small NGO, a council of elders, a ministry of health, a national parliament, an international agency or any other kind of organization.

Policy advocacy is not limited to decisions that are made through open, organized and formal systems of governance. The tools presented in this guide can be applied to situations in which decision-making is informal, adaptive, opaque or even secluded.

**Wherever change needs to occur, advocacy has a role to play.** Whether you want more funding for a family planning clinic, new programs to address child malnutrition, laws to make primary schooling accessible or increased attention to a health program within your organization, advocacy can help you accomplish your goals.

## Objectives

In this module, we will:

- A. explore the **concept of advocacy** as it applies to professionals working in Africa;
- B. discuss which **basic elements of advocacy** we currently use;
- C. consider a **conceptual framework for advocacy**.

### A. Concept of Advocacy

The following case study is presented to help you answer the question, “What is Advocacy?”



#### Case Study

#### **Kenyan Advocates Succeed in Promoting Adolescent Health<sup>1</sup>**

One in four Kenyans is an adolescent and teens represent an ever-growing proportion of the population. Hospital treatment of teenagers for the consequences of unsafe abortion accounts for

between 20 and 50 percent of all such cases.<sup>2</sup> Teens aged 15-19 years also constitute approximately 35 percent of all reported HIV/AIDS cases in Kenya.<sup>3</sup> Still, the government of Kenya prohibits the distribution of contraceptives to adolescents.

In early 1990, the Center for the Study of Adolescence (CSA) was established to conduct research on adolescent health issues and to advocate for policies that promote the well-being of young people.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *After Cairo: A Handbook on Advocacy for Women Leaders*, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> The Center for the Study of Adolescence, 1995.

<sup>3</sup> The Center for the Study of Adolescence, 1995.

CSA encountered opposition to their advocacy efforts early on, but used this opposition to build a stronger and more creative force for adolescent reproductive health. Religious organizations that had attended several conferences on adolescent reproductive health in Kenya opposed CSA's work. They were so effective in their opposition to family life education in schools that the Ministry of Education threatened to eliminate the family life program from the curriculum.

Against this backdrop, youth-serving organizations including CSA decided to develop a coalition to support adolescent reproductive health. In 1994, they established the Kenyan Association for the Promotion of Adolescent Health (KAPAH), conducted advocacy trainings and developed an advocacy strategy. KAPAH developed and distributed fact sheets on adolescent reproductive health which helped to dispel myths and misinformation about adolescent reproductive health and programs such as family life education.

KAPAH also worked closely with the press to educate the public about the true content of family life education programs and the extent of reproductive health problems facing Kenya's youth. In fact, KAPAH paid the newspaper to print an overview of the family life education curriculum and explain the contentious issues. KAPAH's media

advocacy was so successful that they now regularly contribute views, opinions and advice to a column on adolescent health in a Kenyan newspaper. The column is sponsored and paid for by the Kenya Youth Initiative and funded by USAID.

Bravely, KAPAH also reached out to the opposition and engaged them in consultations in order to understand their concerns and to find common ground.

In addition, KAPAH met with individual policy makers and found that while these leaders supported adolescent health privately, it was difficult for some of them to take a public position on the subject. The Association made an effort to support these decision makers both publicly and "behind the scenes." As a result, KAPAH developed better relationships with several ministries including the Ministry of Education. In fact, KAPAH successfully advocated for pregnant school girls to be allowed to stay in school while pregnant and to return to school after delivery.

KAPAH's success has more and more agencies requesting advocacy training and the debate over adolescent reproductive health in Kenya has intensified.



## Sharing experiences with the group

- ① Now that you have read the case study, discuss how you would define advocacy.

Note: It is not essential to develop a precise and elegant definition of advocacy which encompasses all its aspects. But, it is important to define what advocacy means to you.

- ② Describe the advocacy strategies KAPAH used?

## Definition

**Advocacy** is an action directed at changing the policies, positions or programs of any type of institution.

**Advocacy** is pleading for, defending or recommending an idea before other people.

**Advocacy** is speaking up, drawing a community's attention to an important issue, and directing decision makers toward a solution.

continued...

## Definition continued

**Advocacy** is working with other people and organizations to make a difference. (CEDPA, 1995).

**Advocacy** is putting a problem on the agenda, providing a solution to that problem and building support for acting on both the problem and solution.

**Advocacy** can aim to change an organization internally or to alter an entire system.

**Advocacy** can involve many specific, short-term activities to reach a long-term vision of change.

**Advocacy** consists of different strategies aimed at influencing decision-making at the organizational, local, provincial, national and international levels.

**Advocacy** strategies can include lobbying, social marketing, information, education and communication (IEC), community organizing, or many other "tactics."

