

# Section III

---



## IMPLEMENTING AN ADVOCACY INITIATIVE

DEVELOPING MESSAGES,  
WORKING WITH OTHERS &  
EMPLOYING ADVOCACY TACTICS.

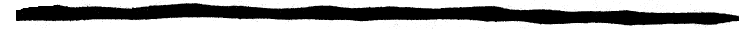
Once you have an advocacy strategy in place, you can start to make more detailed decisions about how to achieve your policy goals. Some of the most important decisions you will make when implementing an advocacy strategy are:

- What messages you will send to your target audience
- How you will work with others in advocacy
- How you will employ advocacy tactics, such as negotiation or using the media, to achieve your aims.

The remaining three chapters provide ideas and advice on each of these topics.

## Chapter 8

## DEVELOPING AND DELIVERING MESSAGES



This chapter focuses on how to develop, deliver, and reinforce advocacy messages. Delivering messages persuasively to your primary target audience lies at the heart of any advocacy initiative. The key to good message delivery is knowing as much as possible about your target audience.



**Messages** are a critical element of any advocacy strategy. Even with convincing facts and political trends on your side, most advocacy efforts will likely fail without clear, simple messages that appeal to target audiences.

In **CHAPTER 5**, we discussed how crafting a message for an advocacy initiative fits into the advocacy planning process. But, developing messages is also a **continuous** part of an advocacy initiative. Messages inevitably need to be revised as you learn more about your policy issue and what appeals to your target audiences. In addition, advocacy may require multiple messages when there is more than one target audience. This chapter suggests methods to create and use messages effectively.

- ◆ **Develop clear and compelling messages.** A message explains *what* you are proposing, *why* it is worth doing, and the positive *impacts* of your policy proposal. A few rules can help you choose the content of your message wisely.
- ◆ **Deliver messages effectively.** When you deliver a message, you want your target audience to agree with it and then take action on your proposal. For this to happen, you must ensure they will *understand* your message and *believe* your message. You also need to think about how to ensure they *receive* your message.
- ◆ **Reinforce messages.** Usually, delivering a message *once is not enough*. Always have a strategy to reinforce your message, either yourself, or through others. When you re-send your message, you can also use the opportunity to respond to any concerns expressed by your target audience.



**MACONDO EXAMPLE: EXAMPLES OF MESSAGES**

Advocacy messages can be written or spoken, and can be delivered in many **formats**. The following are formats that could be used as part of the advocacy campaign to promote responsible environmental policies:

<b>TARGET AUDIENCES</b>	<b>KEY MESSAGE</b>	<b>FORMAT OF ADVOCACY MESSAGE</b>
Minister of the Environment	Enacting an environmental policy will save the lives of many children and increase your political support.	CARE sends a <b>letter</b> to the Minister of the Environment that documents information on the children’s health consequences of environmental pollution. The letter states that an environmental law could help to decrease infant and child mortality. The message re-inforces proposals made in a similar letter sent by the environmental groups GREEN and SVD.
Most powerful business leaders, Ms. Galo and Mr. Amart	Environmentally friendly practices will increase your profit and save the lives of many children.	CARE proposes an <b>informal meeting</b> with Ms. Galo and Mr. Amart to discuss development in Macondo. CARE will alert them to children’s health problems in the region and alert them to environmentally friendly technologies that are profitable.
Macondo’s community representatives	You and your children have the right to clean water.	CARE provides the facilities and organizes a <b>community meeting</b> so that environmental groups can inform community representatives about policy reform proposals and ask for community support.

**8.1 Develop clear and compelling messages**

**What goes into a message?**

Advocacy messages should capture the essence of what you are trying to say to a target audience. In just a few sentences, a message should communicate why your issue is important and what you want others to do on behalf of your cause. It should also give the target audience a clear choice of actions and suggest the consequences of those actions. Your message should be clear, whether verbal or in writing, and it should be appropriate to the social and cultural context where you work. Your message should suggest what will happen if your target audience takes no action – or chooses a different policy option. The goal is for your message to explain why your idea is best.

As you develop the **content** of your advocacy messages, there are two rules to keep in mind.

1. **Know your audience.** Good messages sometimes require a little research. Try to learn how you can best influence each of your target audiences. Each message should take into account the interests, ideas, and knowledge of the people receiving the message.
2. **Keep it simple.** Messages should be short, just a few sentences or less. If you deliver too many messages, your audience might forget them. Limit it to one, and focus on your best supporting arguments, rather than a long list of reasons to support your proposal.

**What you need to know about your target audience**

What does it mean to "know your audience"? Of course, this isn't always possible, but you can take time to learn about the interests, attitudes, and positions of your target audience, even without meeting them. For example, here are some things that you can try to learn before you develop your message:

**About your target audience...**

What are their **political** interests?  
 What are their self-interests in relation to the issue?

How much information do they **already** have about your issue?

Do they already have an **opinion**?

What **objections** might they have to your position? What could they lose as a result of your proposal?

What are their **personal** interests?

Do their **backgrounds** (personal, educational or professional) suggest a bias or position?

**Specifically...**

What group of people do they represent?

Are you telling them something they already know? What **NEW** information are you offering?

What is it, how strongly held? Have they already voted or taken a public position on your issue?

Do you need to clear up any misperceptions, or counter opposing arguments?

What are their hobbies or "passions" outside of work? What do they do in their spare time?

Can you link your issue to something you know they do support?

## **Networking for information**

When gathering the information you need about your target audience, two effective approaches to try are *internal and external networking*.

*The most immediately available source of information you have is your own colleagues.* Internal networking is the process of using resources within your own organization to get the information you need.

*In addition to your sources within CARE, there is a whole world of information out there.* External networking is the process of asking people you know outside your organization for information about your target audience.

**Internal networking.** Often, your colleagues can help you make contact with others who know something about your target audience. For example, if you are working on a reproductive health issue, someone you know may have a contact within the Ministry of Health who can tell you what you need to know. The more clear you are about what information you are seeking about your target audience (and why), the easier it will be for people to help you.

Internal networking has another important benefit. The more you talk to people inside your own organization first, the less likely you are to develop a message for your target audience that contradicts past statements made by CARE.

**External networking.** Even when your goal is to get information from outside CARE, it may be best to start with those closest to you. Do you or your colleagues have personal contacts within other partner organizations who have information about your target audience? Are there people you could approach at NGO coordination meetings who might have some information? If your own contacts have limited information, do they have ideas about who you could call to learn more?

If your target audience is someone in the community, keep an eye out for announcements of public meetings that may be held in your area. Attending these kinds of meetings also may help you to identify other groups who are involved in your issue.

**Being clear**

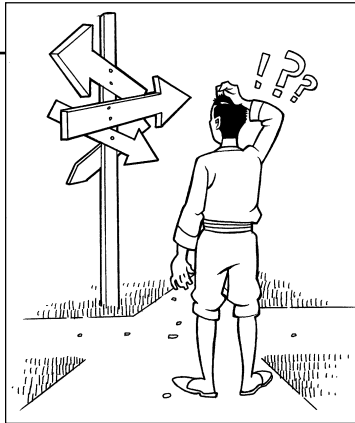
A message is only effective if the targets of your advocacy can understand what you are asking them to do – exactly. Once you have developed the content of your messages, there are at least two things to ask yourself.

First, have you chosen language your audience can understand? For example, have you used jargon, technical terminology, or “NGO-speak”? Sometimes, it can be helpful to try out your message on someone who isn’t in your line of work (like a family member, or a friend).

Second, will your audience know what action to take if they agree with you? For example, is your goal for them to make a decision, call someone, vote a certain way, change a corporate practice, or convince others to support your proposal?

**A CLEAR MESSAGE** uses accessible language and suggests an action step for the target audience.

**UNCLEAR MESSAGE**

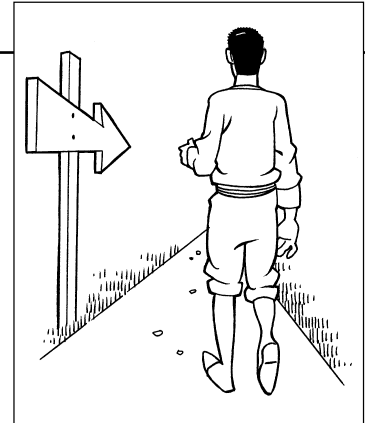


Benefits of proposal vague... Maximizing educational attainment for girls is a critical issue and we are working on it at CARE as part of our HLS framework. There are not only cognitive benefits, but economic and developmental benefits to be gained from this. We see many long-term impacts to enhancing girls’ educational opportunities, particularly those younger than the age of 12. If you’re interested, we can provide more information to you about our programming, which we implement in 4 rural areas and 3 peri-urban areas throughout the country. We hope you and your colleagues will keep girls’ education in mind as a top priority as you debate national strategies for educational policy this year.

