

B2

The *why* of advocacy

Power and politics

Section B2 provides an understanding of the context in which advocacy takes place including how, where and by whom decisions are made. It explains the concepts of power and politics, government and governance. It explores how power can be used and abused in all its different dimensions. It also considers why it is important to engage with power and politics.



Facilitator's notes

This section explores a series of questions and answers. A training workshop facilitator must be familiar with this material.

- What is power and why does it matter? 30
- How is power abused? 31
- What is government and governance? 32
- What is politics and why does it matter? 33



Tools

This section introduces tools that can help us apply our learning in a practical way. In a training workshop, they can be used as handouts.

- TOOL 8: Types of power 34
- TOOL 9: Power analysis table 35
- TOOL 10: Political space chart 36



Training exercises

This section outlines interactive training exercises that can be used with groups, in order to deepen understanding of the issues that have been raised and to practise application of the tools that have been introduced. They are ideal for use in a training workshop.

- EXERCISE 9: Understanding our own power and influence 37
- EXERCISE 10: Understanding power 37
- EXERCISE 11: 'Power line' 39
- EXERCISE 12: Understanding politics 40
- EXERCISE 13: Power analysis 41
- EXERCISE 14: Assessing political space 41

SECTION B2 Facilitator's notes



What is power and why does it matter?

Power is the ability to influence the behaviour of people and the circumstances they live in. It determines who makes decisions, what decisions are made, when they are made, and how. People inherit, take, use and share power in different ways.

Everyone understands power in light of their own culture, personal perspective, experiences and worldview. Some people see power as good, especially where it is used to bring about positive change. Other people view it as bad, particularly where it is used to control or manipulate people, or where force is used.

There are different types of power:²

- **'POWER TO'** do something: The ability to make a decision and take action. It involves bringing about changes in people's lives.
- **'POWER WITHIN'** a person: Self-confidence and self-awareness, which are often linked to faith and culture. Individuals who have 'power within' believe they are able to make positive changes in their own lives. We sometimes say such people are 'empowered'.
- **'POWER WITH'** others: Collective power, which comes about through acting and speaking out jointly. It involves collaboration, organisation and solidarity.
- **'POWER OVER'** others: The power of the strong over the weak. It is a form of control by one person, or a group of people, over others. It includes the power to exclude others.

Power takes different forms:

- **VISIBLE POWER** involves decision-making that can easily be seen and understood.
- **HIDDEN POWER** involves decision-making behind the scenes and may not be immediately obvious.
- **INVISIBLE POWER** involves decision-making based on influences that cannot easily be seen, such as worldview, cultural norms, beliefs, traditions and ideology.

Everyone has different types of power. For example, government officials may have formal authority to get things done, businesses may have economic power, and civil society groups may have power through having information, legitimacy and access to local communities. Advocacy is about understanding the power we have, making the most of it, and using it to influence and persuade decision-makers to do what we want them to do, even when they have greater formal power than we do. It is not about trying to take power from others but about ensuring that the power we have is used well.

Advocacy interacts with power because it involves:

- Holding decision-makers to account for their use of power
- Trying to change the way power is used
- Challenging the abuse of power
- Gaining access to power for those who are excluded
- Helping people to see and use the power they have in order to influence decision-makers

² The rest of the notes on 'What is power and why does it matter?' have been adapted from Oxfam's 'Quick Guide to Power Analysis'.

- Overcoming a sense of powerlessness in situations where people cannot use their power, or where it is not recognised or acknowledged.

There are many different types of power. **TOOL 8: Types of power** provides an easy reference guide.

For advocacy to be effective, it is necessary to understand who holds the power in our country and context, both *formally* (who officially has the power) and *informally* (who actually has the power). This is because time may be wasted if our advocacy focuses on someone with official power when all the decisions are actually being made behind the scenes by someone else.

