

6

Advocacy Action Plan

This chapter provides guidelines for the preparation of an actual advocacy action plan, the last step in the advocacy planning framework (Figure 6.1). This plan includes setting a timeline, preparation of a budget, and preparation of a monitoring and evaluation plan for the advocacy initiative.

The road map (Figure 5.4) is the overall basis of your action plan. Only when you convert the road map into an action plan, will you know the validity of your road map. An inappropriate road map does not guide you to draw a practical action plan. You need to draw a tentative action plan following the directions set by your vision, goal, and objectives as included in the road map. The action plan of an advocacy initiative is very similar to that of a normal service delivery project. Some of the characteristics and considerations of an advocacy action plan are explained in this chapter.

Setting a Timeline

The previous chapter looked at the overall planning of an advocacy strategy. The detailed plan of activities needs a timeline. An advocacy plan needs more flexibility than other service delivery types of programmes because many things in an advocacy initiative are not under the control of the advocates. For example, the political climate and the target audience can change without warning. In this case, advocates need to be willing to change over time and also to re-direct their advocacy strategies at short notice.

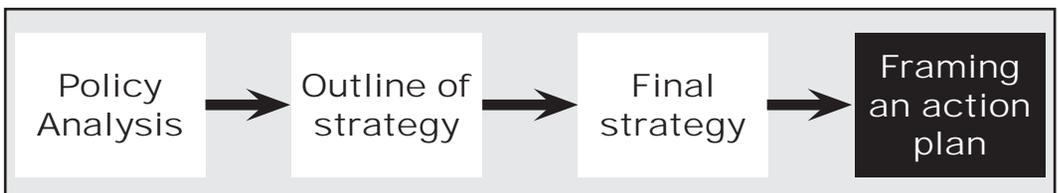


Figure 6.1: Last part of horizontal framework

Similarly, it is very unpredictable when valuable opportunities for influencing the identified target audience may appear, and this can be quite sudden. Advocates should be able to capitalise on these opportunities. In some cases, a policy change planned for five years' time may be achieved within a year. In contrast, after the target audience changes, you may encounter unexpected opposition and the advocacy process may have to be started again from the beginning. In particular, pay attention to the following points.

- The policy environment is not within the control of advocacy groups. It can be changed very quickly. Be flexible in order to capitalise on the changed environment.
- There may be unexpected but important opportunities for influencing policy makers in favour of your advocacy mission. Be ready to capitalise on such opportunities.
- Unexpected events may occur in advocacy. Allocate some extra time for such events.
- If you accomplish your mission earlier than planned, you will be regarded as even more successful. Your planning should be conservative but your thinking should be innovative.

Preparation of Budget

It is also usual to prepare a budget for an advocacy project. However, it is difficult to estimate the cost of an advocacy initiative in advance because you should always be open to inserting new activities, and this involves additional expenditure. This is the main difference between an advocacy budget and the budget planned for a normal service delivery type of programme.

For example, if your target audience suddenly shows an interest in visiting the affected groups of people, you should be able to bring them because it may be a good opportunity for you to influence them in favour of your proposed policy change. This kind of interest cannot be planned and budgeted properly. Furthermore the cost of advocacy activities depends on what type of strategy you want to take up. For example, if you organise a press conference in a big hotel, it may cost a lot. The same conference can be organised in a school building, which may be available almost free of cost. You have to ask yourself which would be more effective from a cost-benefit point of view.

For activities like policy research, policy analysis, designing advocacy messages, preparation of documentary films, and so on, you may be interested in hiring professionals from outside. If you follow this approach, your advocacy activities will be much more expensive. If, however, you have in-house capacity to take up

all these activities, it will be less expensive. Therefore, you have to prepare the budget with enough flexibility and using at least the following headings.

- Overheads – staff cost, supplies, fees, office space, office equipment, communication, travel, other overheads, and so on
- Advocacy activities – meetings, seminars, demonstrations, street plays, and others
- Capacity building for advocacy – internal and external capacity building
- Consulting services – research and others
- Expenses for unexpected activities

To meet those expenses, you can look for interested donors to fund you. Remember that you should be selective about getting funding from donors for advocacy initiatives – to make sure they do not later pressurise you to go in a different direction from that which you and the affected people want to go. You need a separate discussion on how to get funding for advocacy.