Contains jargon... Too long!

No clear request for action from the audience...

**CLEAR MESSAGE**



Makes specific request... Please consider supporting a national policy that will encourage more girls to attend school.

Makes one strong supporting argument... International research shows that educating girls leads to economic growth, thereby benefiting all children. Please read this report, which will show you the positive results girls’ education has already achieved in seven locations nationwide.

Documents benefits... Concise.

## 8.2 Deliver messages strategically

Credibility means that other people trust and value what you have to say. We have already discussed credibility as a prerequisite for advocacy. It is also something you need to consider when you are deciding how to deliver a message and who delivers it. Some things you can do to establish your credibility when delivering a message are:

1. **Know the facts.** Conducting analysis, learning from organizations that do have credibility, or initiating programming that helps you gain expertise are three ways to build up credibility.
2. **Document the problem.** Frequently, CARE or its partner organizations can offer valuable information about problems concerning poverty and discrimination. In some cases, it may be appropriate to document and share this information in ways that are useful to policy makers (the expert informant role). When sharing evidence of a problem, the information must be accurate and reliable, to maintain your credibility.
3. **Choose the best messenger.** Just like your target audience is a person, so is the messenger. When delivering an advocacy message, you need to determine who will be the most credible source in the eyes of the target audience. Sometimes policy skills are important, but other times first-hand knowledge of the problem, technical expertise, or seniority within an organization matter more. Also, it can be effective to have two messengers who complement each another: one knowledgeable about the subject matter and the other knowledgeable about the target audience.

*Some of the factors you used to evaluate your advocacy capacity can also help you choose a messenger once you are ready to advocate.*

### **Deciding when to advocate**

Organization advocating is known by and has the *respect* of target audiences.

Organization has *information and expertise* that is relevant to the issue.

Target audiences are potentially *interested* in the organization's opinion.

Organization can *legitimately speak on behalf* of the constituency or group affected by issue.

Organization is not perceived to have an unfair political bias.

### **Choosing a messenger**

Messenger is known and trusted by – or will appeal to – target audiences.

Messenger can demonstrate *knowledge and insight* into the issue.

Messenger is a *source whose opinion* target audience will value.

A clear link exists between the messenger and the group affected by the issue.

Messenger will refrain from political comments unrelated to the issue.

### 8.3 Reinforce messages

After you send your message, it may be tempting to sit back and hope for the best. But usually, this won't get you very far! After you communicate with your target audience, there are several actions you can take to reinforce your message over time.

1. **Respond to concerns immediately.** Even if your message is appealing, the policy maker may have problems fulfilling your request, such as finding funding, or devising a specific proposal that is supported by enough people. Try to identify your target audience's concerns as soon as possible. Either address these concerns right away (for example, if you are in a meeting) or focus your next communication on ways to resolve those concerns.
2. **Re-send the message.** In the private sector, companies use advertising to send messages to the public over and over, hoping that people will eventually buy their products. While it is important not to overwhelm target audiences with too much information, persistence can pay off. You can either send the message again yourself, or, better yet, rely on other influential people to do it for you. It is best to monitor the impact of your original message before you re-send your message, if possible, to allow for any changes or improvements that might be necessary.
3. **Follow up.** When you re-send a message, you want to avoid repeating yourself exactly. There are a number of effective techniques you can use to help reinforce your message and follow up your first communication.
  - ◆ If you meet personally with your target audience, give them a one-page summary of your proposal. After your meeting, send the summary again, along with a letter of thanks.
  - ◆ If you are asked about specific facts and figures, be sure to provide them. Take the opportunity to restate your key points.
  - ◆ Arrange for an ally to contact the target audience with a similar message to yours.
  - ◆ If your audience has specific concerns, arrange for them to meet with an expert who can address those concerns.

There are many things to remember when developing and delivering a message. Often, it is helpful to write down your strategic information and decisions in one place before you begin. A message delivery strategy for CARE in Macondo might include some of the following information.





**MACONDO EXAMPLE: DEVELOPING AND DELIVERING MESSAGES**

STRATEGIC INFORMATION AND DECISIONS	TARGET AUDIENCE: MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT	SECONDARY AUDIENCE: BUSINESS LEADERS MR. AMART AND MS. GALO
<b>Audience background</b>	The Minister of the Environment was <b>formerly a district judge</b> . He has high degree of influence on policy, but controls <b>limited economic resources</b> . He has met with environmental groups before and <b>understands that water pollution is a problem</b> . The Minister is from another part of the country and has <b>never been to Macondo</b> .	Both leaders have been <b>active in politics</b> and have opposed any efforts to pass environmental regulations about water quality. But Mr. Amart's <b>daughter is an environmental activist</b> . Ms. Galo <b>grew up in Macondo</b> and one of her <b>sons still lives there</b> . Her son has a five-year old child. Both business leaders have <b>refused to meet directly with environmental groups</b> in the past.
<b>Credibility and legitimacy issues</b>	<b>CARE is not an environmental organization</b> . The Minister may not be familiar with CARE. CARE should not make broad assertions about environmental policy, where it has little expertise, but <b>focus on the children's health consequences</b> it observes as a result of pollution. Documenting a link between the pollution and the health problems will be critical.	CARE is not an environmental organization, but <b>knows about economic development in Macondo, which relates to business concerns</b> . The leaders may be more willing to meet with CARE than GREEN or SVD. CARE staff must <b>emphasize their commitment and community ties</b> to Macondo, but also demonstrate that they are objective observers.
<b>CARE's advocacy role</b>	CARE will <b>work with local NGOs</b> in approaching the Minister of the Environment. Partnership with the coalition led by GREEN and SVD will help connect CARE to the cause.	CARE can be an <b>expert informant</b> that brings a problem to business leaders' attention, without "waving a banner" for the environmental cause.
<b>Key messages</b>	Enacting an environmental policy will <b>save the lives of many children and increase your political support</b> .	Environmentally friendly practices will <b>increase your profit and save the lives of many children</b> .
<b>Message formats</b>	CARE will write a <b>letter</b> about the health consequences of pollution to children in the region. Later, CARE will join GREEN and SVD in <b>meeting</b> with one of the Minister's advisors.	CARE staff will propose a <b>dinner meeting</b> to discuss development in the Macondo region at a restaurant where business leaders like to go.
<b>Protocol</b>	In its letter, CARE should address the Minister as "The Honorable Minister of the Environment." In person, he should be referred to as <b>"Minister," not "Mister."</b>	Bring <b>business cards</b> to exchange with the leaders. CARE should send <b>no more than two people</b> to the dinner.
<b>Timing factors</b>	The letter will be sent <b>right away</b> . The meeting will be proposed when the national legislature is out of session, <b>when most officials are not as busy</b> .	There is a <b>business convention in a month</b> . Schedule the dinner soon – ask leaders if an environmental technology expert can address the group.
<b>Messengers</b>	<b>Project managers</b> will draft the letter to the Minister, which will be signed by the <b>country director</b> , as the highest ranking CARE staff member in country.	<b>Project managers from the Macondo region</b> should go, so that they can share first-hand knowledge. Someone with a <b>background in business</b> would be best.
<b>Follow-up activities</b>	SVD and GREEN will send a <b>letter</b> to the Minister reinforcing CARE's main points. CARE staff will <b>call</b> to thank the Minister's advisor after the meeting and ask if she needs more information.	A personal, <b>hand-written, letter of thanks</b> should go to both people. If the meeting is successful, CARE will <b>arrange for an expert on environmentally friendly technologies to speak</b> at their convention.

