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Drawing Attention to Pandemic Influenza through Advocacy

HOW TO

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**HOW DOES WHY
ADVOCACY WORK?**

WHO

GET STARTED

PANDEMIC INFLUENZA
RAISING AWARENESS
INFLUENZA

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RAISING AWARENESS
ON PANDEMIC

Drawing Attention to Pandemic Influenza through Advocacy

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In every society, there are individuals, communities and organizations that through their actions, both small and large, have made a positive difference in the lives of people. This is the essence of advocacy. Chances are high that you have already been an advocate for an issue important to you.

Advocacy is the effort to change public perception and influence policy decisions and funding priorities. Advocates raise awareness about issues and propose specific solutions among different publics, including policy-makers, experts, the media, and affected communities. Advocacy involves making a case in favor of a particular issue, using skillful persuasion and strategic action. Simply put, advocacy means actively supporting a cause and trying to get others to support it as well.

Advocacy has been an important strategy to improve public health throughout the world. It has been used to call attention to and promote improvements in services in health facilities, schools, and refugee camps. It also has been used to protect the health and well-being of large populations, such as international advocacy efforts in support of routine immunization, regular cervical screening for women, and safety and protective gear for workers in high-risk occupations.

The Purpose of this Guide

This Guide provides an overview of the advocacy process and its components – from planning and information gathering, to evaluating the success of your advocacy efforts – and suggests strategic activities and messages that can be used to reach different audiences. It can be used regardless of the issue, the size of your organization, or the resources you have.

The Guide is intended for use with the Humanitarian Pandemic Preparedness (H2P) Pandemic Influenza Advocacy Packet, a collection of fact sheets and other useful information that will help you to undertake advocacy activities in your country, district, or community.

It is important to note that this Guide provides an overview and suggests recommended steps to develop an advocacy strategy. Consideration should be given to the specific social, cultural, and political context in a community and/or country so advocacy plans and activities are adapted to the circumstances in which they will be used.

Why Is It Important to Raise Awareness on Pandemic Influenza?

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Pandemic influenza could start anywhere and spread quickly around the world, causing millions of deaths and severe illness. A pandemic also has the potential to affect people's livelihoods and the larger economy. For people who have "real" problems that they must contend with every day, it might be difficult to understand why it is important to focus on an event that has not yet happened. Others may believe that the risk is exaggerated, and that a pandemic will never arrive. In both scenarios, advocacy can play an important role. Advocacy at the national, district, and community levels can help educate leaders and other influential people to take steps to prepare for a pandemic, and by doing so, protect their family and other citizens.

Many of the people you are approaching will ask the "Why prepare?" question. It is important to note that the investment in pandemic preparedness could be relatively small, especially if it can be incorporated into existing disaster preparedness activities. This preparation and planning would be beneficial in saving lives, would be reassuring to the public, and could be used when there are natural disasters or other disease outbreaks.

Pre-planning now is also important because:

1. Once a pandemic hits one part of the world, experts have predicted that the time for planning and preparations will be less than a few weeks. Planning ahead is always important.
2. Being prepared for a pandemic will help to reduce public panic and anxiety when an outbreak occurs. Learning how to communicate information clearly will help minimize anxiety and risk.
3. The more people who are prepared for a pandemic, the better able health workers and first responders will be to assist greater numbers of people, especially those who need the most help, such as the elderly and people who are already ill with diseases such as HIV, TB, malaria and chronic illnesses.
4. You will reduce the potential economic and social ramifications of the pandemic.
5. Preparing for a pandemic will help to prepare your country for other disease outbreaks, natural disasters, or other crises.

Who Can Raise Support for Pandemic Preparedness?

Anyone who cares about the health and well-being of their community – government officials, health care providers, women’s groups, parents, workers, members of religious groups, workers and businesses, and NGOs – can be an advocate for pandemic preparedness. Many people may think they do not have the skills and training to get involved in advocacy. This is not true. Anyone who is willing to speak in support of an issue or concern can be an effective advocate.

How Does Advocacy Work?

