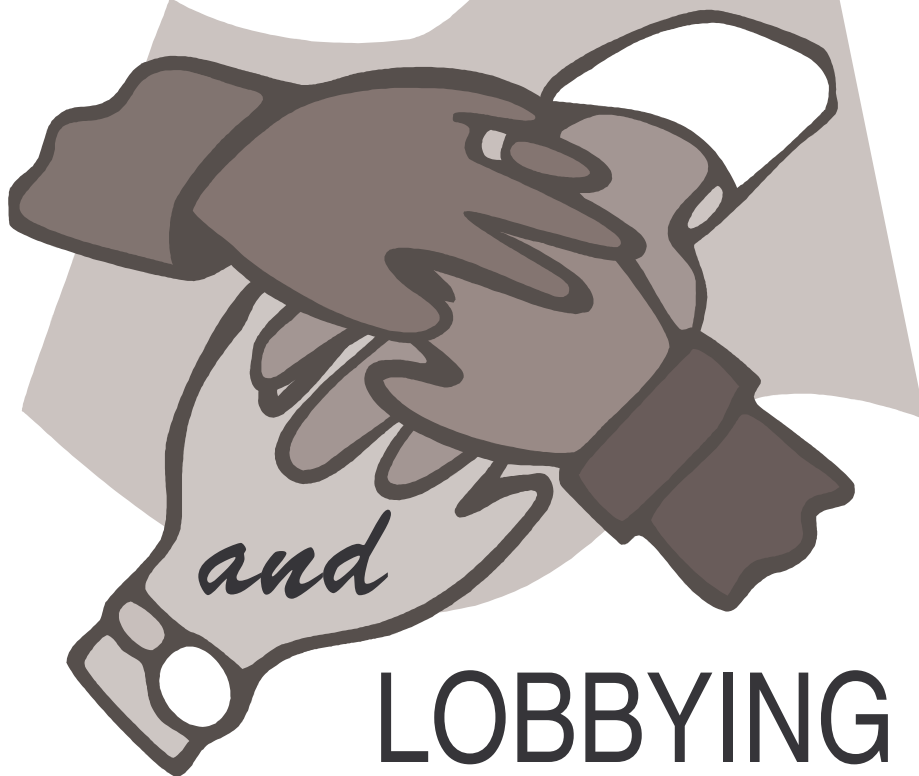


ADVOCACY



LOBBYING

The Secretariat *of the*
African Decade
of Persons with Disabilities

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1. INTRODUCTION

There are as many definitions of advocacy as there are groups and networks advocating. However, each definition shares common language and concepts.

What do we mean by advocacy?

Advocacy is first and foremost a process. It is strategic and targets well-designed activities to key stakeholders and decision makers. Advocacy is always directed at influencing policy, laws, regulations, programmes or decisions on funding made at the upper-most levels of public or private sector institutions. Advocacy includes both single-issue, time-limited campaigns as well as ongoing work undertaken around a range of issues, and the activities may be conducted at a national, regional or local level.

A common definition and understanding of advocacy is; “A set of targeted actions in support of a cause or an issue, because one wants to build support for that cause or issue, influence others to support it; or try to influence or change legislation that affects it.”

Advocacy campaigns can have a number of different aims and purposes. Some of the more common ones are:

- Sensitising the public or decision-makers on a specific issue.
- Persuading or influencing decision-makers in a certain direction.
- Change legislation or work processes that negatively affect the organisation’s members or beneficiaries.
- Provide a solution to a problem that affects the organisations members / beneficiaries.
- Expose a problem that needs to be addressed by others.
- Defend a right or a benefit.

What is lobbying and networking?

Lobbying is - generally - more restricted and only a part of advocacy. It refers specifically to advocacy efforts that attempt to influence legislation.