**CHAPTER 8 WORKSHEET**  
**GETTING YOUR MESSAGE ACROSS**

Steps you can take	Questions to explore	Your notes...
Pick the best format.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ What format is most likely to reach your target audience?</li> <li>◆ What format will best enable you to tell your story?</li> </ul>	
Craft a message that tells your story.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Have you addressed the <i>what, why, and impact</i> of your policy proposal?</li> <li>◆ Have you thought about how your audience is likely to receive your message?</li> <li>◆ How can you simplify your message?</li> </ul>	
Know your target audience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Have you considered the following about your target audience?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their political interests</li> <li>• What they already know</li> <li>• Whether they already have an opinion</li> <li>• What objections they might have</li> <li>• Their personal interests</li> <li>• Any bias suggested by their background</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
Network for information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Have you asked people within CARE for information, contacts, and ideas?</li> <li>◆ Have you asked your external contacts for information, contacts, and ideas?</li> </ul>	
Check your message for clarity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Will your target audience know exactly what to do next if they agree with you?</li> <li>◆ Have you used accessible language free of jargon?</li> <li>◆ Are the benefits of your proposal clear?</li> </ul>	
Establish or reaffirm your credibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Have you developed some expertise in the issue?</li> <li>◆ Do you have documentation?</li> <li>◆ Have you picked the best messenger?</li> </ul>	
Reinforce messages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Have you tried to respond to any concerns expressed by your audience?</li> <li>◆ Have you delivered your message more than once?</li> <li>◆ Have you adapted your message based on the latest information?</li> <li>◆ Have you thanked your audience for their attention or assistance?</li> </ul>	

## Chapter 9 WORKING WITH OTHERS

---



Sometimes, CARE can promote policy change directly, but usually it is better to build the capacity of local groups to conduct advocacy on their own behalf. CARE can also join a coalition of organizations as a partner without necessarily taking the lead. This chapter discusses building local advocacy capacity, organizing constituencies, and working through coalitions.



In most cases, advocacy is a group enterprise. If you are planning an advocacy initiative, it is likely you will work with others, both within CARE and without, to develop support for your idea and to mobilize people who are willing to devote time and resources to achieving change. If you are in luck, you will find other organizations to work with. In some cases, however, you may need to organize an advocacy group yourself. Various approaches you can consider as you are preparing to work with others are:

- ◆ building local capacity for advocacy
- ◆ organizing constituencies
- ◆ working through coalitions



## 9.1 *Build local capacity for advocacy*

In recent years, CARE has renewed its commitment to strengthening local capacity. The focus of our work has evolved from providing direct services to working more through partners. We are emphasizing partnerships with local organizations and deemphasizing direct delivery of goods and services. Strengthening civil society, or strengthening the capacity of local organizations to influence development processes, is one of CARE's most important priorities.

### ***Influencing the decision making process***

Capacity building is just as important for advocacy as for other types of programming. In order for people to participate in the political process and represent their own interests, they must be able to form interest groups and select representatives who can help them communicate with policy makers. In some countries, this is an accepted part of the political culture. But in others, it can be a tremendous challenge for people merely to communicate with those who make important decisions, much less to influence their priorities. In many places, people feel that their opinion doesn't matter and so they are not motivated to participate in advocacy at all.

A potential benefit of advocacy is that it can address not only specific policy changes, but also changes in *who* makes policy decisions or *how* decisions are made. For example, advocacy initiatives can be designed to expand people's participation in decision making processes, make government decision making more transparent, and hold policy makers accountable for their decisions.

### ***Capacity building activities***

Advocacy capacity building can target NGOs and other organizations as well as community groups and even government officials. Capacity building can help community members become better at analyzing their own political interests and generating their own proposals for policy change. Policy makers can operate with better information and better reflect community concerns as a result of institutional strengthening.

Several ways to build the capacity of others to engage in advocacy are highlighted below:

- ◆ Direct advocacy training (media skills, analytic skills, policy research).
- ◆ Planning an advocacy initiative together.
- ◆ Funding public events sponsored by local groups.
- ◆ Sponsoring activities that help other groups agree on a policy position or policy goal.
- ◆ Providing education and training about human rights.
- ◆ Strengthening institutions and providing training to policy makers regarding specific policy issues.
- ◆ Secondment of staff and mentoring (local NGO staff to CARE or vice versa).

### **Capacity building is a two way street**

When CARE engages in advocacy capacity building, the learning will almost always be a mutual process. While CARE may have more resources than local groups, it often has much to learn from its local partners about the political context and norms – and who the key policy makers are. Local organizations typically have a great deal to offer CARE in the advocacy arena.

Whether or not CARE takes the lead in an advocacy initiative is a complex decision that deserves careful consideration at the outset. Each country has different conventions about advocacy, and CARE's level of influence in policy matters varies widely throughout the world. Some international NGOs never engage directly in advocacy in the countries they work, but always support local initiatives for which they provide funds and training. In CARE we have not limited ourselves to one particular role, but it is important that you discuss in your country office how CARE should approach advocacy before you begin.

In many cases, it is appropriate for local groups to take the lead on an advocacy initiative while CARE plays a less visible, supporting role. An advantage of this approach is that it strengthens local advocacy capacity. Indeed, long-term policy reform can be difficult to sustain if citizens themselves are not central players in the advocacy process.

In other cases, though, CARE may be better positioned to deliver messages to national governments, donors, or international policy makers. Also, especially where advocacy for policy change involves risks for local NGOs and communities, it may be preferable for CARE to play a more visible role in advocacy than its partners.

CARE and advocacy partners both stand to gain when advocacy can be jointly implemented. This helps to ensure that CARE's advocacy is grounded and well informed, and allows CARE to support local advocacy capacity building – the most sustainable approach in the long run. It also enables CARE and its staff to learn from other organizations and, ultimately, to become more effective in using advocacy.

## **9.2 Organize constituencies**

In advocacy, it is often hard to achieve results when working alone. Although a small number of committed people can sometimes make a real difference, policy makers are usually more interested in what you have to say if your cause affects a large number of people. The more people and organizations that support your advocacy initiative, the more likely your voice will be heard. The people who support your policy positions are your **constituents**.

**Constituency** is an important concept in advocacy, although constituency relationships are certainly not limited to advocacy. In advocacy, a **constituency** is a group of people whom you represent and from whom you draw your political

A CONSTITUENCY is a group of people whom you represent and from whom you draw your political support. When you have CONSTITUENTS, you are responsible and accountable for representing the interests of those people.

support. When you have constituents, you are responsible and accountable for representing the interests of those people.

When you are speaking for others, you must be sure your actions are in their best interests. While it is often impossible to talk to every person who might be affected by your policy proposal, there are many ways to ensure that your policy positions reflect the interests of those you aim to help. We have discussed many of these in this manual: for example, involving local groups in planning, doing research, and seeking partners in advocacy. In short, just follow the same participatory programming principles you would for other projects.

As you are looking to build up a constituency, a few places to seek input and find potential supporters are:

- ◆ People who would stand to benefit substantially from your proposal
- ◆ Groups already involved in policy debates on your issue
- ◆ Human rights organizations
- ◆ Community based organizations
- ◆ Public interest organizations
- ◆ Unions or other membership organizations
- ◆ Policy makers themselves who support your cause
- ◆ Organizations who have supported CARE on other matters
- ◆ Public figures or famous people who are on your side
- ◆ Donors

You may need to develop a campaign to attract constituents or supporters to your advocacy initiative. An advocacy campaign is designed to convince people to support a particular policy. Campaigns involve organizing people and publicizing information to reach constituents through a wide range of media such as the press, formal and informal networks, or print media, such as posters.

A campaign can be directed at policy makers, or it can be directed at the public. A campaign directed at the public might urge people to vote in favor of a certain law, or to demonstrate their support for a cause in other ways. On a smaller scale, you could have a campaign to recruit local NGOs to join a coalition.

There is extensive literature available on how to organize a campaign. Local and regional advocacy training organizations also can offer extensive expertise on how to organize campaigns.

### **9.3 *Work through coalitions***

Groups that share policy concerns often agree to cooperate by forming a coalition. A coalition is a group of individuals or organizations that work toward a common purpose. In advocacy, coalition members are dedicated to shared policy goals.

Coalitions can vary by size, structure, goals, and in many other ways. They can be big or small, formal or informal, moderate or radical, homogeneous or heterogeneous, and focused on media, mobilizing constituencies, or influencing policy makers directly. In some cases, a coalition will form an independent organization with its own staff and resources, other times, members will all work together on a completely informal basis.

### ***Is a coalition right for you?***

**What are the benefits?** Working in a coalition can be critically important when one of your key goals is to achieve and demonstrate broad support for your position, and when your advocacy strategy has room to develop over time. Coalitions are particularly useful when they bring various groups and constituencies together for the first time, or in new ways. If the members of a coalition can agree on a coordinated policy message, they will usually have far more impact than if each delivered similar, but uncoordinated, messages on their own.

In some cases, when advocating on behalf of human rights or politically controversial issues, a coalition structure can also provide protection to some members. For example, one member can take the lead while others who perceive risks from advocacy can keep a lower profile.

Coalitions often serve another important function, which is helping different groups agree on their positions before approaching their target audiences. When policy makers hear too many competing messages about a particular issue, they may decide a) that there is no community consensus, and therefore b) taking action is premature. Thus, coalitions can become an important forum for settling difficult issues in private, enabling groups to present a united position to policy makers.

