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Implementation of the Advocacy Plan

Advocacy is all about influencing decision makers in order to obtain changes in policies and practices. When well-planned strategies are in place, advocates should start applying different approaches to start the influencing process. At this stage, advocates should take various decisions based on the chosen strategies.

Action-oriented decisions are taken based on (a) pre-defined strategies, (b) the political environment, and (c) organisational capabilities. However, there are several helpful tips for taking such decisions effectively. This chapter focuses more on such practical tips collected from different cases.

While implementing advocacy initiatives, there are three aspects of operational strategies that advocates should pay attention to. These are as follows.

Communication strategies: The basic context of any background to an advocacy initiative is that one party is demanding rights and another party is denying these either directly or by implication/practice. An advocacy initiative takes place between these two conflicting interests. Communication therefore plays a vital role in forwarding the interests of either party using different communication media.

Strategies for a collective effort: Advocacy can be carried out within a family to ensure the basic rights of all family members. Even in this case, the deprived members of the family must stand together. Advocacy for the public interest is broader than the issues observed within a family and covers decisions that ensure the rights of deprived members of the community in public affairs. A collective effort is part of the spirit of advocacy at all levels.

Tactical strategies: Advocacy is the struggle to get expected changes from other people. It is also natural that all struggles can be sustained only when there is some hope of winning in some area even if the overall struggle is difficult. Advocates should be prompt to apply the appropriate tactics, as and when required, to maximise their chances of winning in different areas. Therefore, advocates at this stage of the initiative should always be ready to take decisions with regard to tactics.

Several examples are cited for each of these strategies in the following paragraphs.

Communication Strategies

There are basically three elements in communication for advocacy: (a) the message should be designed properly; (b) the message delivery should be carried out in a professional manner; and (c) the follow up should be carried out appropriately. If one element is missing or is weak, it can affect the achievements of the whole advocacy mission. Therefore, the following references could be helpful for advocates to make these elements stronger.

Designing a message

An advocacy message should be able to capture (a) a short background of your proposed changes – i.e., why you are raising this issue; (b) at least two options for expected change; and (c) the consequences of not making the proposed changes. Finally, advocates should be able to convince others why the options forwarded through the advocacy initiative are the most suitable.

Often, good and bad messages depend upon the interest of the target audience. However, the literature on this suggests that the initial message should be very concise but clear. If the concerned person wants more details, it is more effective to supply these later on. For this kind of message design, advocates must know the interest of the target audience so that the message can fit. For a big issue and a senior target audience, advocates should carry out a small research project to identify the interest of the target audience. Secondly, advocates should not use jargon and unnecessary elaboration in such messages. It is always good to keep the advocacy message simple, clear, and short. The following questions will help you when designing your advocacy message. Advocates need not answer all questions on a formal notepad. However, these questions will work as an eye-opener.

- What group of people does your audience, both primary and secondary, represent?

- What biases do they have because of their educational or professional background?
- Have they clarified their position or stand already on this issue?
- Is it possible to link the present issue with their interest?
- Do you think that there is some misunderstanding on the part of the audience about this issue?
- What information about the issue do they already have?
- What new information are you offering to them now?
- Do you know what they do outside their work – hobbies and so on – which could be used to make your message more appealing to them?

If you do not know all about your target audience as indicated by the above questions, you can follow very informal ways of gathering such information. You can mobilise your colleagues within and outside your organisation very informally and tactfully so that your audiences do not feel that you are carrying out research about them.

Finally, your message should be understandable from your audience's perspective. All the words, phrases, and expressions you use must be from fields familiar to your audience. To ensure that your message is clear, test your message with those who are not familiar with your job.

Getting suggestions from one of the prominent social leaders of India, Mr Chandi Prasad Bhatt, during a visit to Chamauli, Uttaranchal, India

Delivery of advocacy messages

Messages can be designed and tested collectively in a team. It is acceptable to send this message by the distance media of delivery – post, newspapers, email, and others. But if you send someone to meet and hand over the message, it is more effective as well as more challenging. Your challenge here is to identify such a person who could influence the target audience through their credibility even as they deliver the message.

Therefore, advocates should select the best one or two persons to deliver the message effectively. Apart from the designed message, the selected persons should also be able to insert additional information about the issue. If they say something contrary to your message, it affects the whole advocacy mission.

Follow up of messages: The general expectation of message delivery by a reliable medium is getting a response on the issues and options provided in the message. This is the ideal. The general tendency is that you have to follow it up if it is of interest of you. At the same time, your target audience should not feel that you are pressurising them so much that they do not have time to think. Therefore, you have to follow a middle path for effective follow-up of the message. The following tips will help you.

Resend the message: If you have delivered the message by electronic media and you have not received any response for a length of time, you could re-send the message asking tactfully for an acknowledgement

Writing a follow-up letter: Write a gentle reminder if you do not get any reaction within your expected or negotiated time range.

Using the meeting for another purpose: If you meet the person by chance in between for another purpose, remind them gently of your conversation. However, you should not react if you get a negative response during this kind of meeting. Take the response positively and request another meeting regarding the issue.

