

# 5

## Finalising Advocacy Strategies

This chapter provides guidelines for finalising an advocacy strategy, 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. These findings, presented in a systematic and logical way, will assist the advocate in formulating actions as advocacy Figure 5.1.

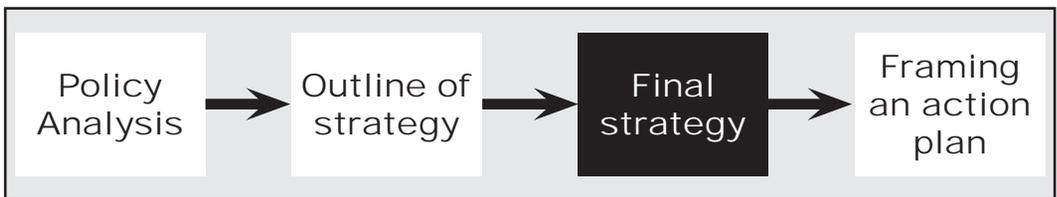


Figure 5.1: Final strategy in horizontal framework

### Possible Strategies for Public Advocacy

Some of the strategic choices that advocates should make after selection of issues and visualisation of the expected results of advocacy are summarised in the following.

#### Constituency building strategy

Ideas for change may emerge from one person. Such an idea could be in the interest of many other people if they understood it properly. The advocate needs to build a constituency among the potentially interested group.

## **Cooperation/collaboration strategy**

This is a strategy under which advocates expect change by working together with opposition forces. For example, the Rural Support Programmes (RSPs) in Pakistan, as social organisations, are seeking social change by working together with the present political system.

## **Education strategy**

This is a strategy to help people realise their inner potential. In most cases, poor people suffer from a 'powerlessness complex'. They do not have the courage to think that they can do anything. Raising awareness about the issue and visualised changes is the first step of this strategy. The subsequent steps include action research, joint collaboration with researchers, and building critical consciousness.

## **Persuasion (convincing) strategy**

In the first place advocates should make their arguments based on evidence, logic, facts, and trends which are collected from their research. All of these efforts have been carried out to persuade the decision makers to get policies or practices changed as per the aspirations of the affected people. This strategy demands a strong research base among advocates.

## **Litigation strategy**

In a democratic system, advocates can also expect to initiate changes by using the legal framework, legal system, and procedures. There are several examples of public litigation on various issues. Advocates submit petitions, ask questions in court, use precedence established by senior judges, and so on.

## **Confrontation strategy**

This is the last destination of advocacy. If nothing happens using all of the strategies mentioned above, advocates can consider this strategy as well. There are two types of confrontation: (a) violent and (b) non-violent. Non-violent means is an acceptable public advocacy strategy. If people go for the violent strategy, the movement goes beyond the scope of public advocacy.

## **Choices of Strategies**

The strategic options outlined above indicate different ways and means to advocate on the same issue. Depending upon the political space, the expertise of advocates, power relations among different groups, available resources, and the strength of the coalition, advocates should select appropriate strategies. For a bigger issue related to a system cause, all of these strategies can be selected for use from different corners and by different groups. But for a small issue

related to policy or behavioural cause, one or two strategies will be enough for an effective public advocacy effort.

## Advocacy Approaches

The terms ‘strategy’ and ‘approach’ look the same in many cases; and, in fact, in a practical sense, there are some overlaps between strategy and approach. However, they should be treated differently.

In public advocacy, ‘strategies’ are those tools which determine your main journey, while ‘approach’ determines all the details within the major decision. For example, if you need to go to Gilgit (a Northern Territory of Pakistan), you need to decide first how you will go. You have two options available – by road or by air. Choosing one of these two will be your strategic decision. If you decide to go by road, there are several options available – by local bus, by express bus, by hired car, or by foot. Choosing one of these several methods to reach Gilgit will be the selection of your approach to achieving the goal. Figure 5.2 will help you to choose the appropriate approaches.