Advocacy focuses efforts on influential people who have the power to take regulatory or leadership actions, change policies, and influence public opinion, as well as on publics who, in turn, can influence these decision-makers. Policy-makers include national, regional or local government officials, traditional leaders, school officials, religious figures, businesses or members of a funding organization. Given their positions, they are able to make decisions that affect their communities.

Their involvement and support is critical to success. Because public opinion affects political decisions, advocacy also needs to address specific publics who can mobilize to influence decisionmakers. A public education campaign can address a whole community or a specific group, such as health care workers. The point to remember here is that the audience for advocacy is the person or group of people whose actions can help to prepare and respond to an influenza pandemic. This can range from health officials, to village elders, to community health workers.



How to Get Started

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While specific advocacy techniques and tools vary, the following elements form the basic building blocks for effective advocacy.

Identify the Specific Advocacy Issue and Potential Solutions

The process begins by identifying issues or needs that require action. It is important that your advocacy effort be based on credible information about the problem and possible solutions. Correct information can be gathered in several ways, such as:

- Participating in public meetings
- Viewing credible websites
- Reading the newspaper, hearing speeches, or listening to radio and television reports
- Meeting one-on-one with decision makers

Using this information, focus on educating community leaders, groups and others about the importance of preparing for an influenza pandemic to protect the community from potential illness and economic loss.

As with many public health situations, it is easier to get attention for your issue if you are responding to a critical situation (e.g., if a disease outbreak occurs) than it is to promote preparedness or prevention activities. For this reason, it might be easier to describe pandemic preparedness as something that would not only help if pandemic flu were to strike, but also would help prepare the country, district or community for occurrences of other infectious diseases or emergencies.

Following are some examples of advocacy issues, solutions, and activities that you might consider.

| Adv ocacy Issue | Adv ocacy Solution | Exa mples of Adv ocacy Activities |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Communities should be prepared for an influenza pandemic, as assistance might not be able to reach localities if the outbreak is severe.</p> | <p>Encouraging national and district officials to develop or adapt an existing policy on non-pharmaceutical interventions (actions such as isolation, quarantine, closing of schools and businesses that will lessen the risk of transmission from person to person).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the mobilization of community groups to begin pandemic preparedness activities together. Working with the media to provide them with information on NPIs so that they can address the issue in advance to educate their communities. |
| <p>Personal protective equipment can protect health workers from exposure to the pandemic virus, and can help prevent transmission to others.</p> | <p>Urging for the mandatory provision and proper use of protective equipment to high-risk populations, such as health clinic workers.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing to local health organizations, ministries of health, or clinics to encourage them to hold training workshops on how to use personal protective equipment to help prevent the transmission of infectious disease. • Working with government or professional/private organizations to develop and distribute posters or other materials to educate health care providers on how to use PPE and how to prevent virus transmission during a pandemic. |
| <p>Pandemic influenza is not just a health issue, it will impact several sectors.</p> | <p>Encourage the formation of a district or local-level task force to plan and coordinate preparedness activities among several actors (government, community-based organizations, civil society groups, humanitarian organizations, private sector, unions).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with community, civic and faith leaders to encourage them to become involved. Provide them with key messages and appropriate contacts and sources of information so that they can better understand the gravity of the situation. |

| Adv ocacy Issue | Adv ocacy Solution | Exa mples of Adv ocacy Activities |
|---|---|--|
| Pandemic influenza planning will help countries prepare for other disease outbreaks, natural disasters, and other crises. | Urging for the development of – or adaptation of existing – preparedness and response plans for health facilities, government officials and community groups. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with different organizations to hold meetings, set up feedback and review platforms for the development of cross-sectoral plans. Make sure to invite organizations involved in health, security, disaster management, education, civil society, and food security). |

2 Select Advocacy Audiences

Advocacy efforts must be directed to the people who make decisions and who can affect laws and regulations or their enforcement (primary audiences). Often these people are reached by those who influence them such as staff, advisors, influential elders, the media and the public (secondary audiences).

3 Gather Information on What Your Advocacy Audience Thinks

Once you have identified your primary and secondary audiences, you need to understand their opinions, attitudes and beliefs about your advocacy issue. Often, there is existing information – such as research studies, media reports, or surveys – that can help you to understand these audiences. Sometimes, you may have informal information gathered from talking with other advocates and colleagues or by reading speeches or other documents written by the organization or individuals.

