

Advocacy

Creating a programme for change

The aims of this chapter

This chapter of the manual will provide information on some tried and tested ways and means to create an effective advocacy programme in support of your campaign.

It seeks to provide you with a framework in which you can develop your advocacy skills and strategies, highlighting useful techniques and tools. It does not attempt to give you all the answers to your particular issues – only you can do this.

This chapter is divided into four key sections:

Section 1. What is advocacy?

Section 2. Successful advocacy

- 2.1 Defining your goals
- 2.2 Identifying your audience
- 2.3 Structuring your campaign

Section 3. Techniques, tools and know-how

- 3.1 Developing and fulfilling an effective campaign strategy
- 3.2 Strategic and creative thinking
- 3.3 Identifying how you want to use your information

Section 4. Your advocacy checklist

SECTION 1. WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

Advocacy is a broad, generic term that can be applied to a wide range of activities carried out to influence thinking and decision-making and create political or practical change.

In the context of this manual and its overall objective of empowering people to protect their own environment and human rights, we have defined advocacy as the following:

Advocacy represents the strategies devised, actions taken and solutions proposed to influence decision-making at local, provincial, national and international levels to create positive change for people and their environment.

Effective advocacy requires:

- Organisation
- Strategic and creative thinking
- Information (which is well researched and factually accurate)
- Strong, well reasoned arguments in favour of your proposals
- Effective communication
- Mobilisation of support

By striving to meet these requirements, it becomes possible to develop solutions to identified problems. With a carefully constructed and well-supported advocacy campaign, people from remote communities can access the most powerful opinion-formers and decision-makers at national and international levels.

In effect anyone can be an advocate as long as he or she has an issue (a problem and solution) to draw attention to. Advocates can be the very people who are directly affected by or concerned with a problem or national and international NGOs or others acting on their behalf.

Remember that the most successful advocacy campaigns are those that have strong and cohesive (united) support as well as powerful and well-researched and well-presented arguments. Whenever possible, the presentation of realistic and achievable solutions will help your case.

When advocacy is targeted very directly at decision-makers to ensure legal or political change, it is often known as 'lobbying' but advocacy in its broadest sense can refer to awareness-raising, for example, amongst the consumers or users of a product.

Put simply, advocacy is the sum total of the legal and legitimate means open to you to create positive, beneficial changes.

SECTION 2. SUCCESSFUL ADVOCACY

2.1 Defining your goals

The first step in any advocacy programme is the clear definition of the problem and your goals. These issues are covered in greater detail in the Desk-based Research section of this manual and by now you should have quality information that has identified:

What is the problem and what are the various impacts?

Always try to clearly define the nature, scale and impact of the problems you are looking at – define them in readily understandable terms, such as cost, health impacts, environmental consequences. Remember to define the potential problems in the context of different time-scales – near, mid and long-term impacts.

What are the solutions and alternatives?

Remember that these need to be practical and achievable – always consider time and cost.

Who is interested in your issue – who is your audience?

There will always be several distinct audiences that may be interested in your issue. Carefully consider how you can relate to each audience, including those causing the problem, and what their motivation might be.

- Money/financial considerations
- Information, science or logic
- Legal structures or action
- Public image and Public Relations
- Power
- Morals or conscience

Who may support your campaign?

Support whether popular, political or financial is vital to your success – actively seeking out support is essential.

Answering these key questions will help you to identify clear policy or practical changes that you can highlight to decision-makers. Remember that by merely drawing attention to a problem without clear recommendations you may not elicit the responses and reactions that are needed.

The Golden Rules

Successful advocacy **MUST** have careful planning, preparation and creative thinking.

Always take time to consider how you can best approach your issues, ensure that you are properly prepared and that you have the information and support you need.

Always bear in mind that you need to have clear aims and **SMART** objectives:

Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Realistic

Time bound

Finally, ensure that you have a budget and the financial resources to progress your advocacy.