**What are the drawbacks?** Coalitions are not always the best strategy for advocacy. Sometimes, advocacy is more effective when done privately, without a large group in attendance. Other times, you may not be in a position to make the compromises that are required to advocate as part of a group. Coalitions are only effective when their members can truly agree on their goals. Some coalitions will fail because there is a lack of consensus on strategy, purpose, or how to share credit (and blame) for the coalition's actions. Sometimes when coalition members cannot reach agreement on key issues, they end up having a bitter disagreement in front of their target audience. This outcome is worse than never showing up at all.

Because coalitions have a consensus building function, they also take time. If you are advocating for an issue that requires immediate action, you may not have the time to join, build, or agree on a common agenda within a coalition. In this event, you must find other ways of ensuring your actions are in accordance with community interests and concerns. Reaching agreement on an overall strategy, as well as specific decisions (such as who will sign a letter, who will speak on behalf of the coalition, or who will get the credit) can be time-consuming and sometimes frustrating. These issues are best handled early on, in open discussions among all members.

Finally, coalitions generally require solid leadership. An extra benefit of coalitions is that they can provide an “incubator” for its members to develop and test their leadership skills. But, without leadership, coalitions can fall apart, since coalition members often have other professional commitments that take priority over their coalition responsibilities.

### **A COALITION OF STREET TRADERS: AN EXAMPLE FROM THE PHILIPPINES**

In the Philippines, CARE stepped into a new advocacy role. In this innovative project, CARE worked with Filipino NGOs to help advocate for the rights of street vendors through the Coalition for Recognition and Empowerment of Street Traders (CREST). This coalition was designed to 1) organize, strengthen, and help build partnerships among street vendor associations; 2) facilitate access to social security and credit services; and 3) develop support systems for children vendors.

The project has sponsored events that build trust through dialogue; organized demographic research to build strong arguments; advised vendor associations on how to work with the media and negotiating techniques; and strengthened advocacy collaboration among people’s organizations and NGOs.

The project began by promoting street vendor representation on a national commission, the Interagency Council. As discussed in Chapter 4, the coalition ran into difficulties when the newly elected President of the Philippines turned out not to be a supporter of informal sector organizations. More recently, CREST has refocused its efforts on strategies to achieve legislative change at the local level, for example by influencing city elections and strengthening the capacity of street vendor representatives to make policy proposals.

While USAID funding for CARE’s involvement in the coalition ended in 2000, the coalition is continuing its activities and apparently gathering steam. Recently, the coalition introduced a “Magna Carta for Street Traders” to the 11th Congress of the Philippines and a draft city ordinance for the city of Cebu authorizing the use of city streets for street vending.

COALITIONS typically form in pursuit of a single goal. Some disband once the goal is reached. Others find common interests and stay together to tackle new challenges as a team.

### **Joining or building a coalition**

There are two principal ways to get involved in a coalition: join one, or help build one yourself.

**Joining a coalition.** Before devising an advocacy strategy, it is always advisable to see what others are already doing. First, check to see if there is already an organization or coalition promoting your policy proposal. You can explore this possibility as part of the networking process described in **CHAPTER 8**. If you identify a coalition you might want to join, there are several things you need to determine before making your decision:



- ◆ Do the other member organizations have a good reputation? Will an association with any of them hurt you in the eyes of your target audience?
- ◆ Who is in charge of the coalition? Is this a person (or group) you can easily work with? Do they have good leadership skills?
- ◆ What is the purpose, advocacy strategy, and approach of the coalition? Is there strong consensus on these matters among members?
- ◆ Do the members of the coalition have good relationships?
- ◆ Does the coalition have the resources it needs to carry out its agenda? What kind of resource commitment is required of you?
- ◆ What role is being offered to you as a coalition member? Who in your organization will attend the coalition meetings?

**Building a coalition.** Building a coalition is a considerable task. You should first determine if you and your colleagues have the time, energy, and commitment required to undertake this kind of project. Also, it is important that you and all potential members agree on the purpose of having the coalition in the first place. Another critical factor is that each of the groups involved is willing to sacrifice its own interests, at least to some extent, for the interests of the group at large. Without these last two elements, a coalition is unlikely to last long.

Before trying to start a coalition, it is important to determine if CARE is the right organization to lead such a group. As discussed earlier, in some cases it would be improper for CARE to play such a role. If a leadership role is inappropriate, consider providing support to a small group of local organizations who might be interested in starting a coalition.

There are several ways to get a coalition started. You can begin with a small, core group of organizations, or cast your net wider. Existing NGO coordination groups or forums can be excellent places to explore this question, especially in humanitarian response situations.

As the organizer, you can propose the coalition's advocacy objectives at the start, or try to develop them as a group. The strategy you pick will depend on factors such as how many potential members you can identify, how controversial an issue you are choosing, how focused you need to be, and the level of interest, energy and expertise of other coalition members. Keep in mind, building up a group that works well and agrees on a basic agenda can take some time. Regardless of how you begin, the chances are that some people will leave and others will join along the way before your group takes shape.

When forming a coalition, make sure to give careful thought not only to who is invited to join, but also to who might be left out. Be sure that you don't accidentally make an enemy by excluding someone from your group.



### MACONDO EXAMPLE

#### ISSUE FOR DISCUSSION: TO JOIN OR NOT TO JOIN?

CARE has been invited by SVD and GREEN, two local environmental groups, to attend a meeting of the coalition they lead, ECO-ACTION. Informally, leaders of both groups have indicated that they might like CARE to formally join their group. CARE staff are interested in getting more involved in advocating against water pollution. The meeting is an opportunity to learn more about the coalition and how they work.

The CARE assistant country director and a project manager from Macondo attend the ECO-ACTION meeting. They come back from the meeting with the following report.

- The coalition has 8 members, including GREEN and SVD. Most of the organizations are involved with sustainable forestry. Half of them are funded mainly from abroad. One group, Envirosolutions, focuses on water pollution problems and environmentally related health issues. Another group, Mother Earth, is a community based group with local membership (mainly made up of mothers).
- The meeting is extremely well attended. In fact, each group usually sends 4-5 representatives each. Since everyone is given a turn to talk, the meetings tend to last a long time. The meetings are very social occasions. There is usually no formal agenda or written record of meetings.
- ECO-ACTION meets informally once a month and convenes at the Macondo community center. The coalition has no paid staff. They have no formal charter or by-laws, or written advocacy strategies, but its members seem to get along well and trust each other. There is great enthusiasm among members for the coalition.
- When CARE staff talked informally to several members about the purpose of the coalition, they received conflicting answers. Some think it is designed to create change in national policy, others see it as a means of raising funds for environmental projects in the community. One person said he thinks the coalition eventually can help create new jobs in the region.
- The coalition has been in existence for 18 months. The first 6 months were mainly getting organized so they have only been working actively for a year. Their two big successes so far have been 1) convincing their elected official in the national legislature to introduce a proposal to limit how much timber could be cut from the region annually and 2) a local effort, led by Mother Earth, to raise money for a new village well (although the well has not yet been installed).
- The director of SVD has a brother who is an elected official to the national legislature. He has helped the coalition write several letters to the Ministry of Agriculture about some pesticide poisonings that have occurred near Macondo. So far, they have received no reply.
- The coalition would like to hire a staff person so that it can better organize its work. The members would like CARE to join, to give them better advice about the pollution-related health problems in the region, and possibly to help them find funding for an Executive Director of ECO-ACTION.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Should CARE join ECO-ACTION? Why, or why not?
- Should CARE offer to help the coalition raise funds for its work? Why, or why not?
- How do you think the coalition could best spend new funds?

### WORKING IN COALITIONS: MAJOR TASKS

When working with a coalition, there are a number of actions that can help you maintain coherence and succeed over the long run. These tasks imply that certain staff skills are important for representing CARE in a coalition. There is no formula for success, but here are a few ideas that can help you effectively lay the groundwork you will need to function effectively in a coalition.

- ◆ Begin by building trust. Before groups will curb their own interests in favor of those of the coalition, they must have confidence in the other members. Just like in any organization, strong relationships are needed to sustain complex discussions and sometimes difficult group decisions.
- ◆ Decide how to share credit. A coalition can be slowed down when its members become too focused on who will receive publicity, credit, or blame for its work. Early on, agree on procedures that will allow all members to participate and share in any public benefits that result from the coalition's activities.
- ◆ Agree on goals immediately. Sometimes the most challenging part of a coalition is agreeing on the goals. Don't be surprised if this takes some time early on. But, the more consensus that can be achieved, the more effective a coalition's advocacy will be.
- ◆ Stay focused. With multiple organizations involved, it can become tempting to move in many different directions. Coalition members should constantly remind themselves why they are together and what forms their common advocacy agenda.
- ◆ Establish structure. Some coalitions can run completely democratically, but usually some structure is needed. Create roles and leadership responsibilities. Provide opportunities for members to change roles over time.
- ◆ Be consistent. Since coalitions run on relationships, try to ensure the same person, or people, participate on behalf of CARE every time. Make sure those people are authorized to speak for CARE.