The table below illustrates a few primary audiences and the secondary audiences that might influence them.

| Primary Audience (Targets) | Secondary Audience (Influencers) |
|---|--|
| Community Health Facility Directors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health professionals groups or unions • Consumers/Users of the facility • Local media • Local NGOs • Local civil society groups (e.g. women's unions) |
| Village Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious leaders • Elders groups • Schoolteachers • Family members of Council members • Community business owners/merchants • Local media |
| Minister of Health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime Minister • Minister of Finance • Health professionals groups or unions • National newspapers/other media • National and international public • Health-based NGOs |
| Head of National Avian and Pandemic Influenza Task Force, or disaster planning and management officials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of relevant ministries (health, agriculture, animal health, information/communication) • Womens unions • National and international NGOs • International donors • National print and broadcast media • Poultry businesses • Pharmaceutical firms |

4 Develop Advocacy Messages to Frame Your Actions

Messages state what you want to happen and what will motivate audiences to engage in desired behaviors. Different audiences respond to different messages. For example, a politician may become motivated when he/she knows how many people in his/her district care about being prepared for pandemic influenza and other disease outbreaks. A Minister of Health may take action when he/she is presented with detailed research on the extent of the problem (for example, the number of health facilities that are not aware of health and hygiene precautions that would protect against pandemic influenza) and the feasibility of the solution (for example, providing information or training to the health facilities on how to detect, prevent and control pandemic flu).

Effective advocacy messages need to state the case in terms that will motivate decision-makers to respond and act. For example “Simple preparedness measures in our community can protect our merchants from losing their business and revenues.”

When developing messages, you should consider the following questions:

- Is the message clearly understood? Is it in a language appropriate for the target audience?
- Does the message respect cultural and social norms? Is the message perceived as truthful?
- Does the audience feel that the message is addressing them?
- Is the message able to convince the target audiences to take action? How will your action benefit the target audience? Alternatively, will supporting your advocacy action create any negative response?

- Is your message based on sound scientific data or other valid evidence? Given the data, is your message or what you want to achieve realistic? Oftentimes, good data itself can make for the most persuasive message, especially if the source is one that the decision maker already trusts and consults with.
- Does the message clearly state why the intended audience will be motivated to take action?

5 Select Advocacy Tactics and Tools

Advocacy tactics and tools are the way you present your advocacy messages to your audiences. The tactics you select will depend on the target audiences you are trying to reach as well as their availability and interest in your issue.

A senior decision maker in a ministry or large organization may grant you only one short meeting to discuss your issue. To be successful, you need to present a careful and convincing case that is based on correct data and not unsubstantiated rumors. The presentation of the argument may take many forms, including briefing documents, presentations, fact sheets with new data, editorials in newspapers, or radio discussion programs.

The materials and other resources provided in the H2P Pandemic Influenza Advocacy Kit can be helpful in gathering information to formulate your arguments.

6 Develop Partnerships to Gain Support for Your Action

Involving large numbers of people representing diverse interests can sometimes provide safety for advocacy as well as build support. These alliances can be short term and strategic or long term and ongoing, requiring varying levels of support. For example, businesses or national trade organizations can work with government officials to develop or adapt a preparedness or disaster response plan that would address pandemic influenza.

Initiating partnerships and nurturing a diverse collection of interests can take time and effort, but it allows different groups to capitalize on each other's strengths. By their very existence, diverse partnerships communicate to policy makers, opinion leaders, and the public at large that an issue is so important that a wide range of interests – who may otherwise have little in common – have come together to promote change. Partnerships also allow smaller organizations to pool their resources and take on projects and initiatives that are too large for small individual groups to address.

7 Mobilize Resources

Sustaining an effective advocacy effort over a short or long period of time requires time of staff, funds and other resources. Resources include more than just money. Human resources are often as important as financial resources.