Identifying a number of smaller objectives that can be achieved incrementally (step-by-step) is often the most effective means to achieve your overarching goals. Most often it is simply not possible to achieve your ultimate goal in one step. Always keep in mind your desired final outcome while working to make real, measurable gains towards that goal. Successes, however small they may be in your larger strategy, are important to motivation and progress, for you and your supporters – these successes are a vital “motor” to drive your campaign.

All of the ‘audiences’ who are supportive of (or interested in) your objectives will also want to feel that there are successes and progress is being made over time (this can apply equally to funders, the public and the media).

Progress is particularly important in maintaining your profile and coverage with the media – each success can provide a new reason for a news story, features article or television report. This coverage will, in turn, provide energy and hopefully renewed support for your objectives (see Chapter on Media Training).

TIP *Keep copies of press articles and news features to remind people of the progress you are making. Building your institutional record in this way will develop the respect that others show for you.*

2.2 Identifying your audience

For your campaign to be successful you must be clear not only what changes you want to achieve, but who will deliver them. In other words who exactly can make or influence the decisions to help you achieve your campaign goals?

The tools and strategies you use to further your advocacy programme will differ according to your audience(s) - the opinion-formers and decision-makers you want to reach.

Broadly there are a number of key audiences which by virtue of their power and influence may help you to achieve your goals (these are not listed in any order of priority):

- Policy makers and Governments at local or national level (including parliaments and law courts)
- International community and agencies (such as the United Nations agencies, World Bank and International Monetary Fund, foreign governments and their agencies; the European Commission)
- International legal agreements such as the United Nations Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) or the Montreal Protocol (on ozone depleting chemicals)
- Businesses and Corporations (in your country and/or overseas) and trade groupings
- Investors in an industrial sector or company
- Consumers or users of a product or service
- Civil society groups such as NGOs, religious or political groupings, labour organisations
- Scientific community or academic researchers
- Local communities and community groupings
- Educational establishments
- A mass public audience (locally, nationally and internationally)

Your research will help you to identify the decision-makers who are key to your issue. As your campaign develops you may choose to add to this list or change the priority listing of your targets to get a more effective response.

TIP Always keep your advocacy under appraisal, do not be afraid to change priorities, actions and targets to meet new events and demands, changed circumstances or new information.

Targeting information effectively

- Be sure that you know which Government Ministry or Department and/or individual is responsible for taking decisions and action on your issue. Think laterally, for example, the Environment Ministry may be the most obvious target for your campaign, but consider also whether there are economic or financial implications to your work or wider social concerns (such as health issues) that could also form a potential audience.
- Look beyond your own government or domestic organisations, media and companies. The international community may be interested in supporting your issue – the international development agencies in particular may be of assistance. Identify the local offices of development agencies and try to meet staff in order to discuss your concerns, elicit support and target specific programmes and actions that they can undertake (such as developing and funding a project or educational programmes).
- Knowing – or at least developing a reasoned assessment – of how the decision-makers you are targeting may react is extremely valuable. Presenting your information in an inappropriate way or criticising a government for not making rapid enough changes can be counterproductive and work AGAINST the achievement of your goals. Companies, governments and individuals can all become more intransigent and resistant to your arguments if the wrong approach is taken.

Consider the reasons why – or why not – the government and other decision makers will support your work and remember to identify those with vested interests in the issue you are addressing.

TIP *Advocacy can of course mean that you are working with or supporting the government, businesses and others to develop new programmes or policies. Think of ways in which you can convince decision-makers to collaborate, or where your views and objectives will coincide. For example, solutions to illegal activities (such as timber smuggling or fisheries) that are harming the environment and people will often bring benefits for the government by increasing revenues from the taxation of legal practices or from sustainable activities associated with environmental protection.*

2.3 Structuring your campaign

Devising an advocacy strategy

How you develop your advocacy programme will to a great extent depend upon the resources that you have available including: Time, money, staff and supporters.

It can also depend upon the support you can build for action within your organisation or community or from other NGOs, scientific community and the general public.

It will almost certainly depend on the **political context** in which you are working – how open and receptive your government is; how well established the framework of laws governing your country is; how well managed and regulated business is; and the strength and depth of civil society and its role in influencing governance.