Networking involves individuals or groups who want to work together in a loose organisational form for a common purpose. Good networks require a shared vision, a mission statement and committed members. Some important benefits of networks are that they;

- Facilitate exchange of information, skills, experience, materials etc
- Coordinate activity and reduces duplication of effort
- Bring together a diverse range of people who would not otherwise meet
- Provide peer support, encouragement, motivation and professional recognition
- Provide critical mass for change – strength in numbers

Some potential problems when working in networks are that they;

- Can lack clear objectives
- Sometimes have a very loose structure without shared leadership that makes action and communication difficult.
- May be dominated by one powerful organisation
- Can be bureaucratic
- Lack common resources
- May suffer from a lack of trust between members of the network
- Are difficult to monitor and evaluate

All these problems can be overcome and are not reasons to not get involved in networks - just things to be wary of. Many networks fail because they are not managed properly.

Who is a target audience?

Advocacy and lobbying campaigns can be aimed at, or targeting, a wide spectrum of audiences. Among those are;

- Policy-makers
- Government officials
- The public
- Professional associations such as doctors, police, teachers, etc.
- Enterprises / businesses.
- Donor organisations.
- Trade unions.
- NGOs.
- Media

Who shall do the lobbying and advocacy work?

There are different ways of running an advocacy campaign. It can be done by the organisation's staff, by a professional lobbyist, a committee that has been established for this purpose, or a combination of these. The main thing is that whoever is responsible for the campaign needs to have all skills required for this work. You can read more about such skills under Section 7 of this manual.

The Decade Steering Committees (DSC) must be actively involved in the advocacy work, both in terms of developing strategies and persuading the target audiences.

2. WHY ADVOCACY WORK AND LOBBYING?

1. *You can make a difference.* A single mother struggling to raise her son without the help of a workable child support system put an ad in a local newspaper to see if there were others who wanted to work for change. There were. Over time, they built an association that helped change child support laws across the country.
2. *People working together can make a difference.* An association against drunk driving convinced the government to toughen the drunk driving law. As a result, the number of drunk driving deaths is lower.
3. *People can change laws.* History is full of people and groups that fought against great odds to make great changes; child labour laws, public schools, clean air and water laws, social security. These changes were not easy to achieve. They all took the active involvement – the lobbying – of thousands of people who felt that something needed to be changed.
4. *Lobbying is a democratic right.* The act of telling our policymakers how to write and change our laws is at the heart of a democratic system.
5. *Lobbying helps find real solutions.* People thinking creatively and asking their elected officials for support can generate innovative solutions that overcome the root causes of a problem.
6. *Lobbying is easy.* Lobbying is not a mysterious rite that takes years to master. You can learn how to lobby – whom to call, when, what to say – in minutes.
7. *Policymakers need your expertise.* Few institutions are closer to the real problem than NGOs, DPOs and CBOs. Every professional lobbyist will tell you that personal stories are powerful tools for change. People and policy makers can learn from your story.
8. *Lobbying helps people.* Everything that goes into a lobbying campaign – the research, the strategic planning, the phone calls and visits – will help fulfil your goal.
9. *Lobbying advances your cause and builds public trust.* Building public trust is essential to the non-profit organisation and lobbying helps you to gain it by increasing your organisation's visibility. Just as raising funds and recruiting volunteers are important to achieving your organisation's mission, so is lobbying.