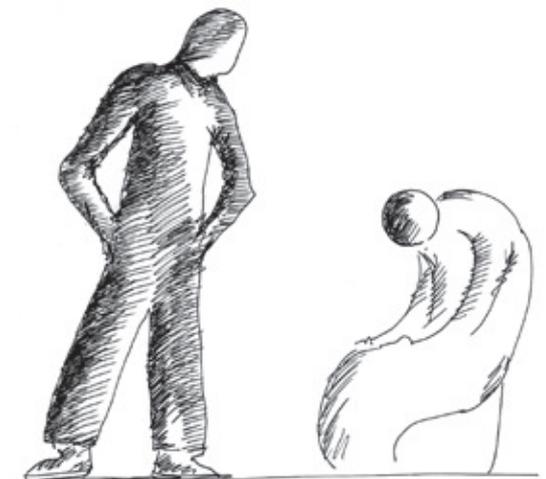
For more information about how to identify who holds power in a country or context, please see Exercises 29–32 in Section E2 (Stakeholder mapping and analysis, Allies and opponents analysis, Routes of influence, and Power mapping and target identification).



How is power abused?

Decision-makers may use their power to abuse others. Many of the problems we try to address in advocacy work arise through abuse of power, such as bribery in local government, the use of force to remove people from their land or information being kept hidden.

If we want to undertake advocacy with integrity, it is vital that we do not abuse power ourselves. Bribery and force should never be considered options, and we should never use advocacy to seek positions of power or influence for their own sake. Instead, we need to seek to transform power relations, so that they are more just and fair, and meet people's needs.



To undertake advocacy with integrity, we need to avoid:

- **EMPTY PROMISES** If we promise to do something, we need to ensure that we do it and that we keep our word. If not, people will lose their trust in us, and we are less likely to be listened to in the future.
- **ABUSE OF PRIVILEGE** Looking for ways around democratic and official processes to get what we want may give us an immediate result, but risks reinforcing any imbalance of power. We should also avoid seeking special privileges for the church (eg being able to accumulate wealth without paying taxes), as that could lead to us and the church being accused of abusing power.
- **USE OF FORCE, VIOLENCE OR COERCION** We should never use force, violence or coercion to get what we want, as we are simply copying the abuses of the oppressors and going against Jesus' teaching.
- **FALSE CLAIMS OF LEGITIMACY AND REPRESENTATION** If we have access to decision-makers based on a claim that we represent a certain group of people, we should ensure that we are representing them fairly and involving them in our decision-making.
- **POOR RESEARCH AND MISINTERPRETATION OF DATA** We need to make sure we represent our own facts accurately (as well as those of any opposing views) so that we maintain integrity and have good solutions. Good research is the basis for all advocacy.

- **BRIBERY** It is never an option to offer or accept a bribe. It goes against all principles of good development, including accountability, openness and transparency. Bribery may lead to bad decisions being made because it excludes people who do not feel morally able to bribe from the decision-making process.



What is government and governance?

The government is the group of people who have the responsibility and authority for leading and governing people who live in a region, country, state, county or district. It also describes the body which creates, drafts, controls, implements and administers laws and policies within the country or state. In some countries, these powers are devolved to the federal, regional or local level.

It is important to understand how government works because advocacy aims to change laws, policies and practices, which are determined and outworked by the individuals and institutions in government.

Most democratic governments have three parts:

THE LEGISLATURE This part of government decides which laws and policies need to be adopted, changed or implemented in the country or state. (It is likely to be a national or state parliament or a local council.)



THE EXECUTIVE This part of government runs the day-to-day affairs of the country or state and implements the laws and policies of the country or state.

THE JUDICIARY This part of government interprets and enforces the laws and policies of the country or state, usually through a justice system that involves the courts.



Governance is the exercise of authority to manage a country or state's affairs. It describes the procedures and mechanisms through which people are able to exercise their rights, meet their obligations, articulate their interests and mediate their differences. It is influenced by politics and power. It is the process by which decisions are made and implemented.

When governance works well, it is often referred to as 'good governance', because it is transparent, accountable, participative and equitable.



What is politics and why does it matter?