Courtesy call: Depending upon the status of your target group, you can think about making a courtesy call at some time. You need not enter directly into the topic of your issue in this type of conversation but you should create such an environment that the person can say something about your previous message.

Invitation for another purpose: If you organise a programme on another matter, perhaps different to the advocacy issue, you can invite the concerned person. If they agree to participate, you can have a follow up conversation. Acceptance of your invitation itself will be a positive response from your target audience.

There are various ways of reinforcing a message to your target audience. It is very hard to determine which might be effective in which context. The most reinforcing ways are situational. A tactful advocate should be able to catch whatever opportunity arises for message follow up. However, remember that too much follow up for the same message to the same person sometimes produces negative effects. Following the middle path for follow up is convincing to average target audiences.

Media Strategies

The media is the means of communication, and includes newspapers, television, radio, banners, posters, billboards, video, badges, notices, newsletters and others. From a transformation point of view, the media can be categorised into two groups: (a) electronic, and (b) printed. From a design point of view, the media can be divided into four groups: (a) formal, (b) informal, (c) written, and (d) verbal. Newspapers, television, and radio are commonly called mass media, as large numbers of people are targeted in the communication. The mass media forms the central attention for advocacy initiatives.

Ownership and control of the media

The media is regarded as the fourth organ of the state and from this point of view is seen as equal to the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government in a democratic society. There are various mechanisms for checks and balances among these organs. But in reality it is not exactly like this. In liberal democratic countries, most mass media houses are owned by business people. In autocratic countries, the government often owns and controls large elements of the mass media. In extreme cases, governments detain journalists and editors and shut down the mass media if they are too critical of the programmes and plans introduced by the government.

Most media claim to be unbiased and independent, and say they publish stories from opposing sides independently. Some newspapers have political allegiances, however. In countries with a multiparty system, political parties sometimes indirectly own or control certain parts of the media based on their own political ideology and party interests. These media can then play a vital role during elections by promoting the side they favour.

Thus, ownership and control over the media varies from country to country. What is important for an advocacy initiative is to understand the dynamics of the ownership and control of the mass media. You need to be aware of which approaches the media prefer on the issue you are dealing with. Without understanding these aspects properly, your media strategy can even produce

negative results. The following tips will help advocacy groups to formulate effective media strategies.

- Map out what media exist in the country, province, or region that your organisation should be aware of. This includes newspapers (daily, weekly, journals), television stations, radio stations and similar.
- Identify who owns what, to what degree, and the focus of each of these media.
- Understand their hidden agenda – their ideological or party allegiances.
- Identify which is the most appropriate to your organisation and the issue that you are dealing with.

The media is powerful. It influences public opinion in a short space of time and to a degree that no one can imagine. Keep this reality in mind and carry out careful homework to develop a proper strategy.

Common Interest of Journalists

While you clearly need the media to send messages to your target audience, people working within the media also look for individuals or groups like yours as a source of information that could be exciting for the public. However, these two needs and interests do not always coincide. Advocacy initiators should work out what interests they have in common with those in the media. The following tips should be helpful.

- Media people want news items from you. If you cannot offer them a specific news item, they may not be interested in listening to you.
- News collectors are eager to highlight critical issues in order to catch the attention of the public. If you offer only generic history about an issue, this is generally useless from a media perspective.
- The media always like to capture burning issues and related crises. If your issue is too simple and common, no one will pay attention to it.
- Media people like to examine your organisation's critical viewpoints rather than simply learning what happened.
- They want to dig out the expert opinion of you or your organisation about the issue you are dealing with. If you cannot offer much expertise on the issue, they may use their own judgement, which may not be in your favour.
- Journalists are always interested in highlighting crises of all types. If you are facing an internal crisis like scandal, corruption, or favouritism they will not forgive you. This situation could be very harmful for you and your organisation.

Possible backfire from the media

Some people tend to have negative stereotypes about the media and journalists. Such a perception does not support an advocacy initiative. Therefore, begin your media strategy with a positive and constructive perception of the media. Some considerations are as follows.

- A small weakness in your preparation for using the media can harm your organisation. You must be able to protect your organisation from any harmful consequences from use of the media.
- Journalists are well trained in discovering a message from your level of confidence. Lack of confidence generally indicates either that you are not well prepared to deal with the issue or that you are hiding something. In this situation, journalists could make various assumptions, which could be contrary to your interests.
- In many cases, senior journalists use non-professional workers for news collection. Do not expect ethically grounded journalism from these people. Something small you have overlooked can be noted and reported to their senior reporters. Therefore, you have to be very careful about what level of journalist you are talking to. This is a major challenge when dealing with media people.
- Politeness in dealing with journalists and passion in responding is the best policy. Journalists can ask you harassing questions, but you should not react negatively.

The above experiences reflect the challenges of those who want to use the media as a means of advocacy. Some of the challenges are under the control of advocates (advocacy groups) whereas some are beyond their control. The media houses themselves have created some of these challenges. The magnitude of these challenges are different from place to place and are mostly contextual. Therefore, a two-way effort (from advocates and also from media houses) is essential to minimise these challenges.