3. STEPS IN THE ADVOCACY PROCESS

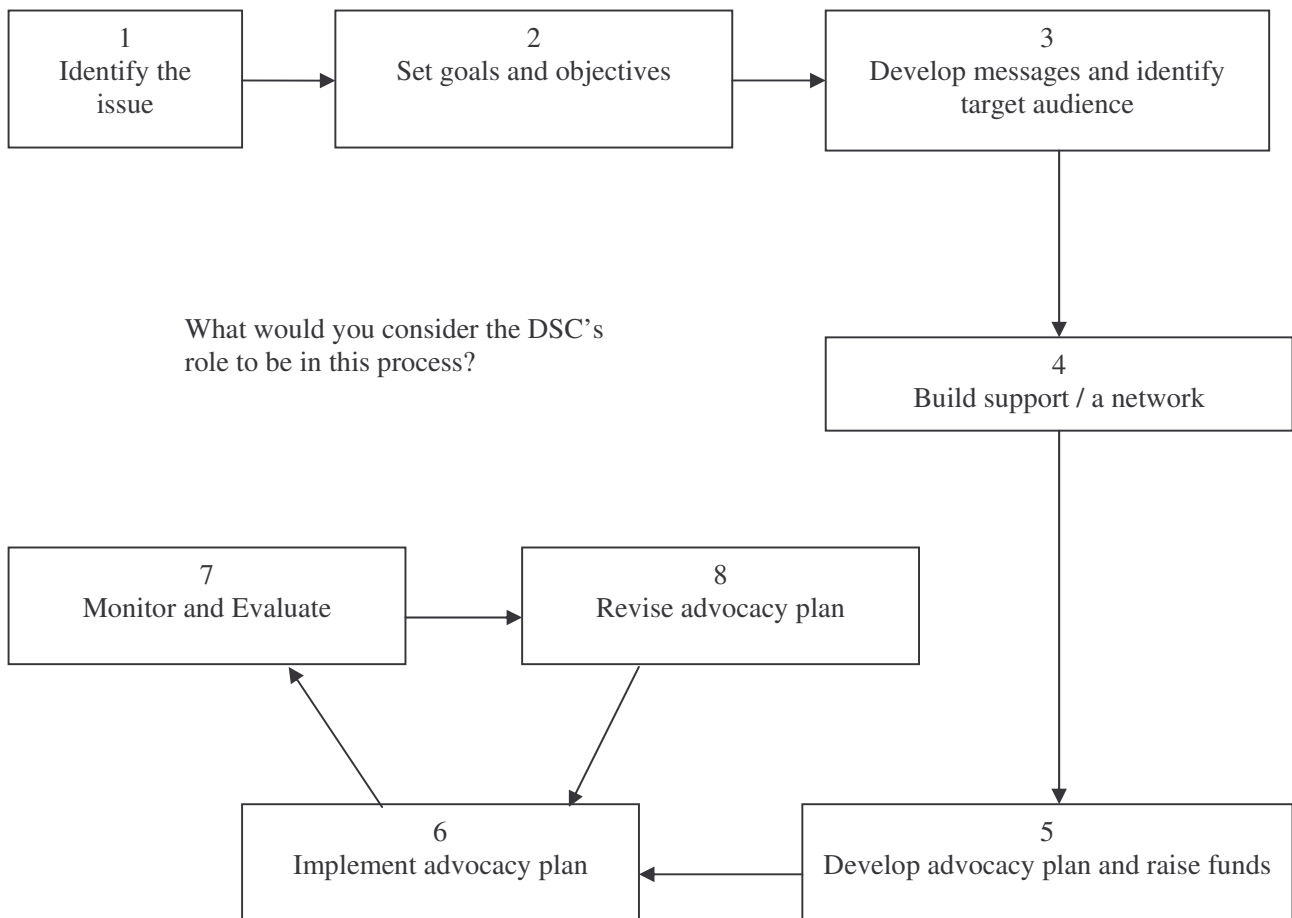
There are a number of important steps that you need to take in your advocacy work. They are presented in sequential order below.

1. *Identify the issue.* Advocacy begins with an issue or problem that an organisation or network agrees to support in order to promote a policy change. The issue should support the organisation's mission and meet the criteria set for its advocacy campaigns.
2. *Set goals and objectives.* A goal (sometimes called a strategic objective) is a general statement of what the organisation hopes to achieve during the next three to five years. The advocacy objective describes the short-term, specific and measurable achievements that contribute to the goal.
3. *Develop the message and identify target audience.* Advocacy messages are developed to frame the issue and persuade the receiver to support your organisation's position. There are three important questions to answer when preparing advocacy messages:
 - What type of people is this message for – what do they already know?
 - What do you want to achieve with the message?
 - What do you want the recipient of the message to do as a result of the message?

The primary target audience includes the decision makers who have the authority to bring about the desired policy change. The secondary target audience includes persons who have access to and are able to influence the primary target audience – other policymakers, friends or relatives, the media, religious leaders, etc. The organisation must identify individuals in the target audience, their positions, a relative power base and then determine whether the various individuals support, oppose, or are neutral to the advocacy issue.