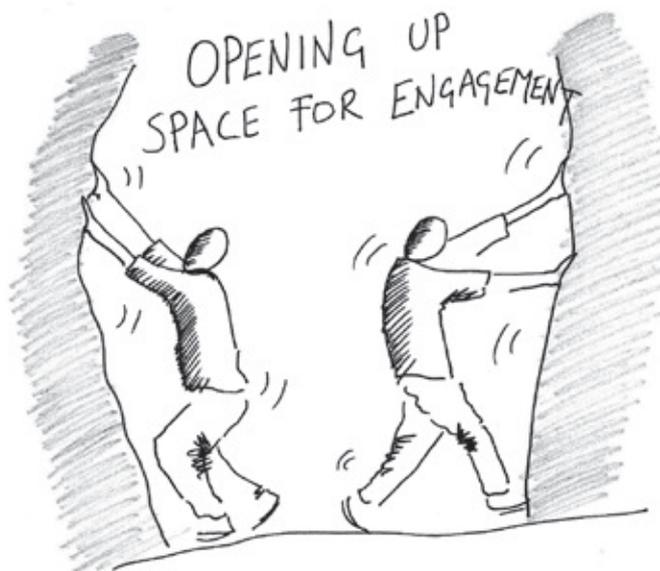
Politics is the exercise of power, and the interaction of people with power. When defined narrowly, it refers to the governing of a country or state and is limited to professional politicians. However, when defined broadly, it can refer to the interaction of all forms of power between people.

This means that *everyone* is political! It does not necessarily mean that we promote a particular political party or candidate, but it means that we need to be aware of the political space in which we are working, and try to influence change. *Everyone* has the potential to influence what happens in their lives, their communities and their countries or states. This includes Christians, who need to engage with politics to bring about change in society and to be faithful to God's calling.

In an ideal world, politics should be open and accountable so that everyone can participate in government decision-making processes. However, participation in politics is often dependent on the arena in which citizens can engage with their government, known as political space:

- A **CLOSED POLITICAL SPACE** is where decisions are made by exclusive groups of people that are not open to newcomers.
- An **INVITED POLITICAL SPACE** is where ordinary citizens are asked to participate in making decisions, but within set boundaries.
- A **CREATED POLITICAL SPACE** is where ordinary citizens are able to claim a space where they can set their own agenda, no matter who is in power.

Different contexts around the world have different power systems and therefore different political space. The amount of political space available impacts how advocacy engagement happens and it is important to understand how to engage in the political space we have available in our context. Where there is no political space, care and caution are needed in how we engage.



For more information, please see **TOOL 9: Power analysis table**, Section E2 on stakeholders and also Section G5 on advocacy in difficult political contexts.