There are a range of different approaches and techniques depending upon the context in which you are operating:



These positions can vary over time and depending upon the particular audience the advocacy is aimed at. Be ready to change your stance if you can more easily achieve your goal by adopting a different tactic – review your progress and learn from your – and others – successes and failures.

For each of your potential audiences, consider the factors that will influence their position. For example:

- will a company decide to support or oppose your work because it will gain a financial advantage over a competitor;
- will a parliamentarian speak out in support because the public has raised concern by writing letters;
- is there a moral or ethical choice to be made, or is there a more pragmatic economic, social or scientific rationale for supporting your position?

The individuals who you target with your information also have varying levels of power over decision-making processes – the Managing Director of a company can announce how the company will operate in the future whilst a junior civil servant is unlikely to hold much sway over government policy or implementation.

International financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and governments and intergovernmental groupings can have great influence over decisions by exerting ‘leverage’: the ability to persuade a government or other body to adopt new measures in return for financial or other ‘benefits’. The IMF for example has attached conditions on forest management to loans made to Cambodia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea.

TIP Write your plan down, get comments and amend it according to changing events and circumstances.

☛ **Effective preparation and planning allied with creative thinking is essential to your success.**

☛ **Always try to work with the media to convey your messages, generate concern and support.**

Identify your short, medium and long-term goals

The core goals that you have identified may be achievable over the short, medium and long-term. You should devise an advocacy strategy that clearly outlines your goals in the context of time-scale: what is possible in the short-term (for example the next 3-6 months); what do you want to achieve over the medium-term (6-12 months) and what over the long-term (e.g. 12 months to 3 years).

- Your first, short-term goal might be simply to raise awareness of the issue, generating press coverage, meeting policy makers, describing problems to the public.
- Over the medium-term you may be able to achieve some concrete, measurable steps towards identified solutions – securing the promise of action from your government, a business or international agency.
- In the long-term you will want resolution to the problems – for example, enactment and enforcement of new laws or proof of attitudinal changes among the consumers of a product.

Budgets and time

Try to plan your fundraising and expenditures so that you and your organisation can pursue the campaign until your goals are achieved. Advocacy campaigns aimed at achieving long-lasting and extensive changes to public attitudes, government or corporate policies are rarely achieved immediately – be prepared to spend significant time raising funds and support for your campaign as a central part of your work.

- Review and assess your strategy and progress over the course of your campaign. Be clear as to how you monitor and evaluate your campaign successes and change your tactics if necessary. Review your work and progress thoroughly at regular intervals.
- Don't be fooled into thinking that 'column inches' in your local newspaper is the same as a successful campaign. Media attention – though essential to your advocacy campaign – is not an end goal in itself.
- Finally, do not confuse symbolic victories for deeper, more significant changes, but remember that small, incremental change in a positive direction is better than no change at all.

☛ **To ensure that you know what financial resources you have and what you have spent, ALWAYS work out a budget for your work, preferably on a yearly basis and closely monitor your expenditure, at least on a monthly basis.**

SECTION 3. TECHNIQUES, TOOLS AND KNOW-HOW

Effective advocacy requires:

- Organisation
- Strategic and creative thinking
- Information (which is well researched and factually accurate)
- Strong, well reasoned arguments in favour of your proposals
- Effective communication
- Mobilisation of support

3.1 Developing and fulfilling an effective campaign strategy

To be successful an advocacy campaign needs to be well-organised with clear and achievable goals and supported by people who believe in those goals. Good campaigners, as well as knowing the facts must be able to argue the case for change both within the organisation and to their audience - be it the media, the public, the government or corporations or a combination of all these and more.

Consultation with partners

If you represent an organisation or community you must have a clear mandate from your colleagues empowering you to speak, write and act on the issue on their behalf. You also need to ensure that all of your supporting partners in the campaign, or those you are working on behalf of, are fully consulted before the campaign is launched. Regular contact and review with your partners is essential.

Preparation and planning

Be organised before you embark on your campaign - have all the relevant facts and arguments well-documented and consider the 'opposition' and how they will respond.