4. *Build support.* Building a constituency to support the organisation's advocacy issue is critical for success. The larger the support base, the greater are the chances of success. Organisations must reach out to form alliances with other NGOs, networks, donors, civic groups, professional associations, women's groups, activists and individuals who support the issue.
5. *Develop implementation and activity plan for your advocacy work.* The organisation should develop an implementation plan to guide its advocacy campaign. The plan should identify activities and tasks, responsible persons or committees, the desired time frame and needed resources. When you develop the plan you need to select channels of communication. Selection of the most appropriate medium for advocacy messages depends on the target audience. The choice of medium varies for reaching the general public, influencing decision makers, educating the media, generating support for the issue among like-minded organisations, etc. Some of the more common channels include press kits and press releases, press conferences, fact sheets and a conference for policy makers. You may also need to raise funds. Advocacy campaigns can always benefit from outside funds and other resources, as such resources can assist in the development and dissemination of materials, cover travel costs and cover costs for training.

6. *Implement the plan.* The organisation should try to follow the plan and do what has been planned, on time and within budget frames in order to achieve the set objectives for the campaign.
7. *Monitor and evaluate.* From the outset of the campaign, i.e. step one above; the organisation must monitor progress and expenditure. It must ask itself questions like;
 1. Are we doing the right thing and are we doing it right?
 2. Are we following our plan and are we approaching our objective?
 3. Are we within our budget frames or are we spending more than anticipated?"
8. *Revise advocacy plan.* If any of the questions above is answered in the negative the campaign management must take corrective action. At the end of the campaign the organisation should evaluate whether the objectives were met and whether the work was done in a cost-effective manner. The main purpose of this evaluation is to learn from one's experiences and use this knowledge in the planning of future advocacy campaigns.



4. TOP TIPS

Policymakers are generally very busy people who are bombarded with ideas, both good and bad, all the time. In order to make an impact, you need to be focused and well prepared, alert and ready to deliver your key messages whenever the opportunity arises, and determined to be heard and understood. Here are tips to consider before you approach an organisation or individual that you want to influence.

Be focused and well prepared.
Be ready to deliver your key messages whenever the opportunity arises.
Be determined to be heard and understood.

When preparing your advocacy plan

- Build a strong case for proposed change – based on solid well-researched evidence.
- Ensure you have a concise and well thought out proposal with practical solution(s) to the problem(s) you have identified.
- Contact like-minded organisations for potential joint lobbying meetings.
- Locate key actors based at the same organisation as your target who are sympathetic to your proposal and try it out on them, seeking advice on how best to influence your target.
- Seek advice from influential people external to the organisation on how to influence your target.
- Create a contingency plan if your proposal is rejected: e.g. persuade the person above your target to get them to reconsider or wait until your target has left & try again with their replacement.

Start early – even before the issue has come up on the agendas of the policy makers.

Follow through if your proposal is accepted

- Suggest that a drafting committee or working group is established, with representatives from your organisation or coalition, to monitor the implementation of the proposed change.
- Offer your organisation's services to assist the person responsible for implementing change.
- If these formal offers are rejected, keep up informal contact.
- Remember to thank everyone who had anything to do with bringing about the policy change - even those who were reluctant collaborators. You may need their help again in the future.

Thank everyone who had anything to do with bringing about a positive change – even those who were reluctant collaborators. You may need their assistance again.

Prepare before a meeting

- Find out all you can about your target: what is their role, what can they do, what do they believe. Check if they have made any speeches, written articles or documents on the issue. What kind of personality do they have?
- Agree who is going to the meeting from your side. If it is a formal meeting its best not to go alone. Also decide who will say what.
- Be clear about what your position is and what your bottom line is. Rehearse your arguments.
- Decide what it is you want from this meeting – its unlikely you will achieve all your goals in one meeting – so you need to establish on-going dialogue. Book a second meeting, obtain a promise to review the issue or an agreement to attend a more in-depth workshop on the issue.

Arrange a meeting

- If it is to be an informal meeting, find out their schedule so you can meet them 'by chance'.
- If it is to be a formal meeting, you need them to agree to meet you. This may mean a lengthy process of phone calls, letters, emails and meetings with subordinates. Once you have agreement ensure both sides are clear about who will attend, how long it will last and what the expected agenda is.