TOOL 8

Types of power

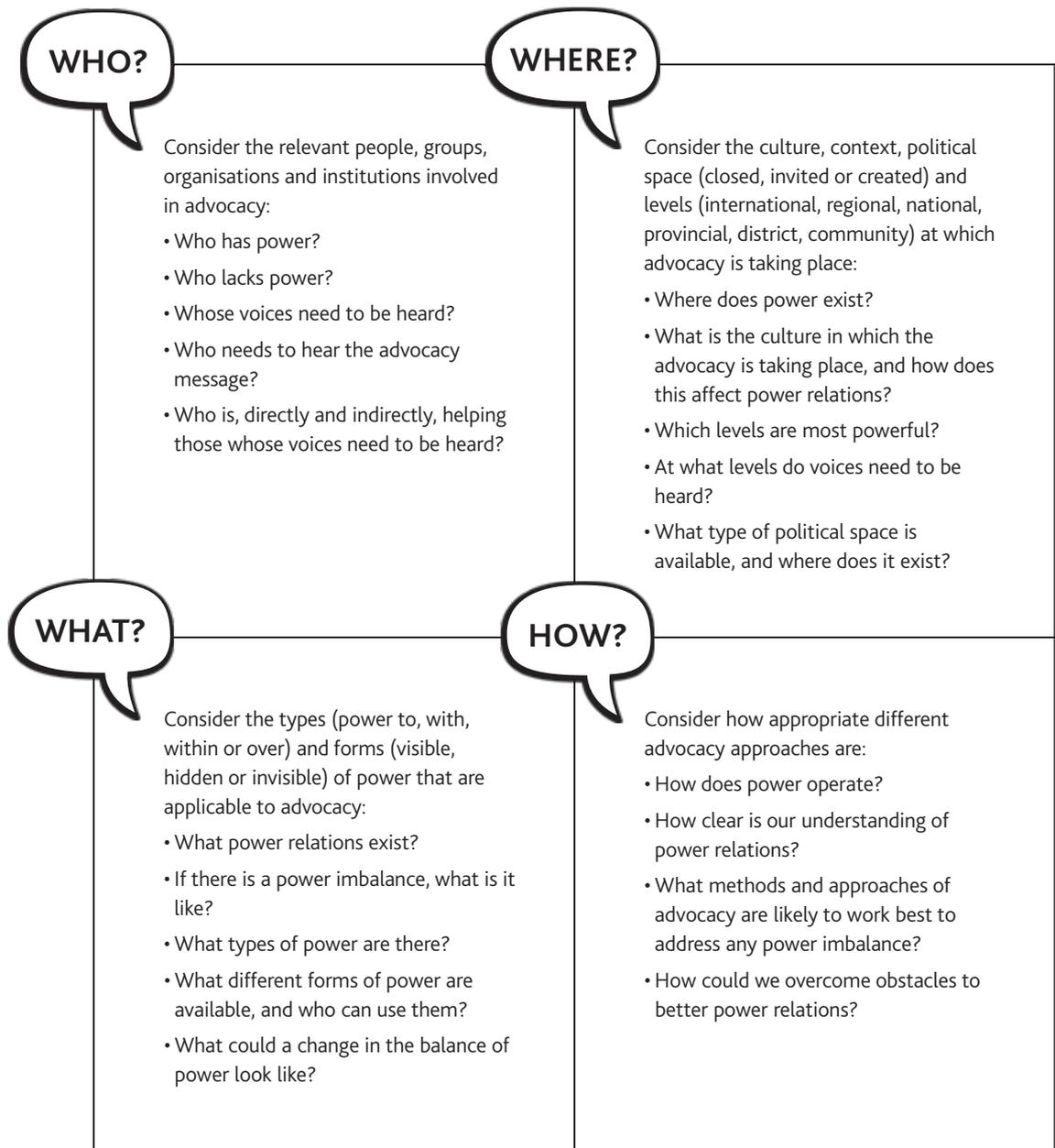
Source of power	Relies on...	Examples
Authority	Authority being connected to having an official position to make decisions	A judge sentences a thief to pay a fine A local politician decides whether a school will be built A pastor appoints a person to oversee a small group
Coercion	Fear of force if you do not respond	The army threatens to burn down a village Gangs intimidate and hurt people during elections
Collective	Being organised to play to strengths	Community is mobilised to advocate for change Links with other organisations
Culture	Belief system and behaviour	Tradition against challenging authority Belief in fate and that one deserves one's lot in life Strong commitment to family and community
Economic	Money or assets	People buy or stop buying from a particular shop or company Donor threatens to reduce a grant Someone offers a bribe to get a favour
Ethnic	Race, people group or class	People only vote for leaders from their own tribe People from higher classes are more respected in community meetings An employer creates a policy to prevent discrimination against job applicants from minority people groups
Expertise	Understanding, information and experience	A trained professional, eg doctor, gives a diagnosis A university professor produces a new research report which changes government policy
God	Relationship with God	Understanding of who you are before God Guidance from God Understanding of God's heart and desire for justice
Institutional	Respect or fear for the institution	Organisation is respected, eg church Organisation is feared, eg government
Moral	Recognition by a community or group that a person is a valid voice to represent them	An elected representative of trade union negotiates a pay deal A recognised elder of an indigenous community speaks to the government about land rights Person is a popular public figure
Privilege	Connections and who you know	A local chief persuades the government to give cheap land to their family Someone becomes a bishop because they know the archbishop
Resource	Having something that someone wants	Provide access to communities Provide access to churches in a particular area
Service	Desire to help others	Motivated by interests of others not selfish gain Commitment to empowering others to speak for themselves Values that others respect, agree with or want



TOOL 9

Power analysis table³

This tool identifies and explores different types of power in order to understand how they interact to reinforce poverty and vulnerability. This is vital for planning and implementing advocacy. The phrase 'power relations' describes relationships between different types of power and relationships between different powerful people and organisations.



³ This tool is adapted from material in Oxfam's 'Quick Guide to Power Analysis'.