Have a clear, written plan (with staffing, budget and time-scale) of how you hope the campaign will develop over time - do you have sufficient resources and support to pursue your objectives over 6 months, one year or several years? Who will do the work - do the research, produce the reports and briefings and visual materials and actively advocate the position nationally and perhaps internationally? Have you agreed a budget and a means to finance the work that needs to be undertaken?

REMEMBER

If you represent an organisation or community you must have a clear mandate from your colleagues empowering you to speak, write and act on the issue on their behalf.

TIP *Be ready to undertake new research if needed to back up or reinvigorate your campaign or to refute opposing claims.*

Focus

Stay as focused as possible on your issue and your campaign goals. Many campaigners deal with several issues at the same time and this can be a problem as time, energy and resources become stretched. Creating successful advocacy on one issue may well be more effective than trying to prioritise and make progress on several issues at once – do not take on more than you can handle.

Factual accuracy

Speak and write with authority and confidence. Know that you can rely on the quality of your information and on the support of those you represent.

The Golden Rule is to ensure factual accuracy; failing to provide strong evidence and sound rational arguments in support of your campaign will critically undermine the credibility of you and your organisation. Making even a small mistake can be harmful as your audience will be less likely to believe the veracity of your information in the future.

☛ **This is covered in detail in the chapter on Desk-based Research of the Activist Training Manual. Read the chapter before embarking on your advocacy programme.**

The Golden Rules

- You **MUST** ensure factual accuracy in any statements that are made, and when there is doubt, if information is anecdotal or unsubstantiated, this must be clearly identified when you write up your research. Statements of fact must be substantiated by credible references or proof (such as filmed evidence).
- It is essential that all the information you collate is effectively referenced, preferably by at least one independent source.

3.2 Strategic and creative thinking

Consider all the different ways in which you can achieve your goals – for example, is it better to try and achieve a change in international or national law or to influence consumers of a product? Look at what has worked – and failed – in the past and consider what improvements could be made to past campaigns or how you could replicate previous successes.

Example Goal: To reduce the environmental impact of pesticides

Campaign goals

- ☛ **Short term** Raise awareness of the issues amongst users, traders and government. Gain media attention and meet with all interested audiences to assess the situation.
- ☛ **Medium term** Companies to stop producing dangerous pesticides. Government to enact and enforce laws to control production and use of pesticides
- ☛ **Long term** Alternative farming methods to be used. Use of pesticides to be reduced or ceased. New international rules, laws and agreements to be developed.

Audience

☛ **Farmers**

Encourage the use of alternative, organic farming methods.

Develop educational materials (posters, t-shirts, leaflets and video) and hold workshops in local communities.

Encourage farmers to describe their own experiences and successes of alternative farming methods.

Make a video documenting farmers experiences.

Encourage proper usage of pesticides (protective clothing, care when mixing and spraying; correct doses to be used; correct storage of equipment and chemicals and disposal of finished containers.

☛ **Traders**

Meet with traders and inform them of problems and elicit their support.

Provide a leaflet showing the right way to use pesticides and harmful chemicals to avoid.

☛ **Companies**

Stop producing dangerous and banned chemicals.

Make buyers and traders aware of the correct usage of other pesticides by supporting educational and awareness (posters, leaflets etc).

☛ Investors

Put pressure on companies to adhere to strict international standards or develop codes of conduct and apply identical policies on manufacture and sale in all countries.

☛ Governments

Enact and enforce laws governing imports, sale and use of dangerous pesticides.

Develop educational and awareness raising projects.

Support pilot projects and academic research into alternative farming methods.

☛ Media

Inform the media about your issue and gain their interest. Present your information in a way that will interest them and their audience. Think visually and wherever possible provide images of the events you are describing.

Target different media to get the widest coverage.

Send out press releases on key developments, consider holding a press conference, producing a VNR (see Chapter on Media Training).

☛ Consumers

Who is consuming products grown with harmful pesticides? Inform them of the risks and the alternatives, ask them to support your goals.