At the meeting

- Every meeting will be different, but bear in mind that the meeting is about dialogue – so you need to listen to them as much as you speak. Listening will also enable you to learn valuable intelligence about their position.
- Remember that you are not trying to win an argument, you are trying to influence them and reach agreement.
- Arrive on time. Ensure everyone is introduced clearly and that it is clear which organisation they represent.
- Briefly present your case. Do not take too long, as your target probably knows your position already. Otherwise they would not have agreed to meet you.
- Listen to their response, including non-verbal signals. Ask for more details if you do not understand their arguments.
- Try to answer their objections, but focus on your priorities and what you want them to do. Pick up on any openings or compromises they offer you. Above all – keep calm.
- If you can, take notes of everything that is said.
- Make sure that something is agreed before the meeting ends, even if it is just to have another meeting. Sum up what has been agreed and what the next steps are at the end of the meeting. Thank them for agreeing to meet you.

Build a steady relationship with your target audience. Difficult goals are achieved step-by-step. Celebrate what you have achieved, even if it was only a small step on the way.

Immediately after the meeting

- Hold a debrief meeting with all members of your delegation before you go back to your offices.
- Review what was said and discuss the potential for further movement. Plan your next steps.

Within a week of the meeting

- Write up your notes and circulate them to your partners as appropriate
- Write to the people you met, thanking them for the meeting and confirming what was agreed - so that the agreement is on paper. This makes it harder for them to back out.

If you agreed to do something at the meeting do it promptly & do it well.
This will encourage the others to do the same.

5. COMMUNICATING THE ADVOCACY MESSAGE

You need to communicate your advocacy message in an effective and efficient manner in order to obtain the best possible results. It is important to think about what you want the target to do as a result of receiving the information and then assess which method is most appropriate for this circumstance. Ask yourself why you are communicating, whom you want to approach, what it is you want to say, how you should communicate to have impact, where you want to be seen or heard, and when is the best time to do it. These are the basic questions you need to answer before you start your advocacy work.

Why?

Take a moment to think about *why* it is you want to communicate. Sometimes you want to inform someone about something, in another situation you want to influence someone to act in a certain way. When you want to inform, you aim to be objective. Deliver facts and knowledge. When your purpose is to create opinion in favour of an issue you want to convince by using arguments that speak to the mind as well as the feelings of the reader. Typically, a communicator has one or more of these five basic purposes: to inform, to persuade, to inspire and motivate, to instruct, or to entertain.

Who?

Think about *whom* it is you are targeting. How much do they know already? How interested are they? Do not repeat things that the reader already knows, but try not to leave knowledge gaps either. Policy makers have special interests and powers. Find out who has an interest in subjects similar to yours. Also find out who has the power to change things that you believe need to change, or who can influence the person that has the power. Approach these persons.

What?

Decide what it is you want to say, then add supporting arguments, facts, quotes and pictures. To make sure that everybody in your organisation communicates your key messages effectively, create a communications policy that guides everything that you say and write. The policy should include key messages and principles that are important to you. Always focus on your main message. The message must, however, be adapted and reformulated to fit the target audience.

How, where and when?

Many e-mails, letters and articles are thrown away just after reading the heading. Keep in mind that your article or letter will be one in a whole pile of material that is sent from organisations, companies and authorities. You need to present your case well to be noticed, know where to do it and pay attention to timing. The rest of this section elaborates on basic communications skills.

The message

A message consists of *five elements* as follows;

- Content/Ideas
- Language
- Messenger
- Format/medium
- Time and place

Content and ideas. The content refers to the central idea of the message. What is the main point you want to communicate to your audience? What single idea do you hope the audience will take away after receiving your message?

Language. Is the language appropriate for the target audience? Is the word choice clear, or could it be interpreted differently by various audiences?

Messenger. The messenger refers to a person or people delivering the message. Is the messenger credible to your target audience? Is it possible to include beneficiaries as spokespersons or messengers? Advocacy networks can send a powerful and more meaningful message to policy makers by letting the message come from a member of the affected population.

Format or medium. The format or medium is the communication channel that you choose for delivering the message. Which is the most compelling format to reach your target audience? Different channels are more effective for certain audiences.

Time and place. The time and place for delivering the message are of vital importance. Are there other political events that you can link up with to draw more attention to the issue? Is there an electoral campaign underway that might make policymakers more receptive than normal to your message?