Many of these ideas are summarised in the following essay.

Role of the Media in Advocacy: Experience from India[15]

It is increasingly being realised that behind the glitter of modern development there is a lot of injustice. Many oppressed groups of our society face injustice (on the basis of caste, gender, race, class), future generations face injustice (mainly in the form of environmental destruction), and other forms of life also face injustice (in the form of cruelty and the destruction of their habitats).

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[15] This article was written by Bharat Dogra, who presented it at the Training of Trainers Workshop, 29 June to 4 July 2004, Kathmandu

Although the threats causing such injustice are increasing, there are also many groups of concerned people as well as individuals working hard to fight these injustices. People suffering under injustice also try to fight, and they are not alone. There are several people (or groups of people) who they may have never met but who are working in their own way to stop these injustices. There are groups with various levels of specialised knowledge and expertise in resisting particular forms of injustice, and there are others who come forward in a more spontaneous way to help a just cause. Apart from resisting specific cases of injustice, there is also a much wider effort to create a more just society where the possibility for injustice, and various forms of violence rooted in injustice, will be greatly reduced.

These efforts at various levels try to approach the government, leading national and international institutions, legislative bodies, courts of law, the media, and other influential forums with the aim of influencing their decisions, policies, and programmes. The aim is to try to ensure the withdrawal of (existing or proposed) unjust decisions/policies and the adoption of just decisions/ policies. This can also be called 'public interest advocacy', or for the sake of brevity, just advocacy.

The media plays an important role in advocacy initiatives for various just causes and for creating a more just world. First of all, media in the form of newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and others enable us to reach millions of people in a short time, something which is not otherwise possible. Secondly, an issue that is being highlighted in the media also has a greater chance of receiving the due attention of other influential actors including legislative bodies, ministers, senior officials, leading institutions, courts of law and so on.

It is therefore crucial that advocacy efforts obtain the support and involvement of the media. Fortunately, fairly often a small section of the media is willing to be very supportive and is sometimes willing to be considered part of the advocacy effort. There are some 'alternative' media outlets which give the greatest importance to these efforts for a just world. In addition, there are some highly concerned persons within the mainstream media who take a special interest in contributing to and helping public advocacy efforts. Advocacy efforts should make it a priority to identify these sources of special support, to make available all relevant information on a regular basis to them, and above all to establish a stable, enduring relationship.

However this is likely to provide only some access to media coverage, and any large advocacy effort should strive to reach the much larger world of mainstream media to try to ensure bigger and better coverage of the issue and ideas advocated by it.

As any good manual on media advocacy will readily tell us, the specific demands and needs of an advocacy effort should be linked to the choice of the media form (printed or electronic, traditional or modern, and so on). Similarly, the immediate need of a particular time or crisis situation will decide whether the print/electronic media should be approached in the form of a press release, or by calling a press conference, by organising a press tour, or writing a series of letters to editors. There are important norms which generally govern these various forms of media advocacy. It is important for anyone leading or playing an active role in any such effort to be aware of these norms to avoid making mistakes and ensure the best possible result from limited resources.

Unlike corporate groups, public interest advocacy groups do not have adequate funds to place advertisements in the mainstream media. In special circumstances, perhaps they can mobilise the resources for limited advertising space, but generally this choice is not available to them. What is more, advertisements are often not the best way of drawing attention to issues of public interest, including some very controversial issues. Readability and credibility are both higher when journalists, editors, and media persons take up these issues on their own. This is why it is important for advocacy groups to have a very creative and constructive relationship with the media. The greatest source of strength is that the media recognises their integrity and honesty, and their sincerity with regard to the ideas and issues being advocated by them.

Such recognition is the biggest long-term source of strength for any advocacy group. The second biggest source of strength is the accuracy of their facts. If the media has faith in the sincerity of the advocacy group as well as in the accuracy of the facts provided by them, the chance that the advocacy group will receive adequate coverage is much higher.

Sometimes, an advocacy group makes the mistake of highlighting itself more than the issues advocated. Sometimes not even a group but a single person is highlighted. This can easily be counter-productive. The greater the concern for the wider issues related to the welfare of humanity (and other forms of life), the greater the likelihood of the media seeing this as a sincere advocacy effort.

However, some advocacy groups complain that despite all their sincerity and hard work they still do not get adequate coverage in the media even though the issues raised by them are important. Some have even worse experiences. They complain that sections of the media are giving space to malicious propaganda against them instigated by powerful vested interests.

This is part of a larger crisis within the media which is seen by many concerned media persons themselves to be moving increasingly away from the most

important concerns of humanity while over-emphasising frivolous issues, scandals, and glamour. In addition there is an increasing stranglehold of big-money interests over huge media empires and these are not interested in issues relating to economic inequalities and social injustice. As overall media concerns increasingly move away from what is needed by a just and sustainable world, the space available for public advocacy groups is also likely to decrease.