### CHAPTER 9 WORKSHEET WORKING WITH OTHERS

Steps you can take	Questions to explore	Your notes...
Influence the policy making process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Would your policy proposal bring more people into the political process?</li> <li>◆ Would your policy proposal help make government more transparent and accountable to citizens?</li> </ul>	
Build capacity in other organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Does your strategy include activities that strengthen other groups that are involved (or interested) in advocacy?</li> <li>◆ Does your strategy strengthen the ability of policy makers to make informed decisions?</li> <li>◆ Does your strategy help groups build consensus on policy positions?</li> <li>◆ Have you explored opportunities for mutual learning with local organizations?</li> </ul>	
Identify potential constituencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Have you involved others in planning?</li> <li>◆ Have you sought out others who are likely to share your policy interests?</li> </ul>	
Organize a campaign.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ What kind of supporters are you trying to recruit?</li> <li>◆ How can you best reach them?</li> <li>◆ Have you consulted organizations that provide training on how to manage campaigns?</li> </ul>	
Decide: is a coalition right for you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Do you require broad public support to succeed?</li> <li>◆ Do you have time to develop a strategy over time or are you in a rush?</li> <li>◆ Do the various stakeholders need a forum to build consensus?</li> <li>◆ Are you prepared to make compromises?</li> </ul>	
Join or build a coalition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Is a group already in existence that can address the issue?</li> <li>◆ Is there a clear role for you in the coalition?</li> <li>◆ Do you have a forum for recruiting members?</li> <li>◆ Do you have the time to participate in or manage a coalition?</li> </ul>	
Follow best practices for successful coalitions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Pay attention to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Building trust</li> <li>◆ Sharing credit</li> <li>◆ Agreeing on goals and staying focused</li> <li>◆ Establishing structure</li> <li>◆ Designating representatives.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

## Chapter 10

# EMPLOYING ADVOCACY TACTICS



There are many ways to be effective in advocacy. Some people are more skilled at certain types of advocacy than others, and different situations will call for different tactics. This chapter focuses on some of the advocacy tactics that are most often used by CARE: direct written and verbal communications, negotiations in meetings, and media communications. Tactics for managing risk also are an integral part of advocacy.



Communicating ideas and negotiating with others are things we do in the course of our professional and personal lives, sometimes deliberately, sometimes not. These skills are so important in the context of advocacy that we are devoting a special chapter to them here. Working with the media also can be highly effective in advocacy, especially when you need to reach a large audience with your message. It can be valuable for other reasons as well, and this chapter encourages you to consider developing a stronger relationship with the media than perhaps you have had up until now.

Finally, as this manual has emphasized, there are many things you can do to limit your exposure to risk when advocating. Most important is to be as informed as possible about your target audience, your opponents, and other actors in the political process. You should also have a back-up plan to protect yourself and others if something goes wrong.

## 10.1 *Communicate effectively*

Successful advocacy often rests on the ability to communicate effectively, either verbally or in writing. This section provides some general tips about how to use two common advocacy formats: letters and group presentations.

### **Writing a letter**

A letter is a good way to deliver your message, especially if you do not have a personal relationship with your target audience. An advantage of a letter is that it creates a record of your position. But, keep in mind, it is quite possible that others will see what you have written, such as your opponents, members of the public, or the media. These are factors you need to balance.

When sending a letter, try to find out how to ensure your audience is most likely to read it (i.e., should you use mail, fax, or e-mail)? If others support your position, consider asking them to sign the letter along with you. Before writing a letter, be clear whether you are writing in order to receive a response, or mainly to register your opinion.

An advocacy letter should contain the following elements:

1. **Proper salutation.** Always address your audience appropriately, and according to their proper title.
2. **Leading paragraph.** State your purpose for writing the letter and deliver your message immediately. Don't be afraid to put your request for action up-front.
3. **Information about yourself.** Explain who you are and who you are representing (CARE, a member of a coalition, yourself as a private citizen, etc.). If your audience does not know you well, make it clear how you are connected to the issue you are raising.
4. **Supporting arguments.** Make a few supporting arguments for your request (typically no more than three). Refer to established facts and positions taken by respected groups. Use statistics strategically, but sparingly. Provide evidence that others support your views.
5. **Request for action.** Be very specific about what you are asking the reader to do. If requesting a meeting, offer to follow up soon to arrange a time.
6. **Acknowledgment of your audience.** Recognize your reader as someone whose opinion matters. Thank him or her for taking time to read your letter and show your appreciation for any past support. Offer to provide additional information or assistance in the future.
7. **Attachments (optional).** In some cases, if you have particularly compelling information that supports your request, you can include it as an attachment. However, try to keep attachments short, recognizing that most policy-makers are too busy to read lengthy reports.

*A sample advocacy letter is provided in Appendix 1.*

After you've sent it, you may want to send a copy of your letter to other people, such as your advocacy partners, or other audiences whose opinions you hope to influence.

### **Presenting to a group**

When making a presentation to a group, your challenge is to win the approval of your audience. Therefore, you must not only be clear in your presentation of your message, but also hold the interest and attention of a group. Here are some steps you can follow to deliver an effective advocacy presentation:



- (1) **Introduce yourself to the audience** (or, better yet, have someone else introduce you). If your audience does not know you or your work, be sure to make the connection between yourself and the topic clear.
- (2) **Tell the audience what you plan to present.** Identify your key points right at the beginning. If you have access to visual equipment, show the audience a short outline of your talk before you begin.
- (3) **Tell your audience how long you plan to speak.** Then keep your promise.
- (4) **Deliver your advocacy message right away.** Don't wait until the end to make your main point. Use your best supporting arguments – try to limit them to three.
- (5) **Tell your audience what they can do to help.** Then give them the tools to act. (For example, if you want them to write letters to a public official, provide an address, title, and a sample letter to work from.)
- (5) **Summarize your main points.** Tell your audience the most important piece of information you would like them to remember.
- (6) **Thank your audience for attending.** If the format allows, offer to answer questions or lead a group discussion afterward.

### OTHER WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR PRESENTATION.

- Use images to tell the story. The more visual your presentation, the more interesting it will be to your audience.
- Don't read from a script, if you can avoid it. Working from an outline is usually more interesting for the audience.
- Use humor. Tell a joke that relates to yourself or your topic.
- Interact with the audience. If the format allows, ask your audience questions, or invite them to make comments during transition points in your talk. After presenting a lengthy topic, ask if people have questions before you move ahead.

## 10.2 Negotiate



Negotiation is a communication process between two or more parties to reach an agreement or to resolve a conflict. In advocacy, negotiation skills are important because you want to persuade target audiences to accept your message and take action to change policy. Usually, negotiation produces some compromises, so it is best to begin negotiating once you have identified a range of acceptable results (not just one desired outcome). Often, we overlook how many things can be negotiated. Just as you might bargain daily in the marketplace, negotiations often occur over and over again.

### **Setting your agenda**

Effective negotiators always plan ahead. It is usually helpful to prepare an **agenda**. An agenda lists the main things you need to discuss during the meeting. In a formal meeting, an agenda is circulated to all participants. In a personal or informal meeting, no formal agenda is generally needed. However, be flexible and remember that your audience may have goals for the meeting too.

You may wish to prepare a **meeting strategy**. This is a plan for how you will accomplish your agenda. For example: What are the main messages that need to be delivered, and which topics need to be avoided? What will you do if your audience disagrees with you? It is always good to have a back-up plan.



## **Knowing where you stand**

Three questions are particularly important to consider when preparing to negotiate:

- ◆ **What do you want?** Agree with your partners on your goals. Are some more important than others? It is often helpful to write these down and then rank them. This is especially important if you are working as a team.
- ◆ **Why has the other side agreed to negotiate with you?** Think about the negotiation from the other side. How motivated is the other side to reach agreement? Do you have an important or long-term relationship with the other party?
- ◆ **What will you do if the other side says no?** Be prepared to not get what you want. If the other side will not agree to your position, do you have a back-up plan or other option to discuss instead?

See Appendix 2 for some of the most effective strategies you can use when planning ahead, negotiating, and “closing the deal.”