☛ NGOs/Community Groups

Build coalitions with other organisations and community groups working on pesticides or concerned about the potential impacts. Identify potential supporters, funders or activists and tell them about your concerns, your activities and goals.

☛ International agencies and/or foreign governments

Support pilot programmes to develop alternative and organic farming methods; farmer extension and education programmes.

Amend policies and projects that have favoured increased pesticide usage.

Provide support to governments to enforce laws designed to curb or control the use of dangerous chemicals and to meet internationally agreed standards and agreements.

Put pressure on multinational companies to meet strict standards for production and sale of pesticides.

Be creative and think laterally

Think of new ways to present your arguments and to capture the public imagination. This can prove difficult with many issues from across the world seeking support and attention - the key is to:

- think in images: how can you use visual images to capture attention?
- create new ways of communicating complex messages to the public and other audiences (see below).

Think of ways to make your story 'newsworthy' and be reported by the media.

Explore new ways to achieve the same goal and try to present alternatives that will be attractive to your audiences. Consider again the pesticides issue outlined above. One means to reduce the use of harmful pesticides is to protect natural predators that maintain the natural balance and so consideration could be given to means of achieving this, such as enforcing or enacting laws on the wildlife trade. This will clearly have wider benefits for ecosystem security above and beyond the direct reduction of pesticide use.

☛ See below and chapter on Media Training – Creating an Effective Media Strategy of the Activist Training Manual. Read this chapter before embarking on your campaign.

Monitoring and Evaluation

It is vital that you monitor and evaluate your work and your progress.

Conduct regular assessments of your work. Look at what you have achieved and how – how much did it cost? Did it create new problems for you? What was the effort involved in achieving it? Are you happy with the outcome?

It may help to ask individuals or even another organisation you know and respect to help you evaluate your work – they may have a different perspective and be more objective.

Try to be objective and apply constructive criticism to your work, but do remember to applaud yourselves and your partners when you achieve things – keep positive and recognise your successes.

3.3 Identifying how to use information

There is a need to choose carefully the ways and means with which you present your information and arguments – i.e. what tactics you use.

Effective communication of your issue is essential – compiling and presenting your arguments to the right audience is critical to the success of your advocacy. Again, try to think creatively – is there a new way in which you can present your issue to achieve change?

The format in which your research and issue are presented will be essential to its impact. There are many different tools you can use to do this and all of these should at least be considered. The different options available to you **MUST** be viewed in the context of who you are trying to reach. For example, if you are trying to reach and influence local communities, it is unlikely that a very dense, complicated and highly scientific report will engage their interest or support.

The following represents some tried and tested ways of presenting and disseminating research:

- Published report or briefing
- Press release or video news release (VNR)
- Educational Video
- Presentation at a seminar, conference or meeting
- Internet publishing

☛ **Effective communication of your issue is essential – compiling and presenting your arguments to the right audience is critical to the success of your advocacy.**

Reports and briefings

Any published report should include the following distinct sections:

- Executive Summary
- Introduction
- Principle findings of your research
- Conclusions
- Recommendations

Reports and briefings are an extremely effective means to highlight your issue and goals to a wide audience. Your report needs to have longevity – you want decision-makers to refer to it over many months or years – but it should also be newsworthy in order to attract attention from the media thereby spreading your message to a wider, perhaps global, audience.

Groundbreaking reports provide new evidence, issues or trends but reiterating older information in a new format and accompanied by new data, quotes or policy analysis can be as effective. If a problem was first highlighted a decade ago and since then things have been getting worse and the government has failed to act, then say so.

Illustrate your case

Reports and briefings should encapsulate all of your arguments and recommendations as succinctly as possible – use graphs, maps and other visual images to convey information and in the case of reports, try and ensure that you have photographs to lend interest and/or provide verifiable documentation of a problem. Using visual illustrations (including photographs, graphs or tables) lends impact to your report and makes it easier to read and grasp the main points of your argument.