<p>Keep up to date with the political debates and news stories. If you can, tie your message to such current events. This will increase your impact and give your message greater attention.</p>
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The effective message

If you can make sure that your advocacy message is simple and concise, and delivered by a credible messenger using a tone and language that are consistent with the message, you stand a good chance of having a great impact on the target audience.

Message medium. It is vital that you choose the best possible medium to convey your advocacy message. The list below presents some of the more important ways of conveying a message. They all have their merits and shortcomings in terms of cost, time required, etc.

- Face-to-face meetings
- Public rallies
- Fact sheets
- Posters and flyers in public places
- Public debates
- Press release
- Press conference
- Contests to design posters, slogans, etc.
- Websites
- Emails

Communicating assertively and listening actively. Characteristics of assertive communication include:

- Speaking in short, direct sentences
- Using phrases such as “I think”, “I believe” and “in my opinion” to show that you assume responsibility for your thoughts
- Asking others to clarify what they are saying when you are not certain that you understand them.
- Describing events objectively rather than exaggerating or distorting, and
- Maintaining direct and extended eye contact.

Characteristics of active listening include:

- Reacting to what people say by nodding, smiling or using other actions that show that you are listening,
- Paraphrasing what the speaker said or check that you understand
- Asking for clarification when you are not clear about the meaning of something,
- Not jumping to conclusions before the speaker has finished, and
- Phrasing questions in such a way that the other person can respond in a manner of his or her choosing.

The one-minute-message

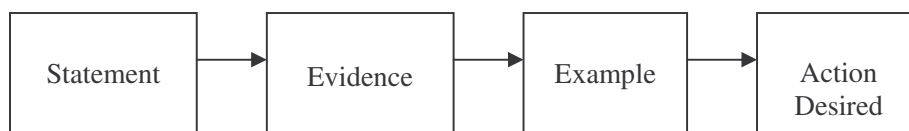
It is important that your advocacy message is brief and to the point. People are flooded with information. Be aware of your target audiences' limited time and interest, and develop a 'one-minute-message'. The one-minute-message includes four components as follows;

Statement: The statement is the central idea of the message. The spokesperson should be able to present the essence of his or her message in a few strong sentences.

Evidence. The evidence supports the statement or central idea with facts and figures. The message should include limited data that the audience can easily understand – such as “only one out of ten children with a disability attend primary schooling”, rather than “only 1.236 567 children with disabilities do not have access to primary schooling”.

Example. After providing the facts, the spokesperson should add a human face to the story. An anecdote based on a personal experience can personalise the facts and figures.

Action desired: The desired action is what you want the audience to do as a result of hearing the message. The advocacy objective should be stated clearly to the target audience as an invitation for action.



Message development worksheet

You may use the “Message development worksheet” below to prepare your message.

Action you think needs to be taken	
Message Content	
Target audience	
Format/Tools	
Time and place for delivery	
Messengers	

Practice your oral presentation skills

- When you have been invited to do a presentation, prepare well. Know your stuff, and know your audience. What do they expect from you?
- Write a keyword script for yourself based on your presentation. Keep it very short. If you know your stuff, you do not need to have every word in your script. You will only get lost in a lengthy script.
- Remember that teaching and learning are two different things. There are filters that hinder your communication, such as language barriers, environmental discomfort, domestic problems in the minds of the audience and differing pre-knowledge and experiences. Therefore some people in your audience will learn what you want them to, or most of it, while some may be preoccupied and learn only some of it – or even misunderstand your message altogether.
- When you develop your presentation, start with the end: What should they know at the end of your presentation (that they did not know before)? This is your learning objective. Secondly you need to think about how you can evaluate that they have understood your message: how will you get feedback? When you have decided on these first two points, develop the content of the presentation. What do you need to present in order for them to learn what you want them to learn? Lastly, think about the method of presentation. Try to motivate, activate, concretise and individualise your presentation. People can only concentrate on pure listening for about seven minutes at a time. Also, cooperate with the audience. Do not think that you know everything, invite comments, encourage discussion, use humour, smile and be nice. Also encourage critical thinking by saying “this presentation is not for me, it is for you – so please ask questions if you do not think that it makes sense”.
- Go from known to unknown. Say for example “you know how... The same thing goes for...”. This will ease the audience from something that they know and find easy to something new and more difficult.
- Go from general to specific. Paint the broad picture first, then fill in the details. This is using a logical sequence that makes it easier for your audience to follow your thoughts.
- Do not cover too much, do not rush and use simple language.
- Try to have eye contact with everyone in the audience (if possible).
- Speak loudly enough.
- Use audiovisual aids, such as a whiteboard, projector or loudspeakers.
- Show enthusiasm. Research has shown that non-verbal communication is what people notice the most. Our words make up only 15% of what comes across to the audience when we communicate. What they notice and remember is often your tone of voice and your body language.
- Summarise in the end of your presentation, to give your audience an overview of your message and arguments: “what have we talked about today...?”.