## **Mediating**

There are different roles you can play in a negotiation. First, you may be negotiating directly on behalf of yourself, or other individuals, families, and communities seeking a resolution to a problem. Second, you may be mediating a discussion between two parties that start from different positions or have a disagreement. The goal of a mediator is often to help others reach an outcome that's better than what they could achieve on their own. When serving as a mediator, you must remain unbiased and impartial, remembering that the ultimate goal is to define shared interests. Here are some mediation principles you can use to help others find common ground:

- ◆ Break down the issues. Work toward the most manageable components.
- ◆ Change positions into needs and interests.
- ◆ Attack the problem, not the people.
- ◆ Find new options for mutual gain.
- ◆ Use objective criteria and avoid conflict-oriented language.
- ◆ Ask each of the parties to consider the others' perspective.

## **Power dynamics**

Before you negotiate, it is important to take a step back and consider the power relationships between all parties to the negotiations, and any others who can influence the final outcome. It is important to understand where your negotiating partner sits within his or her own organization.

A critical question to ask is: who has the final say over decisions? If you are unsure whether the other side has the ability to reach an agreement, try to find that out at the beginning of your discussions. Also, what is the power relationship between you and the other party involved? Are you taking a risk by negotiating? How will you present your position, as a request or a demand?

Also, be careful not to put yourself at a disadvantage. Revealing too much information about your own position, agreeing to delay decisions, or coming to the meeting without authority to reach an agreement yourself can give the other side the upper hand.

### ***When to wait***

There are some times when it is wiser NOT to negotiate. Watch out for situations where:

1. ***You stand to lose much more than you might gain.*** Expect to make some concessions, but don't take unnecessary risks. Always keep yourself and your negotiating team out of harm.
2. ***There are others who can negotiate the issue more effectively than you can.*** Ask yourself, are you the best representative of the cause? Might someone else be more persuasive to the other party?
3. ***Your negotiating partner lacks the authority to reach agreement.*** It can be a real waste of time to negotiate with someone who cannot provide what you want. Be sure your counterpart has the authority to reach and implement an agreement.
4. ***The other party is negotiating in bad faith.*** Often it is best to end a negotiation if you believe the other side is not interested in actually reaching an agreement. ***Appendix 3*** provides additional options for countering unfair negotiation tactics.

### ***Special tips for teams***

If you are part of a coalition group that is negotiating with another party, it is absolutely vital to discuss your plan in private beforehand. This will help ensure that your group delivers a coordinated message and appears unified in purpose. When you are part of a group, try also to agree on these things in advance:

- ◆ ***Main messages.*** Sometimes coalition members will want to emphasize different aspects of an issue, based on their own interests. Reach consensus on the critical points before you walk in the door.

- ◆ **Who will speak.** For each agenda item, identify the speaker, or leader of the discussion. Also, if necessary, identify who should respond to questions on subjects that are likely to come up.
- ◆ **Who participates.** Often, coalitions seek to allow broad participation and bring a large number of people to a meeting. But, in general, it's best to designate a few trusted members to speak for the group.
- ◆ **Who follows up.** Especially when you are part of a group, it is easy to forget to follow up. Before the meeting even starts, agree on who will send a thank-you letter and respond to questions or information requests.

### A NEGOTIATION CHECKLIST

- ✓ Define your negotiation objectives. Identify your highest priority issues and alternatives if negotiations are unsuccessful.
- ✓ Follow protocol. When setting up a negotiation, or any policy meeting, it is important to follow the accepted protocol. Work with the appropriate person and follow proper channels to arrange the meeting.
- ✓ Learn about your audience. This will help you present your case based on their interests and positions.
- ✓ Decide who should be on your team. Assess the number of people that will most help your negotiation strategy, how many people the other party is likely to bring, and the level of privacy needed.
- ✓ Rehearse negotiation options and presentations in advance. Recognize that negotiations seldom follow a script, but practicing ahead of time can help.
- ✓ Bring documentation to support your negotiation position. Also, evaluate any written proposals or materials you have received from the other party ahead of time.
- ✓ Think about the location. Negotiating at your location enables you to decide logistical arrangements. The other party's location is better for helping them feel at ease. A neutral site can sometimes be more favorable to reaching agreement.

**PROTOCOL** is a code, system, or tradition – written or understood – that prescribes correct etiquette. In advocacy, it refers to the proper way to approach policy makers.

### 10.3 Use the media

If influencing public opinion is your advocacy strategy, it becomes important to use the media to deliver your message. Policy makers and groups involved in political processes also pay close attention to the press, so using the media sometimes can help you to reach multiple audiences. The principal benefits of using the media are:

- ◆ The ability to deliver your message to a large number of people, potentially attracting public interest and supporters to your cause.
- ◆ It may increase your profile and credibility with policymakers, and therefore improve your access to them.

Like any approach, use of the media also carries certain risks. For example:

- ◆ The possibility that the coverage of your organization or cause will be unfavorable or inaccurate.
- ◆ The possibility that media coverage will motivate any opponents to your cause.

The best way to help ensure that media coverage will advance your advocacy goals is to plan ahead. Once you decide to use the media, there is a wide range of techniques to choose from. Which method you choose depends on the nature of your message, the audience you hope to reach, media that are accessible to you, and your own level of skill and experience in dealing with the media.

#### **Planning your approach**

In every country, the media is different. Some media are controlled by government, some outlets have wide distribution, others very minimal. In some countries, it is appropriate to work with newspapers, in others, you may want to work with TV or radio stations. Before deciding to use the media, it is important to consider how important the media is, and which media outlets are influential with policy makers.

Once you have decided to use the media, you should first ask: what is the main message and who needs to receive it? Next, you should ask: why should the media be interested in what you have to say? For example, are you using the media to publicize a position or opinion, or is there also an aspect of your story that is news? Do you have dramatic new information that would be of substantial public interest? Or, are you making a principled argument in order to contribute to public debate? The answers to these questions will help determine which types of media you should target and which news organizations to contact.

Once you know what kind of media you want to target, you can start to focus on strategic considerations such as how to reach your target audience, whether the timing is right to contact the media, how to find media contacts, and how to avoid bad press coverage. Key questions to help you develop your media strategy are provided in **Appendix 4**.

A CARE media relations handbook was produced by the CARE USA public relations staff in November 1996 and can be an extremely helpful resource as you go along (see references in the back of this manual).

### ***Making media connections***

***Selecting a Media Organization.*** When choosing a media source, the first thing is to know something about the organization you are contacting: is it fair, reliable, well-known? In particular, does the news organization usually cover stories similar to yours? Another key question is whether your target audience is likely to see, read or hear the coverage provided by that news organization. Ideally, the answer should be yes. However, if your main goal is to bring legitimacy to your cause in the eyes of policy makers, you may benefit simply by having your story publicized by a reputable news organization. If your story appears in print, for example, you can always send policy makers a copy of the article.

Sometimes, no matter how careful you are, you may receive negative news coverage. See **Appendix 5** for tips on how to deal with negative press coverage.

***Contacting Reporters.*** A common way to obtain media coverage is to interest a reporter in your story. In some cases, you may already know a reporter (i.e., someone who has covered CARE or its partners in the past). It is always best to begin with someone you know, if possible. Otherwise, if you have the time, follow the news organization's reporting over a period of time to see which journalists cover issues such as yours (and whether the news coverage is favorable). When you do make contact, let them know you appreciate their work.

Like other relationships, it can take time to get to know journalists, editors, and others in the media. Consider meeting reporters in informal settings where you have time and space for a conversation. Remember that what reporters value most is good information.

***Pitching a Story.*** Sometimes it is necessary to “pitch” your ideas to the media. This means convincing someone, for example, a reporter, or an editor, or a TV producer, that your story is worth covering, or that your opinion is worth publishing. Be prepared to make a strong case for why your story is important – and do it quickly! Here are a few useful rules:

- ◆ Explain why your subject offers something new and timely.
- ◆ Check the organization's guidelines in advance. (If you are submitting something in writing, make sure it is within the page or word limit.)
- ◆ Keep your scope narrow (don't try to cover multiple topics).
- ◆ Present a positive perspective on your issue, rather than a negative perspective about an opponent.
- ◆ If the story is national, include a local connection (local news organizations will almost always prefer local news).
- ◆ If reporting is involved, be flexible about how and when the media coverage will occur.

### **Forms of communication**

The following are some of the traditional forms of communication with media, but you should of course feel free to adapt them to your local environment.

**News Advisories.** News advisories are communications designed to alert the media to an upcoming event. Keep in mind that news events are work for journalists. Be sure that your event offers something of potential value to reporters before you invite them.