Structure your material

The way in which you structure your material will give the reader a clearer idea of your arguments, conclusions and recommendations. Try to include information in a logical order. For example, if you are discussing a local fishery issue, you could first provide an brief overview of global trends and policies; then look at the situation at a regional or national level; finally write about your case study – the local impacts that you have witnessed.

Summing up

Your conclusions and recommendations should try to address these levels if possible. For example, rather than (or as well as) making recommendations for a particular case, suggest measures that could be introduced at national or international level to resolve similar cases.

Reports can be expensive and time consuming to produce. A useful (and cheaper!) alternative can be a shorter **briefing document** that highlights the key findings and recommendations.

Target your audience

Briefings tend to be focused upon a particular audience, for example at an international meeting. It can be a means to provide your own experience or insights into the development, enforcement and effectiveness of existing policies and laws and make recommendations for the future.

Consider your audience's needs

Briefings can be as long or as short as you need, but remember that if you are presenting it at an international or national meeting, your target audience may not have time to read and digest and act on all the points and recommendations that you make. If a meeting is scheduled at which policy will be made, try and tailor your briefing and recommendations to it and ensure that it is posted or emailed to participants in advance so that they can fully consider your recommendations and consult with others.

Statements

If you have a specific issue to draw attention to at a meeting or other event, then a statement can be very effective. This could be released by your organisation alone or you can seek endorsements and support from others. Again, check any facts that you present and ensure that your arguments are well-founded and targeted. Think clearly who or what your audience is and how they can help you.

TIP *Your briefing or report can refer to previous material that your organisation has produced in order to highlight your track record on the issue.*

TIP *Decisions may be announced at international meetings, but they are rarely made there – make sure that you are well prepared and that you have contacted or presented your views to civil servants and decision-makers well in advance of important meetings.*

Your checklist for the production of reports and briefings

- ✓ Check your facts – do not publish information that could be construed as libellous against a company or individual(s). Verify all your information that you have gathered in the course of both your desk and field research.
- ✓ Make sure that all facts, figures and quotes are fully referenced (and keep all your references in a file for you to refer to in the future).
- ✓ Always produce an Executive Summary that will give readers a clear idea of your issue and position. This will briefly outline your key findings – what’s happening and why – and your conclusions. Put the Summary in bullet point format – this makes it easier to read and digest.
- ✓ Provide sufficient background information to put a problem into context (historical, cultural, political or geographical) but do not overburden your reader with reams of facts and figures that can detract rather than reinforce your arguments.
- ✓ Consider your target audience - who do you want to read and act on your report or briefing? If it is, for example, the consumers of a product then you should avoid complex scientific data whereas organisations such as the World Bank may be less interested in emotive personal experiences relating to an issue.
- ✓ Always ensure that your conclusions and recommendations are clearly identified and make it clear who they are aimed at (your local, national, regional or international audiences).
- ✓ Include visual material wherever possible – maps, graphs and tables can simplify the presentation of material. Photos always bring a report ‘to life’ and are essential as visual evidence of a problem (or solution). Picture captions can also be used to reiterate or highlight key facts and figures from your text.
- ✓ If you are producing a report for wide distribution then ensure that contact details and brief information on your organisation are included.
- ✓ Make your report stand out – make it accessible and interesting to the media and decision-makers. If it is not read and acted upon then all your hard work will count for nothing.

Presenting your arguments in person

At some stage in your advocacy you will need to meet decision-makers to discuss your issue and objectives. You will need to consider how you would approach the meeting, what materials you would require and what support or action you are requesting.

Situations where you might make a direct presentation include:

- An ad hoc meeting that you request to specifically address the issue (either locally, nationally or internationally)
- A formal meeting or committee of parliamentarians
- Regular meetings of a forum, discussion or consultation group (this might include representatives from business, NGO, Government, academic expertise etc.)
- International meetings, for example the Conference of the Parties to an international convention or Consultative Group (CG) meetings
- National meetings or workshops – including those that your organisation organise or sponsor
- Press conference – organised by your organisation and/or others

Ad hoc meetings that you request give you the power to set the agenda and the items that you want to be discussed. However, you may not be able to access those who hold the real decision-making power. Key to success is building good relationships with individuals and/or a strong source of public support for you and your organisation.