So while it is important for individual advocacy groups to try to obtain better coverage for their issues in the media, it is also important to initiate wider efforts to reform the media to make it more receptive to issues of survival, hunger, poverty, and justice. Without compromising the impartiality and freedom of the media in any way, these efforts should include positive incentives for the creative use of the media to contribute to a just world, while also including disincentives for those who habitually misuse the media for unethical purposes.

Efforts to improve the media coverage of issues relating to the creation of a just world should include improvements in the advocacy efforts as well as wider efforts to initiate some long-overdue reforms in the media. Encouragement to public-spirited editors and journalists to promote media initiatives devoted to the creation of a just world can also play a very helpful role.

Coalition Strategies

A coalition is a group of individuals or organisations working for the same purpose. The term 'ally' carries the same meaning in advocacy. Other literature speaks of 'like-minded organisations' that have a common agenda on a certain issue. It is not necessary to have the same purpose for everything. A coalition can be formed among those individuals and organisations who share at least one common purpose. In advocacy, the policy goal can be the common factor.

A coalition can vary in size and in many other ways. It can be big or small, formal or informal, homogeneous or heterogeneous, and so on. The coalition approach has both advantages and disadvantages.

The importance of coalitions

Stronger and larger voice: Advocacy is often carried out to achieve changes in policies, and requires wide coverage in society. For example, if an initiative succeeds in changing the government reservation policy for tribal groups, this covers tribal communities living throughout the country. An issue that has large coverage requires a larger voice. This does not only mean shouting loudly. It means different people from different corners raising their voices together. This cannot be done through a single organisation alone.

Influential voice: In advocacy, your target audience does not listen to a general voice. The voice you raise must be influential so that the target audience is compelled to listen. A number of organisations and individuals joining forces to raise a collective voice is the power of advocacy, which makes the target audience sit up and take notice.

Coordinated efforts: Advocacy is required when one group is demanding and another group is resisting certain changes. Here the resisting group is called the target audience. The target audience also observes the dynamics of the society very closely. If they hear different messages from different groups or individuals, they think that action is not required or that it is premature to start making changes. But if they hear the same version from different corners, they are compelled to think twice about their resistance. Therefore, a coalition makes a coordinated argument, which is many times stronger than a single voice.

Creating visibility: In the present day, society is full of debate, discussion, and arguments. Responsive listeners must be selective according to their own specific criteria. Therefore, advocates must think about ways and means of making their issue visible to all concerned individuals and institutions. The media is the best way to make the issue visible in a short time and at minimum cost.

Interaction with women's groups at Pipaldanda, Palpa – users of the Women and Energy project

Mutual protection: The resisting group will also be active in protecting their interests. Advocates can carry out a social survey of opinion formally or informally to determine whether their resistance to change is still valid or not. In this process, the resisting group can also play different games to harass advocacy groups. If one organisation or only a limited number of individuals speak out, they can be harassed easily. If many organisations and individuals work together, such harassment is not possible.

Challenges of coalitions

No concept or approach is free of problems. The approach of working in coalitions for advocacy initiatives certainly has its disadvantages. However, we, who are raising our voices for those who face injustice, should take these problems as challenges.

Differences in commonality: Generally, coalition members come from different contexts and backgrounds. There may be similarities on one issue, but commonality in every aspect cannot be expected from diverse group members. Therefore, differences in perception and action are features of a coalition. Differences are not a problem but managing difference is a challenge that requires considerable time and energy.

Sharing credit: It is human nature that everyone likes to take credit for success and minimise their share in a failure. Leadership is responsible for distributing credit, which is not easy. Sometimes, the leadership itself falls into dispute. In this case, the coalition faces a difficult situation.

Disagreement: Ideally, a coalition must provide space for disagreement within certain limits. Sometimes people overstep the limits and disagree due to personal or organisational vested interests. It is also difficult to set user-friendly indicators for such limits. In this situation, a coalition can collapse.

Time: Decision making in a coalition is always a time-consuming process. Participatory approaches, time management, and harvesting successes from unexpected opportunities in advocacy are interrelated. There should be checks and balances among these aspects in a coalition. This is very abstract and often problematic in real advocacy.

Problem of consensus: A coalition is regarded as a forum that takes decisions based on the consensus of all its members. However, obtaining consensus from a diverse group is a challenge. Making decisions based on the majority is not in the spirit of the coalition.

Advocacy Strategies and Approaches: A Resource Manual

A case study of a mountain state in India

There is a state-level network of NGOs in a mountain state of India (the actual names are not important, this is simply a learning example). More than 20 NGOs working in different parts of the state had joined this network by March 2004. According to the constitution, the network, its leadership, its working procedures, and its structure looked very encouraging. The members of the network represented almost all parts of the state and the network was open to accepting new members.

However, information gathered from other organisations not involved in the network revealed a different and sometimes frustrating situation. One non-member organisation made the following comments about this network.