Make your presentation MACIC:

- M**otivate (make them understand why they should listen)
- A**ctivate (Ask questions, ask them to give examples or work together)
- C**oncretise (Show how, use models, pictures, examples)
- I**ndividualise (Try to understand your audience and adapt to them)
- C**ooperate (Be nice, smile, use humour, encourage discussion)

Tips for writing elected officials

Writing is one of the most effective means of getting your message across to your elected officials and you can do it in just a few minutes. Your letter documents your views, and it reminds the elected officials that their decisions have a direct impact on you and their other constituents.

- Use the correct address and salutations, e.g. Dear Representative Smith
- Type or write your letter clearly so that it is legible and not discarded.
- Use your own words and stationary. Personal letters show personal commitment.
- Keep your letter focused on your message.
- Be brief, but include enough information to explain your reason for writing.
- Be specific and give examples of how the issue affects you and your organisation.
- Know your facts; you can hurt your credibility by offering inaccurate or misleading information.
- Acknowledge counter-arguments and evidence.
- If you can, find out how your elected official voted on this – or similar – issue in the past.
- Be timely and contact your elected official while there is still time for him/her to consider and act on your request.
- Be persistent; write back and ask for more information if you do not receive a response.
- Say thank you and do not use a negative, threatening or intimidating tone

Know your facts. You can hurt your credibility by giving inaccurate or misleading information.

6. A USEFUL TOOL – THE INFORMATION PACKAGE

In your advocacy work it is a great advantage having an information package that presents your organisation. Such an information package should include your mission statement, a presentation of your target groups, what type of services you provide, a presentation of some of your success stories, what networks you are part of, etc. You could also include a presentation of The African Decade of Persons with Disabilities and its plan of action as well as other important matters, if you find it appropriate. Just make sure that the package does not contain too much, as people cannot and will not digest more than a certain amount of information.

The mission statement

Let us look at the most important part of the information package; the mission statement.

A mission statement is a declaration of organisational purpose. It guides the decisions of the organisation, motivates or inspires its members, and informs the public of its philosophy. The mission statement should answer the following questions:

- Who are we?
- What are the basic social or political needs that we hope to address?
- What do we do to recognise, anticipate, and respond to these needs and problems?
- How should we respond to our key stakeholders?
- What are our philosophy, values and culture?
- What makes us distinctive and unique?

A mission statement should be

- Clear and concise
- Short – a few lines or a short paragraph
- Representative of the organisation's identity
- Motivational or inspirational.

Example: “To empower persons with disabilities at all levels of society to be full partners in development.”

If your organisation does not have a mission statement it is high time you develop one. Combine it with a presentation of your activities and achievements and include it in an information package.

7. SKILLS REQUIRED

In order to be successful in advocacy you need to be skilled and have the right attitudes. Within your network or advocacy group, you need to develop the following skills:

- Policy analysis of legal and regulatory issues
- Word processing, graphics and design
- Telephonic and web research. Qualitative and quantitative research skills.
- Interviewing skills
- Language and writing skills
- Presentation and negotiation skills
- Database development and management
- How to develop a communications strategy, planning and management
- PR and media relations
- Project management
- Financial management
- Logical Framework Analysis
- Fundraising skills

As regards attitudes the following three are probably the most important ones:

- Confidence in oneself and the programme one works for.
- Politeness and courtesy
- Persistence and a spirit of “never-give-up”.

Good Luck!

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