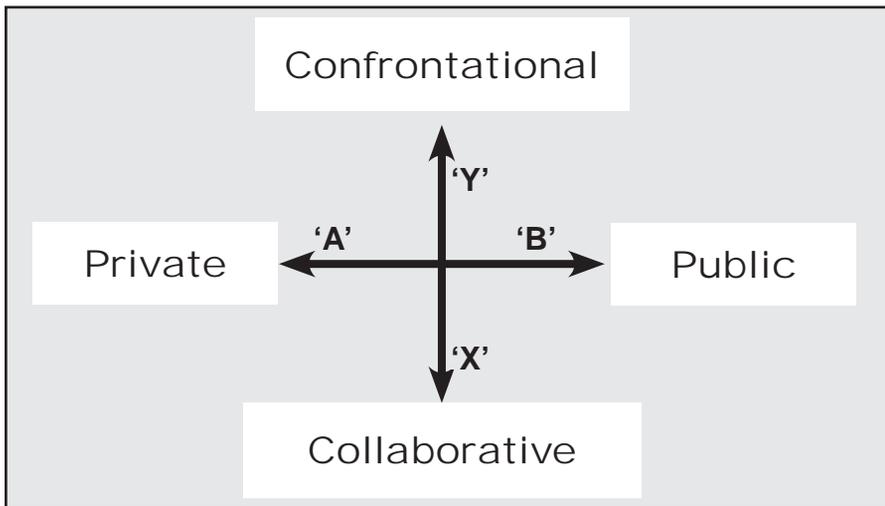


Figure 5.2: Advocacy approaches

## Selection of Roles

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 have then 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 the main problem is the knowledge gap between policy makers and the people affected. The policy makers 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 a 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

## 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 principles which promoted diversity and rested on maintaining a fine balance between water, soil, air, animals, and plants.

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. 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 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?

to their own benefit. In this case your organisation 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 in order to achieve the changes. If you do not have a very good relationship, you can play the 'expert informant' role. In the 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 dimensions of advocacy shown in Figure 5.2 will give you an added insight while selecting your 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 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 which sort of strategy and approach you want to adopt. You can also remember that other coalition members may remain in different quadrants during the 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 5.1 shows some different roles that coalition members can play.

**Table 5.1: Examples of advocacy roles**

Target audience	Possible roles
Ministry 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
NGOs working with mining labourers	These organisations often pay attention only to the immediate relief of the labourers but can be 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

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 is unlikely to be a good capacity builder.

## 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 is the rationale for doing so; and (c), what are the positive impacts of doing so. In today’s fast-paced world, people

### **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 those changes. You should suggest a maximum of two options.
- Be specific about what actions you want your audience 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.

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 such messages 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. For example, if one form of communication does not work, you should be able to deliver another form of communication 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 of your message 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, and similar. If you choose the public approach, your message should be reflected in the form of articles, news items, radio and 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 key elements 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 5.2.

**Table 5.2: An example of a key message**

Overall message	The recently introduced 40% tax on community forestry user groups income in Nepal has to be removed.
<b>Target audience</b>	<b>Key message</b>
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.

# Defining Advocacy Activities

Advocacy activities depend upon the road map that you prepare after several rounds of analysis of the selected issue. The road map shown in Figure 5.4 will help you design specific activities to move onward from each of the milestones. This kind of road map is also helpful for self-monitoring to help you discover whether your campaign is moving ahead or not. The milestones are the objectives set within a timeframe. You will be able to achieve your goal only after achieving several objectives and you need to carry out several activities in order to achieve one objective.

After the problem tree analysis, you need to be able to put your selected issue in this road map format. Accordingly, you can decide activities and also consider the strategies and approaches that you have selected. The parts of planning framework are inter-connected. The main activity of advocacy is making your target audiences listen to your logical arguments on a selected issue. Therefore,