- Most of the larger and more experienced organisations that have gained credit from the people and that hold large projects from different donors have not joined the network. This situation itself indicates that the network does not represent all the NGOs in the state.
- Most NGO members in this network are busy with their own projects in their own localities. Very few people believe in this network. Many others do not see much benefit from strengthening it. Its management, as of March 2004, remains a skeleton.
- Some people comment that some of the network members do not have a clean image with regard to financial transparency. Some have bad reputations. However, it is difficult to know which member is clean and which is not clean, and to what extent.
- The state's NGOs are polarised into several groups based on leadership. Many people comment that the network was formed by one of these groups. Therefore, there is no question of representation and an independent status in the state. This is one of the reasons why many other NGOs are not joining the network.
- This network lacks a funding base, and is hardly covering its operating costs at present. This network has a hidden interest in conducting different activities for its survival. When the opportunity to start an advocacy initiative came up, this network was very eager to be involved in the process. It claimed that advocacy was the main role of the network and that it would also be possible to form an issue-based coalition among the NGOs and CBOs. This network could be a good medium for such coalition building. However, it was very hard for a potential member organisation to decide whether or not to join this coalition.

Questions for discussion
- Do you think that a new member should join a coalition under the leadership of this network? Give your reasons.
- What prerequisites does this network need to put in place before initiating an issue-based coalition?
- How could a good coalition of NGO and CBOs be formed in this situation?

Not enough time: A coalition is made only for a specific objective. Individuals serving in the coalition are often overloaded by the other responsibilities of their organisation. It is challenging for the member to find enough time for the coalition.

It is not that advocacy cannot be carried out without a coalition. There are several ways a single organisation can carry out an advocacy initiative following the private approach. It is the nature and the context of the issue that determines the necessity for a coalition.

Finally, a coalition needs a strong consensual leadership, and finding this in developing countries is often a challenge. Leadership can be tested in a coalition, which helps develop maturity in leadership. Despite the drawbacks, a coalition is more important than other elements in advocacy and its disadvantages are outweighed by its advantages. Coalitions are especially important for issues with important policy connotations.

Some ways to overcome challenges

Readiness to work with others: A coalition is a way of working together. All members cannot possibly have exactly the same vision, goal, and objectives. However, coalitions are possible because of commonality within diversity. In this context, one has to be ready at the individual and organisational level to work with others.

Mutual trust: Trust must exist among all potential members likely to join the coalition. Trust cannot be built in one day or from one exercise. It depends upon a long-standing cordial relationship. Therefore, trust building exercises should be started long before the actual coalition building on a particular issue.

Common agreement about the goal: All members of a coalition must agree to the ultimate goal. However, organisations perceive the various tasks to be undertaken differently. If all members cannot come together and agree a common framework, there are obviously fundamental differences which will not allow the coalition to work smoothly. An exercise to prepare a common and agreed-upon goal and framework for the advocacy effort is necessary.

Maintaining focus: The leadership of the advocacy effort has the challenge of maintaining the coalition's focus. Sometimes the direction that the advocacy effort might take, the opportunities that arise, and the avenues that could be profitably explored only become visible during the advocacy effort itself. If the focus of the effort is to be changed, a democratic process of decision making

must be followed. Decision by consensus is the most reliable for a coalition. In addition, some coalition members may start going in different directions, following their own paths and ambitions. Again, the leadership of the coalition should be aware of this.

Balance between changes and consistency: To some degree, a coalition needs to maintain consistency in its members' roles – which organisation/individual is doing what. Changing roles overnight does not help a coalition. However, neither is keeping an individual in the same role all the time very constructive. Provision should be made for changing the leadership as well. However, these changes should not disturb the image a coalition has gained. This is the tricky and challenging part.

Sharing credit and blame: A coalition is built for certain tasks. In advocacy not all tasks will succeed. There is also the possibility of receiving blame, and this could have major consequences for the organisation and for individuals. On the other hand, if the advocacy effort is successful, the credit can brighten an organisation's image. How is praise and blame shared among the coalition members? This is a challenge. Normal human nature cannot be overlooked in planning the sharing mechanism.

Fund Mobilisation Strategies

Fund requirements for advocacy activities depend upon the issue, the selected media, and the location of the target audience. Generally, advocacy·related activities are relatively less costly than normal projects. However, funding is a basic requirement for advocacy as well. For normal service delivery projects, required funding can be raised from different donors with similar interests. Some donors are willing to support advocacy initiatives but not as many as for other programmes. The following tips should be helpful for preparing a fund mobilisation strategy.

Internal resource mobilisation: Advocacy is an initiative carried out for, and most optimally with, the affected people. Intermediary organisations mainly function as capacity builders for the affected people. If the affected people themselves do not play an active role in advocacy, the effort is ultimately more likely to fail. Internal resource mobilisation is very important. External resources in advocacy tend to create dependency and a culture of patronage, which is not healthy and is unsustainable for advocacy.

Selective donors: If internal resources are insufficient for mobilising people and delivering messages to the target audience, funding from donors can be sought. However, advocacy groups must be selective in identifying and approaching

donors. This is because the type of donor you work with determines your public image on the issue that you are dealing with. For example, if you are working with the World Bank on an issue related to the disaster of globalisation, you couldn't justify it to the public.

