

4

Finalising Advocacy Strategies

This chapter provides important guidelines for finalising advocacy strategies, the third step of the planning framework. Finalising includes the selection of the roles of different stakeholders, as well as determining messages, and activities.

In previous chapters, the focus of all activities has been on the exploration and analysis of realities related to your selected issue. After Chapter 4 these findings, presented in a systematic and logical way, will assist the advocate in formulating actions as advocacy. The following will be the fundamental steps of this chapter (Figure 4.1):

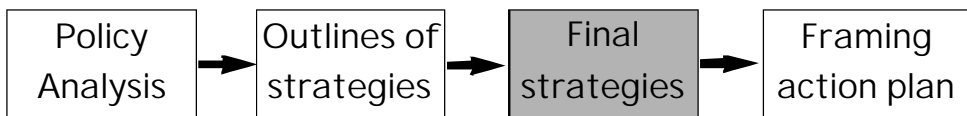


Figure 4.1: Final strategy in horizontal framework

Selection of advocacy approaches: There are different ways of advocating for the same issue. Depending upon the time, situation, and resources, you have to select appropriate ways of forwarding your arguments. These ways are known as ‘advocacy approaches’.

Identification of key messages: Your advocacy message includes your vision of policy change. The message you want your target audience to hear is the basic question here. The appropriate ‘framing’ of the issue is an important element of this particular activity.

Defining advocacy activities: Advocacy activities are those which are taken step by step to influence your target audiences. There are several ways of forwarding your key messages to influence them. You have to be able to determine the definite steps here.

Selection of Advocacy Approaches

Your organisation may not be playing a leading role for all the issues selected for advocacy. There may be many other organisations that have more legitimacy for leading the process. If this is the case you have to play a supporting role. In other situations the people who are actually affected by the issue should take the leading role. In this case you can play the role of capacity builder for these people or groups of people. Sometimes it will be necessary for your organisation to take up the issue and influence the policy makers directly. These all depend on the time, situation, and status of your organisation, and the nature of the issue.

When you finalise your roles at the organisational level, you then have to think about the roles that your staff can play at the individual level. Remember that different staff members can play different roles. You have to be able to give appropriate roles to appropriate staff members. The following tips will help you to determine organisational as well as individual roles as you begin your advocacy approach.

Expert informant: Particularly in the mountain regions, it has been noticed that a knowledge gap between policy makers and the people affected is the main problem. The policy makers do have raw information but they do not have independently analysed information. Another reality is that most of the policy makers reside in the plains, and policies are often formulated using the opinions/experiences of these individuals. In this situation, organisations like yours can play the role of expert informant. This is very low risk role and can be played without much upheaval. Many organisations – particularly international organisations – use the term ‘technical assistant’ for this kind of role. This is actually an advocacy role in terms of policy change. One successful example from Nepal is that many international agencies, including ICIMOD, have played this role to promote community forestry since 1970.

Honest broker: In many areas, the term ‘broker’ does not have good connotations. Depending upon what is acceptable to those you work with, you can change the term to ‘mediator’, ‘negotiator’, etc. The reality, however, is that the person (s) who are playing the advocacy role should be able to work as the link or middleperson between the affected people and policy makers. The prime condition here is the adjective, ‘honest’, which must be evident in all aspects of interactions and negotiation. This is the main difference between general brokers and brokers as advocates. A people-centred advocate would also make sure that the ‘power’ that gradually begins to accrue while playing this role does not remain with the individual advocate but is gradually transferred to the affected people themselves so that they can speak for themselves. But until such time as this is possible, an honest broker is needed.

Capacity builder: In the mountain regions, many people know that the rights of the poor are denied. Some of them also know how to claim their rights but they do not have the resources (human, financial, time) to do so. In such situations, organisations like yours can support such groups in filling these gaps. In other cases, people do not even know the provisions in existing laws that could be used to their own benefit. In this case your organisations can raise awareness. However, it must be noted that not every kind of capacity building programme is necessarily advocacy. Only capacity building efforts which keep a conscious relationship with the goal of policy influence can be considered part of the advocacy initiative.

Lobbyist: This is a process of entering into a direct influencing approach with policy makers. The level and gravity of participation in this process depends on your organisational status. For example, if you are an international organisation, it will be more appropriate for you to be involved at the international level as a lobbyist, but if you are a national- or state-level organisation, it will be more relevant for you to lobby with national- or state-level policy makers. To play a successful lobbying role you should have a strong representation of affected people in the form of a coalition or network. You can also form issue-based allies to make your lobbying role more effective.