Preparation of a Logical Plan of Action

To make your advocacy plan more systematic, it is important to follow a planning tool so that all elements of your plan are reflected in a logical order. Some organisations use a tool known as a logical framework (logframe) as a planning tool. If your organisation is familiar with this tool, you can use it for advocacy planning as well. If your organisation is using a different tool for your normal planning, you can use the same tool for your advocacy planning.

Whatever tool you use, you should be able to show the links between the goal, objectives, inputs, outputs, effects, and impacts in your planning document. Based on these reflections, you can make a plan for the monitoring and evaluation of your advocacy initiative.

Setting Strategies for Monitoring Progress

It is clear that all advocacy activities are not visible and measurable in a quantitative manner as in other normal programmes. For example, lobbying based on the private approach cannot be seen publicly. Similarly, some advocates playing the role of honest brokers may strategically choose to be invisible. However, monitoring and evaluation of advocacy initiatives are even more important than in other programmes, since without such a system in place one could be actually going nowhere while convincing oneself that one is actually doing something useful. Therefore, a monitoring plan has to be prepared carefully and tactfully.

Some of the distinctions between ‘monitoring’ and ‘evaluation’ that people were interested in discussing during a Regional Training of Trainers meeting are given in Table 6.1.¹⁴

Table 6.1: Differences between monitoring and evaluation	
Monitoring	Evaluation
Monitoring focuses on the activities, and whether these activities are leading to the objectives identified earlier.	Evaluation focuses on whether the overall outreach is moving towards the vision and goals of the organisation, and the goals and objectives of the proposal/plan on the basis of which the outreach was started/funded.
Monitoring is carried out during the functioning of the programme	Evaluation is carried out ‘post-activity’ (sometimes mid-term, sometimes at the end of the funding cycle etc.)
Monitoring focuses on ‘efficiency’ (whether the resources are being used optimally).	Evaluation focuses on ‘effectivity’ (whether the outreach has really changed the situation in the desired direction).
Usually monitoring is carried out using internal human resources.	Usually evaluation is carried out using external human resources, supported by internal human and logistical support.

You should follow the same framework for the monitoring and evaluation of advocacy as used for other programmes (Figure 6.2).

It is necessary to bear in mind that the monitoring and evaluation of any programme is a difficult and complex task. The monitoring and evaluation of an advocacy initiative is even more difficult and complex. For example, you cannot claim that the behaviour change of some people is only due to your advocacy activities. There may be several influential factors ongoing in society that has helped to change their behaviour. Similarly, you may get policy change as expected by your advocacy mission but this may not necessarily result in immediate changes in people’s lives. Some changes may come after several years of policy enactment. So, monitoring and evaluation is a complex process in advocacy. Please pay attention to the following points while preparing a monitoring and evaluation plan for your advocacy initiative.

- Do not be impatient to see the positive impact of advocacy in the first year after policy change. Be passionate and flexible enough to judge the impact several years after your advocacy initiative has finished.
- Do not expect that all the credit for getting positive changes will come to you or your organisation. Remember that advocacy is done collectively, joining with many other organisations and individuals like yours. You should also not

¹⁴ This section is adapted from the notes of Josantony Joseph.