**Advocacy** is the process of people participating in decision-making processes which affect their lives.

Effective **advocacy** may succeed in influencing policy decision-making and implementation, by:

- ◆ educating leaders, policy makers, or those who carry out policies;
- ◆ reforming existing policies, laws and budgets, developing new programs;
- ◆ creating more democratic, open and accountable decision-making structures and procedures (InterAction, 1995).

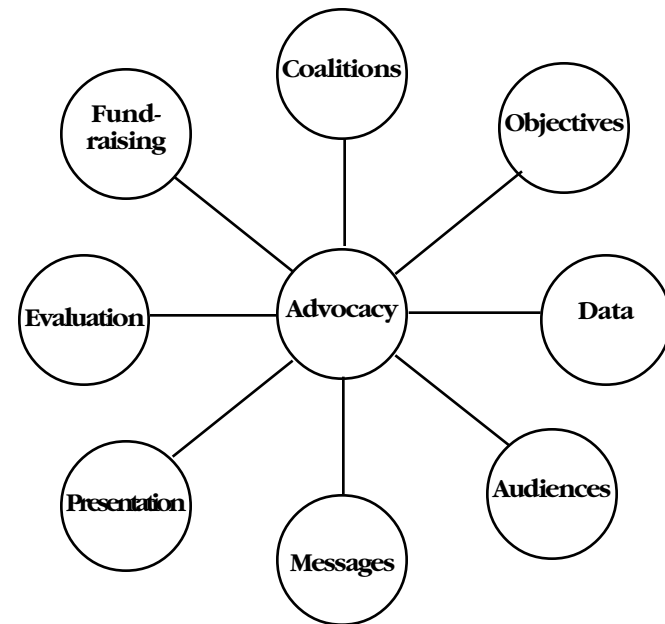
*Sharing experiences with the group*

⓪ Which of these definitions describe things that you or your organization does?

## B. Basic Elements of Advocacy

While specific advocacy techniques and strategies vary, the following elements form the basic building blocks for effective advocacy. Like building blocks, it is not necessary to use every single element to

*The Basic Elements of Advocacy*



create an advocacy strategy. In addition, these elements need not be used in the order presented. You can choose and combine the elements that are most useful to you.

As you examine the elements in the diagram, you may notice that some of these concepts are borrowed from such disciplines as political science, social marketing and behavioral analysis.

### **Selecting an Advocacy Objective**

Problems can be extremely complex. In order for an advocacy effort to succeed, the goal must be narrowed down to an advocacy objective based on answers to questions such as: Can the issue bring diverse groups together into a powerful coalition? Is the objective achievable? Will the objective really address the problem?

### **Using Data and Research for Advocacy**

Data and research are essential for making informed decisions when choosing a problem to work on, identifying solutions to the problem, and setting realistic goals. In addition, good data itself can be the most persuasive argument. Given the data, can you realistically reach the goal? What data can be used to best support your arguments?

### **Identifying Advocacy Audiences**

Once the issue and goals are selected, advocacy efforts must be directed to the people with decision-making power and, ideally, to the people who influence the decision makers such as staff, advisors, influential elders, the media and the public. What are the names of the decision makers who can make your goal a reality? Who and what influences these decision makers?

### **Developing and Delivering Advocacy Messages**

Different audiences respond to different messages. For example, a politician may become motivated when she knows how many people in her district care about the problem. A Minister of Health or Education may take action when he is presented with detailed data on the prevalence of the problem. What message will get the selected audience to act on your behalf?

### ✓ **Building Coalitions**

Often, the power of advocacy is found in the numbers of people who support your goal. Especially where democracy and advocacy are new phenomena, involving large numbers of people representing diverse interests can provide safety for advocacy as well as build political support. Even within an organization, internal coalition building, such as involving people from different departments in developing a new program, can help build consensus for action. Who else can you invite to join your cause? Who else could be an ally?

### ✓ **Making Persuasive Presentations**

Opportunities to influence key audiences are often limited. A politician may grant you one meeting to discuss your issue, or a minister may have only five minutes at a conference to speak with you. Careful and thorough preparation of convincing arguments and presentation style can turn these brief opportunities into successful advocacy. If you have one chance to reach the decision maker, what do you want to say and how will you say it?

### ✓ **Fundraising for Advocacy**

Most activities, including advocacy, require resources. Sustaining an effective advocacy effort over the long-term means investing time and energy in raising funds or other resources to support your work. How can you gather the needed resources to carry out your advocacy efforts?

### ✓ **Evaluating Advocacy Efforts**

How do you know if you have succeeded in reaching your advocacy objective? How can your advocacy strategies be improved? Being an effective advocate require continuous feedback and evaluations of your efforts.

*Sharing experiences  
with the group*



*How could these elements strengthen your current work? Do you feel that any of these elements might be difficult to use in your context? Which ones and why?*