A proper policy analysis of selected issues helps to determine which approach is appropriate under which circumstances. Much is determined by the political situation in which you are working. Similarly, another determining factor is the relationship that you have maintained with the policy makers of your constituency. If you have a good relationship with policy makers, for example, you can play a very successful lobbying role to in order to achieve the hoped-for changes. If you do not have a very good relationship, you can play the 'expert informant' role. In this latter case, you could use this role to build relationships, because the data you gather and communicate will give you a strong entry point for a discourse with those in power. The following dimensions of advocacy (Figure 4.2) will give you an added insight while selecting your advocacy approaches.

In each of the roles you can adopt a variety of approaches as mentioned in the diagram. When you remain closer to the 'A' and 'X' areas, you do not face much risk and you may not need a strong mass of people behind you. Your advocacy will be very gentle and be carried out within the context of a smooth relationship with your opponents. They may not even perceive you as an advocate on behalf of the oppressed people. However, when you move towards the 'Y' and 'B' areas, you are more at risk and you should have a strong support base behind you to protect yourself and to get the changes made. It is up to you to decide what sort of strategy you want to adopt. You can also remember that other coalition members may remain in different quadrants during the

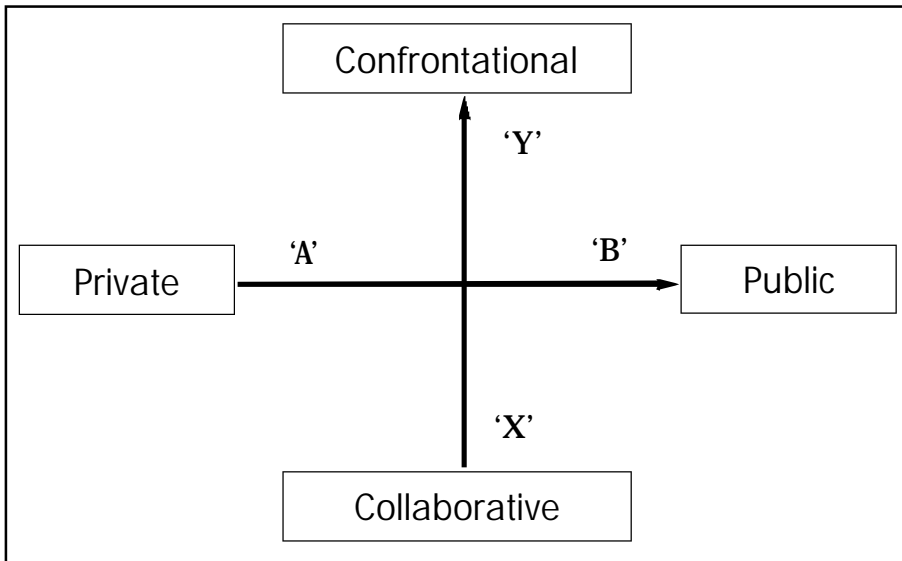


Figure 4.2: Advocacy approaches

advocacy process for the same issue. This must be kept in mind, and you must proceed accordingly, depending on your organisational limitations and risk-bearing capacity.

It is also important to remember that sometimes a strategy demands that you do not remain with the same approach for a stretch of time. For example, it is always easy to start from an easy and less risky quadrant – the private and collaborative approach to advocacy. If you are not able to produce any results using this approach, you should move towards public and confrontational approaches. On the other hand, you can initiate a strategy by which some of your coalition members always remain with the private approach while others move towards a public approach so that you are able to exert pressure from both ends. Table 4.1 shows the different roles the coalition members can play.

You can play a variety of roles while working on one and the same issue. This also means that it is necessary to be very particular when selecting an appropriate person from within the organisation for a specific role. For example, a good lobbyist cannot be a good capacity builder.

Expert informant role: a case from Uttarakhand, India

Uttarakhand is representative of the conditions prevalent in the Western Himalayas. The people in the region are mainly farmers, practicing subsistence agriculture. A distinct feature of this type of agriculture is that despite the otherwise apparent poverty, it provided food security to the people and virtually no family went to bed hungry. This was because traditional agriculture was based on the principles which promoted diversity and rested on maintaining a fine balance between water, soil, air, animals, and plants.