Selective foundations: Foundations are established to promote certain interests at different levels. Such foundations are available at the country level as well as at the international level. However, the issue you are dealing with and the interests of the foundation should match. Advocacy groups should be selective and strategic about seeking funding from foundations.

UN agencies: The UN is ultimately responsible for promoting human rights all over the world through international treaties and convictions. It has also created several wings to enforce such rights. If a national government does not support an internationally approved issue, UN agencies do not hesitate in supporting civil society organisations to pressure the government. Therefore, advocacy groups can identify such UN agencies for collaboration.

Interest groups: Interest groups are people who can do nothing themselves but who are keen to make something happen in society. Such groups can be organised formally or informally. Various interest groups want to promote certain sections of the population to resolve certain issues. For example, some business houses are interested in promoting education for tribal children. Advocacy groups should identify such groups.

Coalition members: Another main source of funding for advocacy is the funding base of coalition members. If the issue is genuine and they are really committed, coalition members should be able to share resources to forward the issue from their own funding base. If required, coalition members could raise funding from their own sources.

Important factors while mobilising funds for advocacy

The factors to consider when mobilising funds are not unique to advocacy. However, there are some important considerations, as below.

Transparency: Whatever funds an advocacy group uses, there must be a high level of transparency. The level and degree of transparency has to be determined by all members of the coalition. Advocacy groups must remember that financial allegations play a major role in the success of an advocacy effort. If funds collected from any source are misused or mismanaged, your opponents will make this an issue to destroy your advocacy initiative.

Cost effectiveness: Your expenditure profile provides an image to the people you are working with. This does not mean that advocacy activities should always be carried out in an inexpensive way. Your activities could be expensive depending upon the issue and target group audience you are delivering your message to. For example, if you want to deliver your message directly to a Member of Parliament of Nepal, you may need to organise a seminar in an expensive hotel in Kathmandu.

Record keeping: Financial record keeping is important for all expenditures at the public level, and even more important in advocacy. If you are not keeping a proper record of your funds, no one will trust you. Mistrust will arise not only from the public but also from your own coalition members. If you do not record everything properly, you cannot be trusted, however clean you are.

Public auditing: This relates to financial transparency. In advocacy programmes, financial transparency among executives is not enough. Every individual who is devoting time and energy to the effort should know what money is coming in and what expenditures are being made, and for what purpose. Comments from the public should be given top priority for building and thinking about expenditure plans.

Frequent sharing: Sharing is necessary for all public organisations, and even more so in coalitions formed for advocacy initiatives. The sharing can be done regarding the financial situation, programmatic achievements, strategic alterations, and procedural operations. If required, public sharing can help with building trust on a wide scale.

Publications: Raising critical issues and debating is normal in advocacy processes. Likewise, it is also the public's right to ask advocates critical questions. Therefore, all financial transactions should be published periodically and brought into the public arena. After all, there should not be anything to hide in an advocacy organisation.

Embarrassing mistakes: This does not mean that advocacy groups never make any mistakes. What happens after a mistake is made is very important in advocacy. If you defend your mistakes, you are making another mistake to hide the first one. This process then spirals. Advocates must be conscious about this 'mistake adding' process and follow the 'mistake reduction' process that requires immediate acceptance of the mistake with the commitment not to repeat it in future.

Negotiation Strategies

Negotiation is the last stage of the advocacy process. It is close to the stage of agreement between two or more groups for resolution of the problem. Communication strategies applied throughout advocacy play a vital role in bringing target audiences to this stage. Neither party has yet won the game. Either party can still come up with a last trick. From a success and failure point of view, arriving at the stage of negotiation is a success in itself. Nevertheless, it is very challenging, tricky, and demands significant skills. The following tips can help enhance the skills needed for this stage in the advocacy process.

Assessment of power dynamics: In most cases when there are negotiations, advocacy groups feel that the issue they have been talking about at length is about to be resolved. This may not always be the case. Calling you for negotiations could be a strategy of the opposition to divide and break the movement. Therefore, you should become even more serious about the final goal rather than starting a victory celebration. Advocacy groups must take their time and observe the power dynamics of the present situation very critically. A realistic estimate of the power relations between the advocacy group and their opponent will give a picture of the possible negotiation. In particular, ask the following questions of your team members and have a critical discussion.

● Who is supporting you and who is supporting your opponents?
● Who are the direct decision makers?
● Who will be influencing the decision behind the scenes?
● What level of preparation have your opponents carried out?
● What could be the best and worst reasons for calling you for negotiation?

Power dynamics are always changeable. Advocates should not assume that the power relations are the same as before. Discussion on all these questions is important for assessing the current power dynamics.

Preparation of negotiation agenda: A negotiation agenda is crucial in advocacy. The agenda itself can determine the entire achievement of your advocacy effort. Keep the following points in mind while setting your negotiation agenda.

● Your agenda for negotiation must match the goal that you have set for your advocacy campaign before starting the process.
● The negotiation agenda must be discussed and agreed upon by all coalition members and affected people. If a consensus of all individuals is not possible, a consensus of representatives is essential.