Try to build alliances with parliamentarians, government representatives, members of the scientific community and so forth. Think creatively about the ways in which you can win support from these people.

REMEMBER
When considering undertaking any of the above, cost, time and potential benefits must be carefully thought through before making any decision.

Lobbying

The term 'lobbying' developed from the way in which advocates wait in lobbies of legislatures, meeting places hotels etc. in order to get the chance to talk directly to policy makers.

In strict terms 'lobbying' differs from the more general concept of 'Advocacy' in that it is specifically refers to the attempt to influence legislation. However, the terms Advocacy and Lobbying are often used interchangeably.

The term lobbying is often applied to the way in which advocates operate at meetings when participants are faced with many competing demands on their time.

To lobby effectively you need to be prepared to argue your case and to have all the background material – such as briefings - available to give to delegates at a moment's notice. Attending these meetings - especially where they involve international travel - can be expensive and time-consuming, but they are your opportunity to meet and present your information to a wide range of representatives AND crucially, these are the places where many key decisions affecting international policies are announced.

The media

The media is crucial to successful advocacy - it is the most effective means to convey a message to a wide audience. Businesses, governments and international organisations are all extremely sensitive to the issues reported by the media nationally and internationally. The public in your country and internationally are the consumers of products, the investors in companies and political constituents upon whom members of parliament and others depend for support.

Global news reporting means that someone on the other side of the world can express support for your campaign - consider how you can best reach this audience and galvanise their support (see below).

The most effective means of highlighting your issue to the media are:

Press Release

A press release can be the most efficient and effective way of disseminating your research. However, it is vital that you have all the supporting information at hand to answer any queries and prove the substance of your claims. A press release is often useful as a means to publicise the fact that you have produced a report, briefing or other document.

Video News Release (VNR)

If your research has included the collation of new or existing video/film documentation it is possible to edit this material and release it as a VNR to the media or others. VNRs are in effect a visual representation of a written report and can be highly impactful.

Press Conference

An event organised to gather journalists together in one place and give them your news and new reports or show your VNR.

Educational videos

This can be an extremely effective way of communicating an issue to specific audiences, particularly among local communities, consumers or others involved in or affected by your issue.

However, they can be timely and expensive to film, edit and distribute – if you need to produce a video, see if you can work with another organisation or gain sponsorship or support.

Internet publishing

The internet can be a very effective, far-reaching way of publishing your work. It is possible to set up your own web-site or to publish via other existing sites. If well structured and organised it may be possible to reach a massive audience through the web, but bear in mind that it is still difficult to target specific readers this way.

☛ **Press releases, video news releases and press conferences are covered in detail in the accompanying chapter on Media Training – Creating an Effective Media Strategy. This section will cover the strategic use of the media.**

☛ **See Video Training chapter of the Activist Training Manual.**

Mobilisation of support

It is extremely useful to be able to galvanise support amongst NGOs, community groups or others in civil society, both in your country and overseas. The Internet has made the task of finding and contacting a wide range of NGOs far easier. Try to develop and build contacts and relationships and consider whether forming an alliance would be beneficial. As always, try and think laterally – who might your campaign appeal to?

Think of ways in which you can elicit active support by email, the internet, by mail or fax:

- If your organisation has a website then publicise your issue by including press releases, reports and briefings on it. Include copies of previous media articles so that people are made aware of your track record on the issue and make it clear how people can help.
- ‘Sign on letter’ (or petition) – write a short statement that calls upon a particular audience to act. Include the essential facts of your issue – what is happening, to whom or what and why and outline key recommendations or demands (such as enforcing a law, banning or supporting an activity) targeted at decision-makers.
NGOs and others (such as scientific experts, community leaders and even celebrities) can add their names to your list of supporters. A sign-on letter or statement can be sent by email, fax or post – remember to include an address or fax number for people to send it to.
- Contact NGOs and others overseas and ask them to publicise your issue on the internet or in their newsletters or other publications. Ask if they would be willing to publish an article or otherwise promote your issue, organisation and materials to their supporters. If they can help, then remember to provide them with visual as well as written material.
- Request that NGOs, communities and the public write letters in support of your campaign. Make this task as straightforward as possible – provide background information on your campaign (what the problems and solutions are) or include an example letter that people can copy. Remember to include the contact details of your intended recipient and ensure that it is clear what you are calling for and why you are targeting them.
Remember that this is also a useful tool to congratulate decision-makers when they announce a new policy or action in support of your campaign. Policy makers – as anyone else – like to be recognised for taking positive actions. Make sure that your allies are not criticised by people who have misunderstood your message!