The main purpose of a news advisory is to tell the journalist: **who, what, where, when, and why.** Advisories are issued before an event, usually several days ahead of time, to accommodate reporters' schedules. Ideally, a follow up call should be made to priority outlets the day beforehand, reminding them of the event. See **Appendix 6** for a sample news advisory. A news advisory should have these elements:

- ◆ A short description of the event
- ◆ The location (and directions, if appropriate)
- ◆ A contact person (including phone number, etc.)
- ◆ The date
- ◆ If the event is visual (and it should be), describe what it will look like or include a photo.

**News Releases.** A news release or press release is a written statement that alerts the press to a public announcement you are making, or an event. Whereas a news advisory goes out ahead of time, a news release is usually issued at the time of an event, or immediately afterward.

A news release should contain all the information a reporter might need to write an article, as well as contact information in case he or she has follow up questions. Frequently, a press release includes quotations that could be used as part of a story. Keep in mind that the press is likely to use your release immediately upon receiving it.

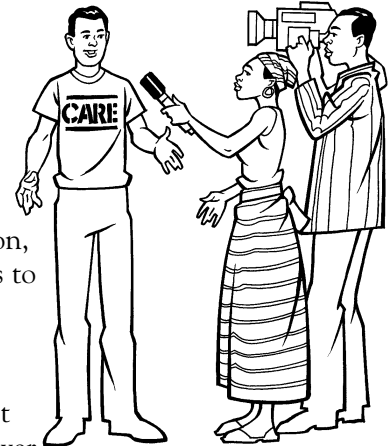
The easiest way to write a news release is to work from a model. A sample news release is contained in **Appendix 7**. Usually, a press release is structured as follows:

- ◆ Top of the page:            Contact information
- ◆ First paragraph:        Most important information about the event, or most newsworthy aspect of your announcement.
- ◆ Second paragraph:     Descriptive information about the event (when and where)
- ◆ Remaining paragraphs: Background information that suggests why the event or statement is important; developments that have led up to it.

Some rules of thumb for press releases include:

- ◆ Stick to the facts. Avoid overstating the case. (Remember, your news release might be reprinted word for word.)
- ◆ Try to answer the basics: Who, what, when, where, why, and how?
- ◆ Make the case why that your story is newsworthy. (Remember: the first target audience for your release is the reporter, editor, or producer, not the public.)
- ◆ Keep it short (1 page is perfect, unless you offer photos or graphics).
- ◆ Use graphics or photos whenever possible.

**Interviews.** Once you have attracted the media's attention, be prepared to receive it. As soon as you issue a news release or contact a media organization, someone should be ready to conduct an interview. A good way to prepare is to be ready for both questions you would like to be asked, as well as those you would like *not* to be asked.



An interview is not a test. If you are contacted by the media and you are not prepared to hold an interview, simply explain that no one is available to answer questions at that time, find out what the reporter is looking for, and arrange a time to call back. Many media outlets have deadlines every day. Ask the reporter when you need to get back to them, then honor their request.

A good way to get ready for a press interview is for you and your colleagues to prepare **talking points**. These are very short statements that summarize the main points that you hope to make during the interview. These points should contain the main message you hope to get across. In many cases, it can be helpful to share these points with the reporter. If it is a controversial topic, you should consult with a press officer if at all possible.

In addition, it is common to prepare written “questions and answers” that anticipate possible questions and then map out the best responses. While the person being interviewed should not try to memorize all of this information, it can be extremely helpful to review in advance, so that he or she has given some forethought to how to respond. This method also helps the interviewee benefit from the entire team and helps to develop internal consensus on complex issues before a public statement is made.

**News Conferences.** News conferences are events in which many members of the media are invited to come hear an important announcement. This is an appropriate format when you want to reach a range of different media, and when you have something truly newsworthy to report. However, reporters tend to see these events as contrived or “packaged” and will often prefer formats in which they can ask more questions individually. A news conference should not be called simply for the purpose of making your organization or message “seem important.” If you are in doubt, ask a reporter or two for advice before planning a news conference.

**Commentary.** Written commentary is a tool frequently used in advocacy. The goal of commentary is to call attention to an issue, make an argument, or to promote a cause. One type of commentary CARE sometimes uses is a **position statement** (or, in longer form, a **position paper**). Position statements are similar to news releases, but they may be focused on a specific audience, rather than the general public. They are used to take a clear stand on an issue of public importance. (The advocacy letter contained in **Appendix 1** is similar to a position statement.) Often, organizations will issue a position statement jointly, to increase its impact. When this is the strategy, it is helpful to encourage people with high status in the community to add their name to the statement. Position statements can be released through the press, or they can be communicated directly to policy makers.

Tips for writing commentary are attached in **Appendix 8**. A position statement produced by CARE about Sudan is attached in **Appendix 9**.

## 10.4 *Manage risks*

Many CARE staff work in places where the political system is relatively closed, where there is conflict or, where advocacy is discouraged. In these settings, the important thing to keep in mind is that advocacy does not need to be confrontational, and that there are many ways of influencing policy makers, whether by providing information or simply bringing people together to talk. The kind of advocacy that is culturally acceptable and effective will vary from country to country. Your own informed judgments should guide you first and foremost in deciding what kind of advocacy will work in the political context where you live.

With all of that said, there are several ways you can minimize the risks that can be associated with advocacy. Most important are:

- ◆ Making informed judgments
- ◆ Carefully planning your initiative
- ◆ Being prepared for trouble

Note that most of these are steps you should take before you begin to advocate. Also, there are several tools and reference materials, such as Mary Anderson's work on **Do No Harm** and CARE's internally developed Benefit-Harms manual that can be extremely helpful in thinking through risk management strategies.



### ***Making informed judgments***

When you are selecting an advocacy issue, you should be able to make informed judgments about what kind of advocacy risks are acceptable. Your advocacy strategy should be based on an analysis of your specific issue, but there are some considerations that you should take into account even before you select an issue or develop a strategy. For example:

- ◆ Don't choose issues that raise significant risks of political violence
- ◆ Don't take sides in high-profile domestic political debates
- ◆ Don't engage in advocacy just for the sake of supporting a particular political party (don't be "partisan")
- ◆ Don't get involved when you have no legitimate role in the debate
- ◆ Don't choose allies who are dishonest or unprincipled
- ◆ Don't use unfair tactics to undermine your opponents

### ***Carefully planning your initiative***

Good planning and analysis are the foundations of risk management in advocacy. The more you understand your issue, the political context, and your target audience, the less room you have for error.

During the ***policy analysis*** stage, you will be learning about the actors and policy making processes. This is also an opportunity to learn about any risks involved in advocacy. During your policy analysis, you can explore such questions as:

- ◆ Are the officials you are targeting corrupt?
- ◆ Are others involved in this policy debate dangerous or dishonest?
- ◆ Will you have any allies to help you if you run into trouble?
- ◆ Has political violence surrounded public debate on your issue?
- ◆ Have others suffered for raising similar concerns?

The more people you consult, the more likely you are to discover such information before you start. Both external and internal sources can be valuable. One important way to manage risk is to achieve internal consensus among staff before taking any advocacy action that could pose major risks. As noted throughout this manual, advocacy is rarely conducted by an individual on behalf of an entire organization. Within CARE, it must be part of a country office team effort.

Later, when you are working on your ***advocacy strategy***, you will be choosing among different advocacy approaches. Pursuing private dialogue and engagement or an expert informant role generally will be lower risk, for example, than conducting a media campaign or trying to confront high-level officials on a controversial issue. If you are brokering competing interests, be sure you are qualified and comfortable working as a mediator. As you consider an approach and role, consider not only your chances of succeeding, but also the risks of any unintended consequences.

You can also think about risk management when you are **seeking allies** and partners in advocacy. Choose only partners whose judgment you trust, and who are publicly respected. If you are working in a coalition, make sure that your partners will be accepted as representatives of the community. When capacity-building as an advocacy strategy, keep in mind that you are never under any obligation to support someone else's advocacy goals if they are opposed to CARE policies, core values, or violate human rights. The *Do No Harm* framework is also helpful here: advocacy should reinforce connectors and avoid reinforcing dividers in communities. You should begin by analyzing the situation before you intervene.

Just as knowing your audience is important for delivering messages effectively, it is *also* a good way to manage risk. The more you know about the background, attitudes, and interests of your target audience, the less likely you are to offend, put someone at risk, or pursue an advocacy strategy that will backfire.