If you are working with a number of partner organizations, you can share the costs for these activities among the partners. One group may be able to provide meeting space, while another can transport people to meetings. Having limited resources should not discourage organizations or individuals

from becoming advocates. There are many advocacy activities that can be undertaken with a minimum of resources, such as writing letters to policy makers or the media. Moreover, through partnerships, you may be able to pool limited resources and create enough to support your activities.

8 Monitor and Evaluate

Constant feedback on and evaluation of your advocacy activities is the best way to ensure success. If one tactic does not work, then try another, and another, until you reach your goal. Adaptability, creativity and persistence are characteristics of successful advocates.

There are two forms of evaluation to consider:

- Process evaluation, which looks at how the advocacy activities were carried out, (such as which activities occurred, how many times, and where). They focus more on the process of undertaking the activities rather than their outcome.
- Outcome evaluation, which measures how successful you are in meeting your objectives.

Monitoring and evaluation can help you take a step back and assess your progress toward your advocacy objective. Ideally you should assess your efforts once or twice a year and make adjustments based on the results.

Bringing It All Together: Ingredients for a Successful Campaign

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TOGETHER CAMPAIGN

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETH

A successful advocacy campaign addresses three distinct groups that influence one another:

- Opinion leaders
- The public; and
- The media.

Opinion leaders will be more likely to support pandemic preparedness efforts when they believe the public agrees with their position. The media educates the public about the need for the proposed policy exchange. An educated public is more likely to express their support for the advocacy campaign's goals to the community and national opinion leaders.

Advocacy and Opinion Leaders

Advocacy takes place any time opinions are shared, but the most effective advocacy campaigns determine which policy makers or opinion leaders should be convinced to support the issue and offers exactly what they should do to show their support. Many of the basic tactics for approaching and persuading opinion leaders are the same whether they are at the community, regional or national level. Some of the most effective approaches include:

1 Targeting efforts. Assess whose support and agreement among opinion leaders and decision-makers is necessary for the advocacy effort to reach its goals. Decide whom to approach and in what order. Start with the very supportive and move on to those who are somewhat supportive or undecided. One successful technique is to identify a “champion” for your issue who will visibly support your views.

2 Being prepared. Try to determine the opinion leader's position in advance on the issue. Look at comments s/he has made about the subject, the kind of events the leader attends, his/her political affiliation and past policy decisions. This knowledge will help you design a persuasive approach.

3 Being focused. Talk only about one subject in the visit or letter. Do not overload the audience with too much information. State the problem and give the solution and describe how this policy maker can support the effort. Make a specific request such as signing a letter, making a public endorsement, or changing a policy. Ask directly and attempt to get a direct answer.

Know who else supports the issue and who disagrees with the issue. This may provide additional reason for the opinion leader to support the issue. When possible, bring community members or others who support your issue to the meeting.

4 Following up. Find out if the opinion leader did what he or she committed to doing. Send a letter of thanks for the conversation and restate the position. Thank the leader for any supportive action. If no action has occurred, politely encourage the leader to follow up.

Educating the Public

Public education helps an advocacy campaign build a broad foundation of support. Effective public education provides people with information about the dangers of a pandemic influenza outbreak and shows them how advance preparation can protect the community. It also suggests how the public can help and shows them how to be involved. The goal of public education is to inform and mobilize the public.

Public education is most effective when specific audiences are targeted with tailored messages and information. Advocacy efforts may decide to target women leaders, health care providers, or business owners.

As each audience is identified, gather information and create messages that will likely persuade that group. Separate materials should be created for each group. Health care workers will require different information from

business leaders or workers. The type of audience will also determine the tactics used to reach them.

Other activities to educate the public:

- Hold a community event to provide information about pandemic influenza and encourage people to support advance preparation and education.
- Ask permission to distribute material and talk about your issue at meetings that are already planned.
- Give presentations at local and district meetings, traditional councils, training workshops, conferences, and other community gatherings.
- Ask opinion leaders to talk to their friends, family and community about the issue. If these opinion leaders are difficult to reach, write letters and enclose material for them to read.
- Go where the audience is, such as markets, bus stops, union meetings, community centers and public areas. Distribute flyers and simply talk to people about the advocacy campaign.
- Conduct polls or surveys to gauge community support.
- Write articles about the advocacy effort for newsletters or newspapers.