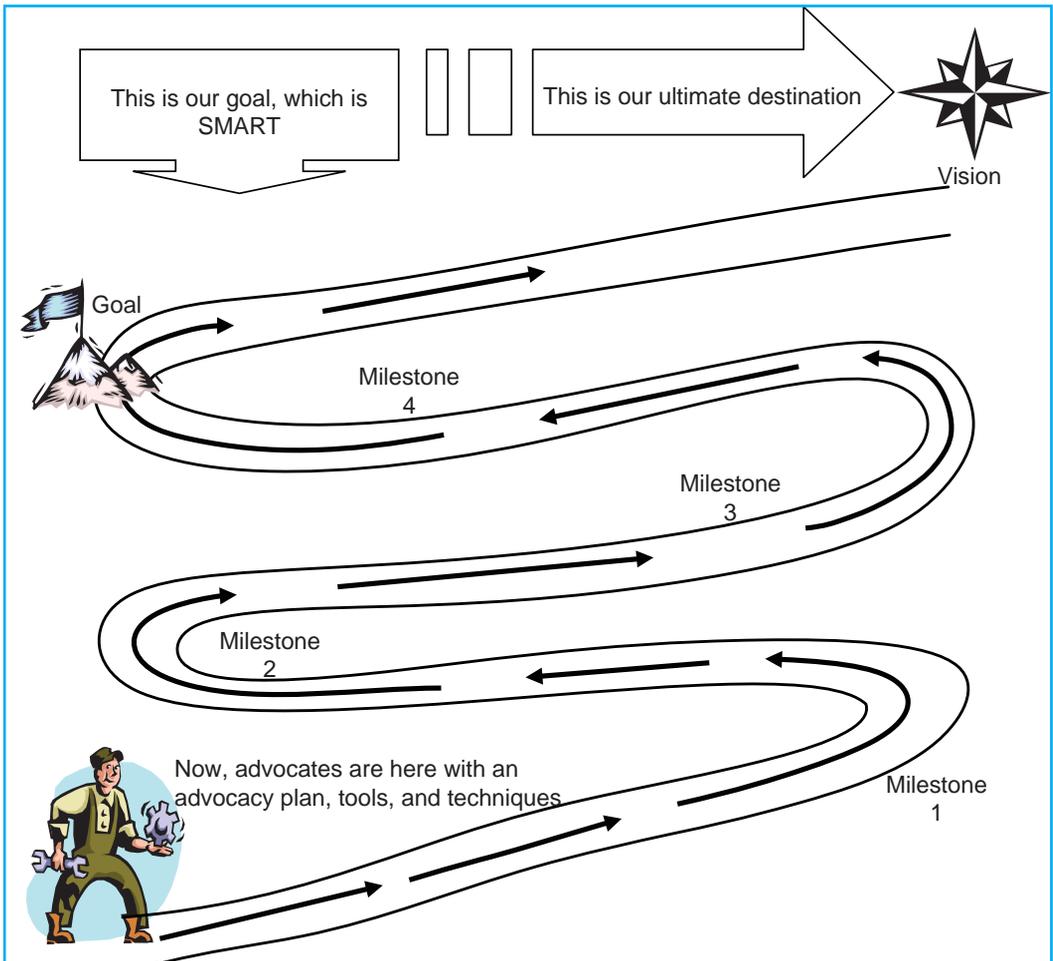


Figure 5.4: Road map for an advocacy initiative

in one sense the entire range of advocacy activities is nothing more than different 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. Table 5.3 will help you to understand this.

The summary sheet at the end of the chapter summarises all the steps and tips presented. 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 5.3: Examples of advocacy activities**

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

# Summary Sheet for ‘Finalising Advocacy Strategies’

Contents	Some of the questions dealt with in this chapter
1. Selection of advocacy approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What is the best approach for influencing your audience, both primary and secondary?</li> <li>● Do you have a good relationship with policy makers and can you use such a relationship in your advocacy process?</li> <li>● What style of advocacy do you like to follow – private, public, collaborative, or confrontational – or a combination of these?</li> <li>● Do you lead yourself or do you support others in leading the process?</li> <li>● Do you have enough capacity to play different roles – lobbyist, broker, expert informant, etc.?</li> <li>● Do you use the media in your advocacy?</li> </ul>
2. Identification of key message(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What do you want your target audience to hear?</li> <li>● What policy changes do you want and what support do you expect from other people?</li> <li>● What are the possible options you have identified? Are you open to different options?</li> <li>● Can you convey these options to your audiences?</li> </ul>
3. Preparation of road map	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What are the steps to prepare a road map for advocacy?</li> <li>● What connections are there between milestones and the goal?</li> <li>● How does a road map guide activities?</li> <li>● What is the importance of a road map in advocacy?</li> </ul>
4. Defining advocacy activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What are steps you will follow to deliver your key message?</li> <li>● What other activities do you need to follow to get policy change?</li> <li>● What could be the best options for delivering your message to your target audience?</li> <li>● What media do you use to deliver your message?</li> </ul>



Visiting a gravity ropeway system in Khairnitar, Nepal