“Advocacy is political. It attempts to change the status quo. However, there are different kinds of political. Taking positions for the purpose of changing the humanitarian status quo is a required and appropriate role for CARE. Taking sides in order to influence the political balance of power, per se, is not.”

- SUBIR, project staff member

Finally, a good way to manage risks is to maintain **strong communication** within your own advocacy team (usually CARE staff and partners). Sometimes advocacy messages designed for one audience can be received very differently by others. Especially if you are working in a conflict environment, it is critical to closely manage your message delivery and be consistent and transparent in your dealings with everyone involved to avoid appearances of bias.

### **RISK MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY FROM SUDAN**

Sudan has been devastated by civil war for 33 of the last 44 years. Two million people have died and four million are displaced. The existing peace forum has failed to produce a peace settlement. The conflict is complex and stale-mated. As the war drags on, people are continuously displaced from their homes, food flows are disrupted, and famines continue to occur.

CARE and other international NGOs have provided a combination of emergency relief and long-term development assistance in Sudan for years. In 1998, yet another "hunger gap" turned into a famine. CARE senior managers decided that after years of working in central and southern Sudan, they had earned the right to speak out and decided to pursue an advocacy initiative. They wanted international policy makers to understand that they were ignoring a major humanitarian crisis and that their lack of consensus on how to address the long-term political issues was exacerbating the problem.

One goal of the initiative was to raise the visibility of the humanitarian crisis among senior policy makers at the UN and within the US government as a possible means of making concrete steps toward peace. The initiative has also involved extensive advocacy with the government of Sudan and the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

CARE staff involved with the initiative have learned a great deal about advocacy. While the war continues, a number of objectives have been met, including raising the profile of the Sudanese war within the US government. As CARE staff enter the second phase of this initiative, they now know more about the benefits and risks of policy work – including how to advocate in an armed conflict setting. Here are some lessons they have offered:

1. Staff security comes first. Limit the exposure of national staff. Their participation and involvement is key, but must be carefully planned.
2. Deliver messages in a transparent, even-handed fashion to authorities on both sides of the conflict. The dialogue should not have hidden agendas.
3. Give special attention and review to communications materials, e.g. posters. CARE must avoid any impression it is inciting people to violence.
4. Assign only one spokesperson to the mass media (in-country). That person should be the country director or assistant country director – a person personally involved in advocacy and with authority in the office.
5. Never give the impression that you will use aid as a weapon.
6. Use neutral language and avoid words that are perceived to be allied with only one side.
7. Focus less on actions of parties and more on the consequences of what is happening as a result.

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

- ◆ How could you build some of these considerations into an advocacy strategy?
- ◆ Which ones seem most important?
- ◆ Which ones might be important in non-conflict situations as well?

### ***Being prepared for trouble***

Even well-planned advocacy rarely goes as intended, since it depends on so many factors beyond your control. There are several strategies you can use to be prepared for any problems you may encounter.

- ◆ **Stay in touch with political trends.** Often, things will change after you conduct your policy analysis. New developments can change the level of risk associated with advocacy. Use up-to-date information as much as possible.
- ◆ **Anticipate things that can go wrong.** Identify any groups that might be exposed to unusually high risks as a result of your advocacy. Devise methods to mitigate those risks and include them in your strategy.
- ◆ **Be prepared for press** (even if you aren't using the media as an advocacy strategy). If your advocacy has a public dimension, and might attract press attention, be prepared for any coverage you might receive. Ensure one member of the team is prepared to talk to journalists and answer questions.
- ◆ **Treat your opponents with respect.** If you are advocating on behalf of a controversial issue, study or anticipate the arguments of your opponents and be prepared to respond to them. Even if you strongly disagree, always engage in principled debate, never name-calling.
- ◆ **Decide in advance what risks are unacceptable.** Advocacy is rarely risk-free. It is easier to handle a crisis if you decide beforehand what type of problems you can handle, versus those that you can't. This is especially important when working with partners, so that you can make quick decisions if needed.
- ◆ **Always be prepared to stop.** If your advocacy leads to consequences that are dangerous or pose unacceptable risks to CARE (its staff, reputation, or program participants), your advocacy partners, or others, stop. Reconsider your strategy and decide whether to choose a different approach or to put your work on hold.

<p align="center"><b>CHAPTER 10 WORKSHEET EMPLOYING ADVOCACY TACTICS</b></p>		
<p><b>Steps you can take</b></p>	<p><b>Questions to explore</b></p>	<p><b>Your notes...</b></p>
<p align="center"><b>COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY</b></p>		
<p>Write a letter.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Have you been clear about your purpose in writing and what you would like the reader to do next?</li> </ul>	
<p>Make a presentation to a group.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Have you tailored your remarks to the audience?</li> <li>◆ Have you given your audience the tools to act on your ideas?</li> <li>◆ Have you planned ways to interact with your audience?</li> </ul>	
<p align="center"><b>NEGOTIATING</b></p>		
<p>Prepare thoroughly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Have you set an agenda and a meeting strategy?</li> <li>◆ Have you thought through where you stand with respect to the other side?</li> <li>◆ Have you analyzed the power dynamics involved?</li> </ul>	
<p>Make back up plans.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Have you identified something you would agree to, short of your goal?</li> <li>◆ Have you thought about the potential benefits of delaying the negotiation?</li> </ul>	
<p>If applicable, prepare a team strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Have you and your partners agreed in advance on:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Your message?</li> <li>◆ Who will speak?</li> <li>◆ Who will follow up?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p align="center"><b>USING THE MEDIA</b></p>		
<p>Decide if a media approach is best.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ What are the main advantages (reaching many people, gaining credibility) versus the disadvantages (bad publicity, motivating opponents)?</li> <li>◆ Is the timing right?</li> <li>◆ Do you have the right mix of staff skills?</li> </ul>	
<p>Plan an approach.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Who is your target audience?</li> <li>◆ What media do they pay attention to?</li> <li>◆ Have you consulted the CARE media handbook?</li> </ul>	
<p>Make media connections.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Do you have good relations with any media organization? Which ones?</li> <li>◆ Which media outlets are fair and reliable?</li> <li>◆ Do you know any reporters?</li> </ul>	
<p>Prepare for media interactions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Are you prepared to make a strong case for why your story is important and new?</li> <li>◆ Have you prepared talking points if you are planning an interview?</li> <li>◆ Have you gathered good photos that will make your news release or advisory more interesting?</li> <li>◆ If you are working with others, have you considered writing piece of commentary?</li> </ul>	
<p align="center"><i>(continued on next page)</i></p>		

**CHAPTER 10 WORKSHEET  
EMPLOYING ADVOCACY TACTICS**

Steps you can take	Questions to explore	Your notes...
<b>MANAGING RISK</b>		
Learn about <i>Do No Harm</i> Approaches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Have you read <i>Do No Harm</i>, or other literature by Mary Anderson?</li> <li>◆ Have you read the <i>CARE Benefit-Harms Handbook</i>?</li> </ul>	
Make informed judgments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Have you avoided risks of political violence?</li> <li>◆ Will you appear partisan or biased?</li> <li>◆ Have you chosen tactics that are respectful of your opponents?</li> </ul>	
Carefully plan your initiative.	<p>During the <b>policy analysis</b> stage, have you consulted many people and considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Whether others involved are dangerous?</li> <li>◆ Whether there has been retaliation against others raising your concerns?</li> <li>◆ Whether you have allies who can help manage risks?</li> </ul> <p>During the <b>strategy development</b> stage, did you think about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Public versus private approaches?</li> <li>◆ Low versus high risk advocacy roles?</li> <li>◆ Choosing allies you trust?</li> </ul> <p>When planning your advocacy <b>communications</b> did you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Learn as much as possible about your target audience?</li> <li>◆ Tailor your message for different audiences?</li> <li>◆ Ensure that you are consistent and transparent, especially when dealing with parties in conflict?</li> </ul>	
Be prepared for trouble.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Are you in touch with relevant political events?</li> <li>◆ Have you anticipated things that can go wrong?</li> <li>◆ Have you decided in advance on unacceptable risks?</li> <li>◆ Do you have a backup plan?</li> <li>◆ Are you prepared to stop if unacceptable dangers arise?</li> </ul>	
Pay attention to lessons learned within CARE.	<p>Have you...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Considered special risks to national staff?</li> <li>◆ Been as even-handed as possible?</li> <li>◆ Avoided the impression of inciting violence?</li> <li>◆ Designated a media spokesperson?</li> <li>◆ Avoided any impression that aid will be used as a tactic to manipulate conflict?</li> <li>◆ Used neutral language?</li> <li>◆ Focused on the consequences of problems when negotiating, rather than blame?</li> </ul>	