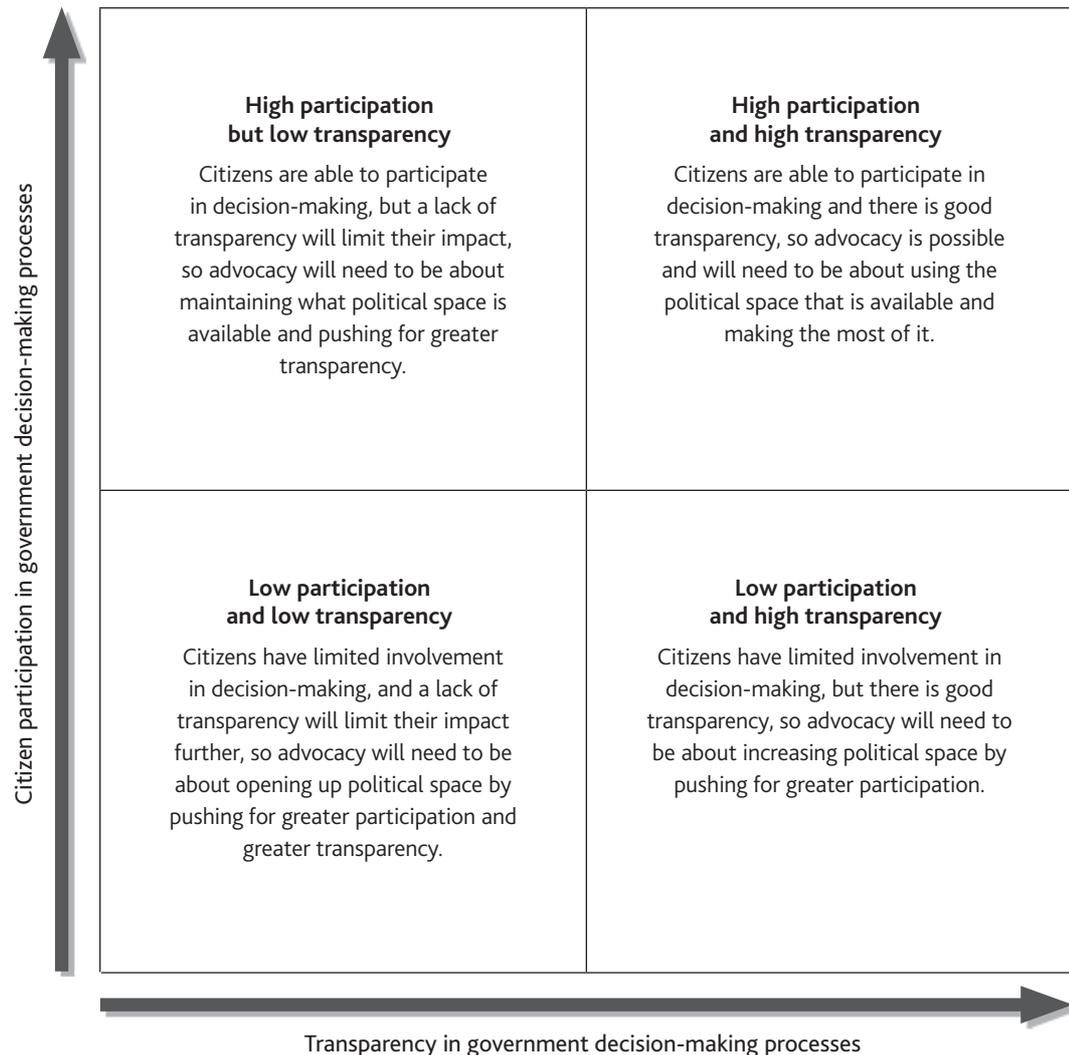


TOOL 10

Political space chart

This tool is designed to assess what political space is available to ordinary citizens for influencing decision-makers, and how to make the most of it in advocacy work. It makes it easy to see the level of citizen participation and the level of transparency available in government decision-making processes. The aim is to use it to open up as much political space as possible for advocacy work, by increasing both participation and transparency.

- STEP 1 Brainstorm the names of all the people, organisations and departments who are, could be or should be involved in government decision-making. A particular emphasis should be placed on naming different civil society organisations and representatives.
- STEP 2 Draw a chart like the one below, with an arrow from bottom to top to measure citizen participation and another arrow from left to right to measure government transparency. This can be done with pen on paper, a stick on the ground, or tape on carpet.
- STEP 3 Consider the four different quadrants of the chart and discuss which one best describes the political context.
- STEP 4 Agree what political space is available to the list of people, organisations and departments listed in Step 1 and the best approach to take with advocacy work to make the most of it.