- Your agenda must spell out what you want to achieve. If your team agrees to establish some level of bargaining, you have to determine the 'dead end' demarcation of the bargaining.
- Do not forget the power and interests of your opponents. Think about your opponents and their reaction to your agenda. If you can discover your opponents' views, this will help you.
- Your final agenda will be what you will do when your opponent says 'No'. You should be fully prepared for this scenario in the form of an activity or other process.
- You have to maintain a high degree of confidentiality in your agenda. If your opponents know what you are going to say and offer, you will be in a losing situation.

Mediation arrangements: Mediation is a middle path in advocacy. Depending upon the issue, some people may already be planning a mediating role between two parties. This is sometimes visible and sometimes not. Some of your coalition members who are able to win your opponent's trust can also play a mediating role in advocacy. The main roles of negotiators are to bring both parties towards a peaceful solution of the problem. To play this role effectively, the following tips are helpful.

- Find impartial and unbiased individual(s) for negotiating roles. Negotiators should not take the side of either party.
- Selected negotiators must be able to win the trust of both sides. If certain people have that image already, it is even better.
- The negotiators must be able to unlock the issue and display it in several components and lock the ideas and opinions of all together.
- They should be able to deal with the problems rather than persons. They should be able to facilitate/moderate heated discussions without personal attacks and avoiding conflict-oriented and bitter language.
- The most important role of mediators is to identify options for mutual gain that lead to a 'win-win' situation.

Selection of timing: Consider that society is not only facing the problems related to your issue. Your opponents might be dealing with several other issues, some of which are larger than yours. For example if a national issue is being hotly debated and you are about to negotiate about a local issue, this may not be an appropriate time. To wait for a better time, you can do some tactful lingering without reflecting any reluctance to negotiate.

The best time for negotiation is when your agenda is receiving attention from the concerned authority. Therefore, the role of the advocate is to conduct informal

research and to find an appropriate time. For example, if there is an election going on or just over, it is better not to plan a negotiation meeting because all the authorities are paying attention to something else.

Selection of a negotiating team: Communication and presentation skills play a large role in negotiation. A skilful person can moderate even a tough discussion constructively. Therefore you must select appropriate people for your negotiation team. If you select the wrong people for the team, the likelihood of success declines.

In this regard, the position held and an individual's skills may be different. For example, the chairperson of your advocacy coalition may not be very skilful as a negotiator. If this is the case, you should be open to selecting another person with the proper skills. This does not undermine the chairperson. If the chairperson must be included to maintain protocol, give the chairperson only a limited role.

A negotiation checklist: All preparation for negotiation is done with an ideal view of the opponent. All of your assumptions may not be correct when you sit at the table for the actual negotiation. Many things will emerge suddenly. The negotiation team should be able to deal with all the new opportunities and challenges.

Protocol: A negotiation team should be conscious about the protocol of the members at the meeting. All procedures should fall within an acceptable protocol. If your opponents do not follow the protocol, do not be concerned. This is their problem, but do not overlook the protocol from your side.

Agenda, objective, and bottom line: A negotiation team must be very clear, confident, and should have the authority to discuss the agenda and the objectives. If you have ambitious objectives for bargaining, your bottom lines should be very clear. Not only the team leader but all members should be equally competent in this regard.

Preparation of options: A negotiation dialogue is not possible in a 'dead end' situation. If you have only one option, your opponents will not necessarily agree. For healthy negotiation, both parties should present several options – as many as possible. The more options you can present, the greater is the possibility that the negotiation will be successful.

Supporting documents: You need to collect, prepare, and arrange documents, data, facts, and figures to support your arguments. You need not show or present everything right away but if you are questioned about the facts, you must be able to demonstrate them. If you say, "I will go to the office and bring the information," the strength of the negotiation is reduced.

Number of team members: Generally, negotiation meetings take place with an equal number of members from both parties. There is no question of majority and minority in this kind of discussion. It is always good to fix the number of team members by mutual discussion with your opponent.

Level of privacy: There should not be anything to hide in a negotiation. Ultimately, everything becomes public. However, certain things should be kept in confidence for a while. Therefore, the level of confidence from your side has to be determined before going to the meeting. The negotiation may not be completed in one day. No team member should go beyond the norms set for maintaining the level of confidence. If someone goes beyond this boundary it creates more harm than good.

Site selection: A negotiation meeting at your own location is good, but your opponent must also accept this. People often prefer a neutral site for negotiations and this needs to be decided openly by mutual agreement.

Logistics: Whatever site you agree upon, you need some logistics. Do not depend on your opponent or someone else for logistical arrangements. Your opponent may offer you something if the selected site is favourable to them. For example, they can offer you food, vehicles, or a place to stay. There is no problem about accepting these things which can help to build trust. However, you have to rely on your own preparation.

Risk Management Strategy

Advocacy is not all about confrontation. Advocacy has several modes and methods, depending upon the issue and context. Advocacy is not as simple a task as normal service delivery. You can easily make people happy with a service delivery programme. For example, if you provide food to hungry people, they will be very happy with you. In advocacy, however, the affected people may blame you if they do not get the changes they expect. Therefore, advocacy is not a risk-free initiative. There are several ways to manage risk. The measures for risk management at the programme level can be analysed in three stages.