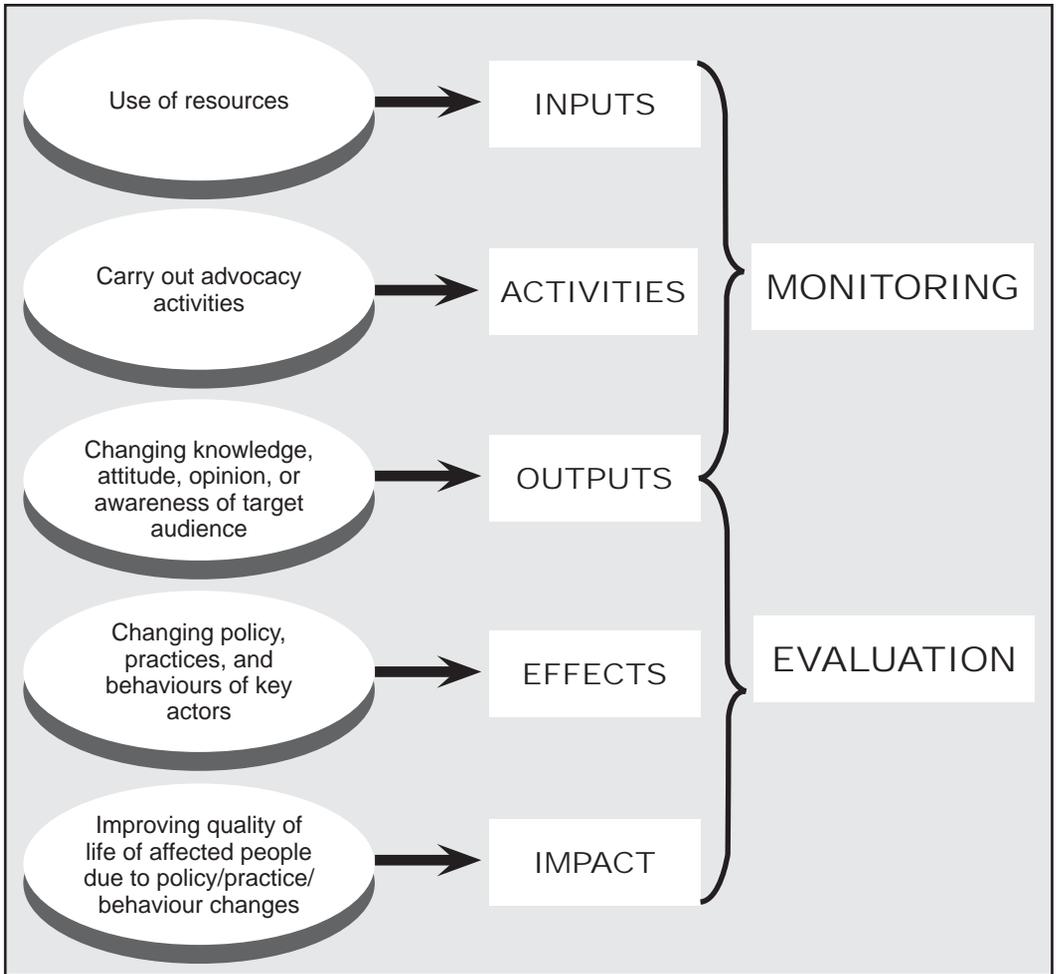


Figure 6.2: Areas for monitoring and evaluation

undermine the contributions of invisible actors. Your status will be that of contributor.

- Focus more on the process rather than on the product. The process you take up is under your control but the product is not within your control. Believe that a good process produces a good product.
- Compare the process of advocacy in one context to another. This will give you useful insights for improving your advocacy strategy.
- Remember that you should revise your advocacy plan more frequently than other normal programmes. Information coming from your monitoring reports will help get revision done.
- You can count policy changes but you cannot count the improvements brought by advocacy in policy enforcement. Therefore, do not expect to be able to quantify everything in advocacy.

- Changes in behaviour are even more difficult to measure. Be passionate and investigate the degree of change in qualitative terms.
- It is good to gather lessons from evaluation, rather than products, in the form of quality of life.
- It is not necessary that all advocacy missions have the success they intended. Therefore, be open to receive and acknowledge the failure lessons of advocacy, which will be very useful for you when revising your ongoing advocacy strategies and future planning.
- Make your funding agencies clear about what kind of advocacy work this is. If your donors want a definite result at any cost, discuss this with them at the beginning. If you do not discuss during the planning stage, you will have a problem at the end.

Summary Sheet for 'Advocacy Action Plan'

Concept	Questions dealt with in this chapter
1. Setting a timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How long will it take to achieve your advocacy goal? ● How flexible are you regarding your timeline? ● Is the situation such that you are likely to achieve your goal in a timely fashion? ● What will be the alternative approaches of advocacy if the situation changes?
2. Preparation of budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are your funding sources? Are donors interested in supporting you? What donors should you select for your advocacy initiative? ● What level of profile should you choose for your advocacy activities? Do you prefer to remain 'high profile'? ● Do you have in-house capacity for all the work that you have planned? ● Are you hiring consultants for some of your work? ● What is the level of your flexibility in budgeting? Are you able to revise your budget frequently?
3. Preparation of road map	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What planning tool are you going to use for your advocacy plan? ● Are you familiar with the tool selected? ● Do you see any advantages in using this tool for advocacy planning? If yes, what are they?
4. Monitoring and evaluation plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Did you think about a monitoring and evaluation plan for advocacy? ● Did you understand the differences between the monitoring of advocacy initiatives and other normal programmes? ● Do you have clarity on focus areas of evaluation of advocacy? ● Do you see overlaps between monitoring and evaluation?