Table 4.1: Examples of advocacy roles

Target audience	Possible roles
Minister of mining	The ministry does not know the physical condition of labourers working in coal mining areas. It is important to give them analytical information about labour, wages, physical living conditions, and their basic human rights. – Expert informant role
Ministry of labour and housing	The ministry does have information about labourers in coal mining areas but it does not have analytical information about their seasonal migration patterns and about foreign labourers working in coal mining. – Expert informant role
Business leaders of coal mining areas	These people are always looking for profit but do not have enough information about basic human rights determined by the constitution and international conventions. Hence they could suffer in the international market if they contravene these laws – Capacity builder role Sometimes, labourers do bargain to get appropriate wages and other facilities but they often fail to get their demands fulfilled. – Honest broker role
Non-government organisations working with mining labours	These organisations often pay attention only to the immediate relief of the labourers but are often out of touch with the root causes. – Capacity builder role
Local representatives	Local representatives of the area are manipulated by business leaders. They use labourers as a vote bank but do not play any role in protecting their basic human rights. – Lobbyist role

However, today the scenario is different. Agriculture in the mountains has been subjected to unsustainable changes through the introduction of the principles and practices of the ‘Green Revolution’. These procedures were actually conceived for water sufficient areas in the plains and hence were alien and unsuitable for the largely rainfed Himalayan slopes here. The excessive stress on hybrid seeds, chemical fertilisers and pesticides, monoculture, and cash crops has led to a fall in yields and in the quality of food; has rendered crops vulnerable to new diseases and failure; and has impoverished the land. By uprooting the safety valves that traditional agriculture allowed, the new agriculture has greatly undermined people’s food security, self-reliance, and resilience and has had a negative social effect as well. It has broken up the people’s inter-dependence and spirit of sharing, and engineered migration and an exodus from the villages.

Against this background, Beej Bachao Andolan (Save the Seeds Movement) in Tehri Garhwal has bravely stood up against the challenge posed by the new agriculture and its promoters, and given a voice to farmers’ personal angst and

public despair. It will not be an exaggeration to say that in the post-Chipko period, it is one of the most original struggles in the Uttarakhand hills, which has brought the malaise and issues of the farming system and farmers' rights to its current prominence in the region.

Today there is a growing awareness and acceptance of the need to conserve biodiversity, preserve indigenous knowledge systems, and to stress the farmers' right to self-determination. But when the Beej Bachao Andolan started almost two decades ago, it was a bold, visionary decision based on deep conviction, and was a movement that seemed to be swimming against the current, because the technology of Green Revolution at the time wore the halo of being a universal panacea.

Questions for discussion

- Do you see any possibility for advocates to play the role of expert informant in this case? If you do, indicate a maximum of three options.
- What other advocacy roles can advocates play here?
- Can you suggest some collaborating agencies for advocacy?

Identification of Key Messages

There are three basic elements in a key message: (a) what it is that your target audience is being asked to do; (b) what the rationale is for doing so; and (c), what the positive impacts are of doing so. In today's fast-paced world, people often do not have enough time to listen to the history of an issue. Similarly, they do not have time to read a long application or petition. Advocates should design the message so that the argument can be transmitted in a precise but clear way. However, you must not lose the basic elements you need to include in the name of making the message short. The following tips will help you design such an advocacy message.

During your strategic planning, you can finalise the key messages for your advocacy mission. When you secure funding and exposure to the media, you can develop your message in different forms. However, you should always prepare a back up method of communication method. For example, if one form of communication does not work, you should be able to deliver another form of the message containing the same elements immediately.

Your message always depends upon the approach you choose. For example, if you choose the private approach to advocacy, the form your message takes would be different. A diary note, some written points, or a simple memorandum would be enough. If you choose the confrontational approach to advocacy, the form of your message would be different. Your key message should be reflected in militant slogans, banners, etc. If you choose the public approach, your

Some tips for designing an advocacy message

- Be specific about what you want to achieve. Propose your vision.
- Frame precisely why you or the affected group (s) with you want to achieve these changes.
- Give options about how you want to achieve them. You could suggest a maximum of two options.
- Be specific about what actions you want them to take up, and by when. You can give a range of time but be careful not to make it too rigid.
- Include in the message ways to get detailed information about the issue if somebody wishes to get it.
- Use very formal, officially acceptable, and polite language in your message. Do not criticise the policy makers at all.
- Use understandable language from your audience perspective. Avoid using unnecessary jargon.
- Prepare and practice your message before exposing it to the media. For example, if you are going to present it verbally, rehearse several times.
- Choose an appropriate form of media to deliver your message. It is good to select a form of media which is acceptable to your audience too.

message should be reflected in the form of articles, news items, radio/television interviews and so on. If you choose the collaborative approach, your key message should be reflected in presentations, study reports, seminars, and training programmes. This does not mean that you should use the prepared message all the time. You can make on-the-spot changes as well, but be sure that you have not lost the main point of the message.