Risk during preparations for advocacy

Fully legitimate role: Legal legitimacy is the prime condition for advocacy. If your organisation is supporting affected people to initiate their own advocacy campaign, you have to review your conditions and legal status and determine whether or not you are legally allowed to support such groups. If the conditions set in your registration or agreement do not allow for such support but you want to do so anyway, you are taking a risk.

Following a safe approach: Some issues are directly related to the country's mainstream politics. Generally, more important people such as business leaders, experienced politicians, and high profile interest groups become involved in mainstream politics. In this case, you should assess your strength to determine whether you want to start a struggle at this level. In this case, you would need to be prepared to manage greater risks.

No involvement in political debate based on party interests: Advocacy as such involves political discourse since in a democratic society political leaders elected by the public should be the ultimate decision makers. However, tactful advocates can keep advocacy processes far away from becoming politically polarised. This is a very challenging task, however. You should be careful from the beginning. Entering into the political debate can have serious risks.

Rise above party interests: This point relates to the multiparty political system. You have to be active in the political process in order to promote desired changes for the poor. However, you should keep your arguments above party interests. This is much more tactical and demands a high intellectual capability.

Select honest allies: Select as allies only those who are reasonably honest. If you work with people who have lost social credibility, you cannot maintain your image in society. Having the wrong types of people as allies harms many good organisations.

Risk during advocacy activities

Employ only fair tactics: Advocacy is like a game. There is an equal possibility of winning or losing. How you win and how you lose is also important in this process. If you lose fairly, this will improve your credibility for future advocacy on the same or different issues. However, if you win by compromising the fairness of your tactics, you may gain something at present but will lose your positive image in society, and may have to abandon your interest in advocacy. Therefore, success and failure are facts, but you should never apply unfair tactics in advocacy.

Be tolerant: Tolerance should be an inherent character of advocates. If your opponents disagree with you, and you become angry and publicly upset, this situation will be harmful to your cause. If you remain tolerant and your opponent exhibits anger, this can be a plus point for your advocacy and can even make your opponent feel sympathetic towards you.

Take a far-sighted approach: During your advocacy mission, you will be dealing with several stakeholders one after another. Do not think only about the success

or failure in front of you, but consider the long-term relationship and its possible consequences. In one meeting you may be disappointed, but this may lead to avenues for future meetings and achievements.

Get prepared to utilise opportunity costs: In advocacy, you cannot estimate all possible opportunities at the beginning. You should be able to take advantage of unseen opportunities and give up unnecessary elements. Therefore, you should be alert all the time during your advocacy mission.

Make alternative plans: If one element of your plan does not work, what will you do next? For example, if you cannot meet the minister, what will you do? Will you try to meet the secretary? The personal assistant? Or will you simply leave? Similar back up plans and alternatives are required in all advocacy activities. Prepare as many alternatives as possible, and be optimistic that one of the alternatives will work.

Risk at the end of advocacy

Well-prepared negotiations: If you have prepared your negotiation well you will have discovered alternative possibilities whether your dialogue succeeds or fails. If you are not well enough prepared, you may face great risks after the dialogue.

Healthy agreement: An agreement takes place in a situation of 'give and take'. It is very hard to find a 'win-win' situation in all issues. In some cases, you may be giving more than your opponent. In some cases, your opponents will be giving more and you will be taking. This depends upon the power relationship and the strength of each party. However, your role is to maintain a healthy environment so that your relationship can continue for any necessary follow-up programmes.

Healthy disagreement: Sometimes dialogues simply fail, but this need not end the relationship. One failure could be a stepping stone to future success. At the end of a failed dialogue, sum up the meeting as well as possible in a happy mode. As far as possible, keep the door open for the next meeting.

Risk at the organisational and individual level

Ultimately, individual staff members or volunteers carry out advocacy initiatives in the name of certain organisations or coalitions. Therefore, their individual security in terms of family, career, status, credibility, and benefits throughout the advocacy process is a high priority. Areas of attention can be identified but framing a risk management plan in advance is very difficult. The following questions will be helpful for paying attention to potential risks at the individual level.

- What will you do if your opponent is able to cancel your organisational agreement?
- What steps will you take if your opponent arrests some of your staff? They could even be charged in criminal cases.
- What will happen if your opponent mentally or physically harasses your staff?
- How will you safeguard the family members of staff who are actively involved in advocacy processes?
- What will you do if you receive a letter or call from your opponent asking you to fire some of your staff members?
- What will happen if your opponent 'buys off' some of your staff members by offering them good incentives?
- What steps could you take if your opponent destroys your physical facilities such as telephone, office, other supplies, etc?
- How will you manage your mission if your opponent succeeds in breaking up your coalition?

Based on the situation and context of the advocacy, several other questions of this type may arise in relation to risks during advocacy initiatives. Advocacy organisations must at least think about these potential risk areas and prepare alternative plans using their best judgement.