TIP *If you have a substantial number of signatures in support, you may want to present the letters to your target audience in person and even use it as a means to gain media attention.*

Other advocacy tools

It is possible to exert pressure to achieve your ends by using a number of other tools or techniques:

Boycotts

Organising support in the refusal to purchase a product or service.

Direct political engagement

Organising support to vote for or against those who support or oppose your goals.

This is a very contentious area – being overtly political and supporting one political party over another should not be undertaken lightly – try to remain apolitical if possible.

Legal challenges

In many situations it may be possible to use the laws and courts of your country to mount a legal challenge in support of your campaign. Can you legally require those who are creating the problem to desist or change their practices or create an effective argument to amend existing laws or promulgate new legislation?

Some key questions you should try to answer when considering how to use the legal structure of your country are:

- What is the process for mounting legal challenge in relation to your issue?
- Has any organisation been successful in doing this in the past?
- Do you have the necessary expertise to mount such a challenge?
- What would be the cost and time-scale of such an approach?

☛ **The key to boycotts or direct political engagement is whether you have strong public support and the means to communicate this support effectively or whether you think you could generate public interest in the issue.**

Safety

Although not all advocacy is contentious, some campaigners will focus on issues that bring them directly into conflict with powerful, corrupt and dangerous individuals and organisations. Wherever money can be made out of exploiting or damaging the environment, there will be vested interests keen to prevent policy changes or enforcement from occurring.

The context in which advocacy campaigns operate differs from country to country and region to region. In many places advocacy is extremely limited – curtailed by both concerns for personal safety and the lack of transparency in decision-making.

EJF underlines the need for advocates to stay safe – throughout the world, activists, NGOs and communities have been harassed, intimidated, harmed and killed as a result of their work.

Think very carefully about your targeted audience before you contact them or release information that they may oppose. Never take unnecessary risks in either researching or advocating your issue. Take great care to ensure that you do not inadvertently put others at risk (e.g. by identifying an activist, without consulting them first or being sure they will stay safe if identified).

If the risks of publicly releasing information within your country are too great then consider either:

- focusing on an international audience. Make the information available to international agencies, other governments or organisations and persuade them to apply pressure on your government, companies etc.
- building a coalition with NGOs or others overseas - provide them with the information and ensure that they maintain your anonymity. Releasing information overseas can be a highly effective means to apply external pressure to achieve positive change.

☛ **The safety of you and all those you work with is of paramount importance. Never take unnecessary risks in either researching or advocating your issue.**

☛ **See Field Research chapter of the Activist Training Manual for more on safety issues.**

SECTION 4. YOUR ADVOCACY CHECKLIST

- ✓ Always have SMART objectives: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timebound.
- ✓ Clearly identify your issue and your goals in the short, medium and long-term. Prioritise your efforts and resources.
- ✓ Check that you have support, time, resources and finance to develop your advocacy.
- ✓ Decide who your audience is and target your information effectively. Be considered in your approach – how can you best achieve your goals – who are the key decision-makers on your issue?
- ✓ Consider how to distribute the information and ideas to greatest effect. Is it in the form of an educational video or a hard-hitting report?
- ✓ Ensure that the information that you are basing your campaign on is factually correct and targeted at the appropriate audience. Try to collect visual material (video, photos, maps) both as verification of your claims and to increase interest in your work.
- ✓ Ensure that you monitor your progress during the course of your campaign, assess your strengths and weaknesses and amend your strategy accordingly.