While working on the same issue, you will often have different target audiences. Within the primary audience, you will have several individuals having different responsibilities. Based on their responsibilities and interests, you should be able to craft the key message. Look at the example of a key message in Table 4.2.

Defining Advocacy Activities

The main activity of advocacy is making your target audiences listen to your logical arguments on a selected issue. Therefore, in one sense the entire range of advocacy activities is nothing more than ways of effective message delivery. Some literature has also used the term 'advocacy tactics' for advocacy activities. Advocacy activities depend primarily upon the advocacy approach that you have selected. The following example (Table 4.3) will help you to understand this.

This worksheet summarises all the steps and tips presented in this chapter. You can have a group exercise on the basis of this matrix using the same or a different case study in your training programme.

Table 4.2: An example of a key message

Overall message	The recently introduced 40% tax on community forestry user groups has to be removed.
Target audience	Key message
Minister of Forests	Introduction of this tax on community forestry user groups is not within the framework of decentralised local governance that is accepted by the constitution of Nepal. User group members have also invested their time and energy to earn this fund and they are well committed to utilising the fund for local development. Local development is the main thrust of the country. Therefore, this tax has to be removed.
Minister of Finance	If you have funds available at the local level, you would not have to allocate funds for local development. The question is whether we want that fund to first come to the centre and then be sent back to village again or whether it is better to keep the money in the village itself. Ultimately, this fund will be spent on local development.
Political leaders	This tax intends to start an anti-decentralisation process in development. It also discourages local institutions from taking responsibility for local development. This process will encourage even more centralisation in future. Therefore, it is also a matter of your political credibility at the local level. People will be closely observing you whether you support the process of centralisation or decentralisation.
Business leaders (Those with business interests in forests)	You need to change your previous style of business. You may not be able to keep bureaucrats happy and they may not do your work quickly. Letting this funding remain at the local level will not disturb your business at all.
Local representatives	If you are not supporting the removal of this tax from the community forest user groups, such a removal of this tax will be impossible because you are primarily responsible for local development. If you manage to retain this fund at the local level, you are the one who will have higher credibility in the arena of local development. Ultimately, you are the one who is responsible for fulfilling the demands of the people. If this imposition reduces funds at the local level, it will affect your political mission too.

Table 4.3: An example of advocacy activities

Alternative advocacy approaches	Possible advocacy activities
Private approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select all information, analyse, and have enough data • Identify, meet, and build rapport with key personal assistants of the minister • Getting appointment with minister of mining and meeting for rapport building • Inviting minister of mining to a formal reception in connection with some other programme and build rapport • Briefing minister about labour settlement problem in Koilapahad • Providing details of the issue as demanded by the minister • Similarly, meetings, briefings, and providing detailed information to all other target audiences
Public approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite minister to a public gathering, honour him/her, and ask him to speak about the issue • Brief him/her about all problems and expected policy changes through your speech and presentations in public gatherings • Publish several news articles about the issue from leading newspapers at the local and state level • Meet minister with a delegation of people from the affected area • Give television/ radio interviews about the issue • Gather several intellectuals and organise paper presentations about the issue and possible options for solutions • Publish newsletters, reports, and other publications about the issue • Publish posters and arrange displays in public places • Similar activities can be carried out for all of your target audiences
Collaborative approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify interests of the ministry and plan joint work • Plan joint research and identify solutions to the problems • Prepare a joint action plan and implement • Carry out capacity building programmes for different levels
Confrontational approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise rallies, demonstrations, public gatherings, different types of strikes • Participate in dharnas (sit-ins), gheraos (surrounding someone), paintings, posters, hunger strikes, and so on • Organise 'hunger strike to the death' as a last step

Summary worksheet for finalisation of strategy

Steps	Questions to explore	Your note
1. Selection of advocacy approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the best approach for influencing your audience, both primary and secondary? • Do you have a good relationship with policy makers and can you use such a relationship in your advocacy process? • What style of advocacy do you like to follow – private, public, collaborative, or confrontational – or a combination of these? • Do you lead yourself or do you support others in leading the process? • Do you have enough capacity to play different roles – lobbyist, broker, expert informant, etc.? • Do you use the media in your advocacy? 	
2. Identification of key message	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you want your target audience to hear? • What policy changes do you want and what support do you expect from other people? • What are the possible options you have identified? Are you open to different options? • Can you convey these options to your audiences? 	
3. Defining advocacy activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are steps you will follow to deliver your key message? • What other activities do you need to follow to get policy change? • What could be the best options for delivering your message to your target audience? • What media do you use to deliver your message? 	