

1.0 ADVOCACY DEFINITIONS

The word ‘advocacy’ literally means ‘to plead the cause of another’ (Chambers English Dictionary). It is derived from the legal sector, and in some countries, lawyers are called advocates. Humanitarian NGOs and social justice organisations have adopted the term to refer to work that involves influencing those with power to address the causes of poverty. So, the meaning of ‘cause’ might be unfair trade or gender discrimination and the meaning of ‘another’ would be the poor and excluded, particularly children.

“Seeking with, and on behalf of, the poor to address the underlying causes of poverty by influencing the decisions of governments, companies, groups and individuals whose policies or actions affect the poor”

Tearfund

“Public advocacy is a planned and organised set of actions to effectively influence public policies and to get them implemented in a way that would empower the marginalised. In a liberal democratic culture, it uses the instruments of democracy and adopts non-violent and constitutional means.”

National Centre for Advocacy Studies, India

“The promotion of a specific message and/or course of action in order to influence or contribute to the development and implementation of public policies which will alleviate the causes and consequences of poverty”

Oxfam

“A set of strategies that aims to defend and promote human rights regardless of race or religion, and with a particular emphasis on the most vulnerable groups” WV Latin America

“Our advocacy seeks to bring about sustainable changes for social justice that benefit the poor and oppressed through *the construction of citizenship* and through *influence on the generation and implementation of public and private policies*.”

WV Latin America Advocacy Vision

“Advocacy is a project, programme or programmatic approach which seeks to address the structural and systemic causes of poverty by changing policies, systems, practices and attitudes that perpetuate inequality and deny justice and human rights. Advocacy is a ministry of influence using persuasion, dialogue and reason to obtain change. To be successful in advocacy we must work at two complementary levels: policy influence and citizen empowerment.” World Vision Partnership

“Advocacy is a tool that can draw on programme experience to show the impact existing policies have on the poor and to suggest alternatives” International Planned Parenthood Foundation

“Advocacy is the instrument of civil society in shaping public policy.” Individual

“Advocacy is a natural outcome of a process of mobilisation and conscientisation of the poor.” UK Department for International Development

“To plead the cause of another” Chambers English Dictionary (odd one out)

MSiS definition:

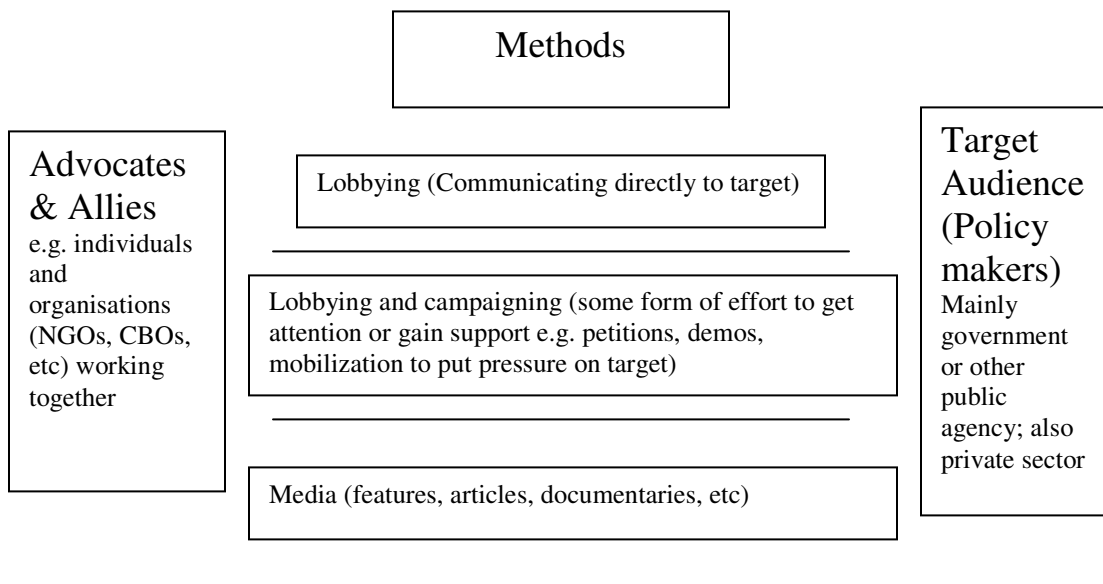
Advocacy is a process aimed at promoting a particular cause by achieving specific policy changes. It involves a set of organised and planned actions aimed at influencing decision making processes, building support, or creating a favourable climate for introducing, changing, enforcing a law, policy, programme or a budget.

For MS advocacy is a strategy used to achieve the overall aim of poverty eradication and a more fair distribution of resources by means of ensuring inclusion of marginalised people in decision making processes.

Can we now try and agree on a joint definition of advocacy from these ideas:

Advocacy should not be an end in itself, but rather a means to a just end.

Components:



Therefore:

An advocacy strategy should ideally comprise:

- A clear definition of the problem you wish to address (remember our problem tree?);
- The objectives (long-term objectives to be achieved in order to influence policy and solve the problem);
- Tactics including how alliances/networks will be built; research conducted; resources mobilised and used; messages will be developed and communicated; etc;

- How progress will be assessed.

Good practice in advocacy:

1. Representation and local participation:
It is always a good idea to involve as many stakeholders as possible, especially the beneficiaries, in an advocacy process. This leads to synergistic outcomes because more resources and support becomes available.
2. Capacity:
Building the capacity of individuals and communities to represent themselves and defend their rights in future should be along-term objective of a good advocacy strategy.
3. Root causes of the problem:
Advocacy should focus on the root causes of a problem. Dealing with symptoms is a waste of time except in situations where it is necessary to address immediate problems first. For example, poverty may be caused by corruption, poor infrastructure, lack of access to markets, lack of educational opportunities and ill health. If advocacy focused only on relief efforts and ignored the policy failures that lead to the root causes, poverty cannot be defeated;
4. Legitimacy:
Legitimacy of advocacy may rest on the support of the majority but not all the time. The interests and rights of minorities are many times at issue and these have to be protected even if public support is hard to get. The legitimacy of advocacy is derived from equity (fairness or equal treatment of all). The exception is where positive discrimination/preference is perceived as absolutely necessary to achieve equity e.g. affirmative action to get more women into positions of power, lowering entry marks to high school or university for pupils from very marginalised communities.
5. Relationships with policy makers:
Ideally, advocacy would be more effective when done in an atmosphere of mutual respect between beneficiaries and advocates on the one hand, and the policy makers on the other. However, this is not always possible.

To be effective, advocacy needs to:

- Empower those who have less conventional economic, social, or political power
- Resist unequal power relations (like patriarchy) at every level
- Bridge micro-level activism and macro-level policy initiatives

Remember, as advocates, we are mainly concerned with:

Who decides: legislators, heads of state, appointed officials, policy-makers, judges, ministers, boards of advisors, managing directors, administrators, etc.

What is decided: laws, policies, priorities, regulations, services, programs, institutions, budgets, statements, party platforms, appointments, etc.

How decisions are made: accessibility of citizens to information and the decision making process, extent of consultation with the direct say of citizens; accountability and responsiveness of decision makers to citizens and other stakeholders, etc.

How decisions are enforced, implemented, and evaluated: ensuring accountability so that decisions are put into action, laws enforced equitably, etc.