For example, an effort to reach out to people in a certain part of the community might involve planning an event in the local community health center. To reach business people, advocates may want to create and distribute a short, factual pamphlet.

Understanding your audience will help you select the most appropriate tactics to use. Following are some brief examples of target audiences, types of messages, and tactics/tools.

| Target Audience | Message | Tactics and Tools |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Decision Makers | <p>Messages to decision makers should be short, concise and persuasive. Even if the decision maker is not a politician, it can be beneficial to communicate how your proposal enhances his or her political or social standing. Economic arguments such as potential budgetary savings or benefits are always good to include when possible. Policy makers will also want to know what action you would like them to take and who else supports your proposal.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal or informal face-to-face meetings • Informal conversation at social, religious, political or business gathering • Letters: personal, organizational or coalition • Briefing meetings • Program site visits • Fact sheet • Newspaper article, editorial • Peer advocacy – having them talk with an influential they respect and trust about the issue |
| Advocacy Organizations | <p>Advocacy organizations need specific information that supports their arguments. Research and data are useful when facts and figures are presented clearly. Because advocates often insert such facts directly into their material targeted to decision makers, design the content for a policy audience</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with advocacy organization leaders and staff • Ready-to-use fact sheets • Graphics or illustrations • Factual data and anecdotes from their community and members • Briefing meeting for advocacy organizations. • Electronically available information/useful websites |
| Broadcast and Print Media Journalists | <p>The media are generally interested in new, groundbreaking information or how an issue relates to a current event. The press generally likes to know how a situation affects individuals, often reporting “human interest stories.”</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News release • Press conference or media event • Issue briefing for journalists • Graphics or illustrations • Fact sheets or background sheet • Media packet or press kit • Data and access to experts |

Working with the Media

Engaging the media is important in public education. The media serve two roles: First, they can be a credible source of information that reaches large numbers of people including your primary and secondary audiences, and second, they can take a position or “advocate” for change on their editorial and opinion pages.

There are several ways to engage the media to help convey your messages

- Build relationships with journalists and meet their needs for timely information. Undertake briefings on emerging issues not only with working journalists but also editors and other media managers. Often journalists do not have the time or resources to research topics. Make sure to have spokespersons from a few organizations or the community available to talk to journalists.
- Approach journalists with news, not a story you want them to cover. News implies new, different, or controversial. Make sure you have something to offer for a story such as a new report or access to a pandemic influenza expert or information on an upcoming event or training that addresses broader disaster preparedness.
- Organize visits with people who have been working on pandemic influenza issues internationally, nationally or locally. This gives the story a human face and ensures that the real issues are kept in the forefront of attention.
- Work internally to ensure that any person who may interact with the media is equipped to handle any questions that may come their way. It is particularly helpful to have a variety of spokespersons available that can work with the media, as this provides diversity to the voices of people.

- Identify one or two key messages for your spokesperson and add to this any additional background information on the issue and recent events that may be touched upon by the media.
- Develop materials that support your issue. Fact sheets, briefing kits, reports, charts and graphs offer the media useful information to finish a story. Make sure these materials reinforce the key messages and provide the technical content for these messages.

Advocates often view the media as a channel through which to deliver their messages. However, the media can also serve as an effective advocate on its own. Investigative, “watchdog” types of articles or editorials can advocate for decisions to be made and activities to move forward if they are at a stand-still. For example, an article on a pandemic preparedness workshop held in a neighboring nation might provide the opportunity to point out that your own country should take similar steps to prepare for a pandemic.

Conclusions – Using Your Voice

The best way to learn advocacy is by doing. We hope that the processes outlined in this Guide have provided you with some ideas for taking action to prevent and control pandemic influenza in your community, country, or region. At the very least, you should be able to start the process of identifying specific and realistic activities you would like to accomplish, and determining what types of resources (financial, partner organizations) are available to help you achieve your goals.

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For further information or copies, please contact:

AI.COMM

Academy for Educational Development (AED)

1825 Connecticut Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20009

Tel: 202.884.8000

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