SECTION B2 **Training exercises****EXERCISE 9** Understanding our own power and influence

- Aim** To understand our own sources of power and the opportunities available to us to influence
- TYPE** This is designed for group work but it could be adapted for individual reflection
- METHODS** Interactive agree/disagree line, plenary discussion
- ADVANCE PREPARATION** Think of sample statements about power and influence
- STEPS**
1. Get participants to stand up.
 2. Assign one end of the room 'Agree' and the other end of the room 'Disagree'.
 3. One by one, call out statements about power and influence (which you have prepared in advance) and ask participants to stand along an imaginary line between 'Agree' and 'Disagree', depending on their answer. Before moving on to the next question, ask different participants to explain why they are standing where they are. You could do this for extreme responses, as well as for anyone standing in the middle. Some example statements could include:
 - Only politicians have real power in our country.
 - Voting is a waste of time.
 - Decisions about our country's development are made overseas by donors and we cannot influence them.
 4. Encourage plenary discussion and draw out the fact that we all have sources of power and opportunities to influence, but we need to recognise and use them.

**EXERCISE 10** Understanding power

- Aim** To understand power and the different forms it takes
- TYPE** Group exercise
- METHODS** Role play, pairs work, observation, plenary discussion
- MATERIAL** Copies of role play scenarios (optional – see examples on the next page)
- STEPS**
1. Ask participants if they have ever experienced abuse of power while doing their job, when dealing with government or in another context-specific setting. Invite them to share their stories.
 2. Explain or distribute copies of role play scenarios (see examples below).
 3. Pairs of participants act out a brief role play to show different power dynamics at work in different relationships.
 4. After each role play, invite participants to identify what types of power have been shown, and how that power has been used and/or abused.
 5. Lead a plenary discussion around the different forms that power takes.

ROLE PLAYS

COMMUNITY LEADER AND COMMUNITY: A community leader goes to a meeting with an oil company and allows the company to enter the community in exchange for a new office. He/she then informs the community of the decision.

MAYOR, LOCAL COUNCILLORS AND COMMUNITY: Local councillors decide to allocate money for an irrigation project. Later, the mayor consults with the community's schools, teachers and parents, and they decide it would be better to use the money for a new classroom, rather than the irrigation project.

CHURCH LEADER AND CONGREGATION: A church leader announces that half the collection money will go to a new health clinic in the community. It later turns out that all the collection money has gone to the church leader's mother for the construction of her new home.

LANDLORD AND TENANT: The landlord writes to inform the tenant that the rent will be increased by 50 per cent with immediate effect. If the tenant doesn't pay, his or her family will have to leave their home but they have nowhere else to live at such short notice.

TEACHER AND STUDENT: Following an incident in a classroom the teacher punishes one student with a detention (keeping her after school) for a month. The student thinks this is very unfair, especially as it was a group of people causing the trouble in the classroom.

BOSS AND EMPLOYEE: Each month the boss has been increasing the workload and responsibilities of one employee with no additional salary. After six months, the employee has had enough and confronts the boss about his/her unfair work burden. The boss doesn't think there is an issue.

VILLAGE CHIEF AND VILLAGER: Someone wants to build a new home for his family on a spare bit of land within the village boundaries. When he asks the village chief, he is refused permission but no satisfactory reason is given.

BUS DRIVER AND PASSENGER: The passenger has been using the same route to get to work for more than a year. One day the bus driver says the fares have been doubled with no warning and with no improvements to the service.

JUDGE AND DEFENDANT: The defendant is innocent of charges of theft, but the judge asks for a bribe to let him go. The defendant is willing to pay it!

DOCTOR AND PATIENT: A patient needs to be referred to a hospital for treatment but the doctor says he/she needs to make a charge for the referral. The patient knows that this isn't the case and doesn't want to pay but has to be referred by this doctor.

DONOR REPRESENTATIVE AND NGO WORKER: A donor representative makes a visit to a community project funded by the donor. When speaking with the NGO worker, the donor representative says that the donor wants a new village added to the scope of the work. This wasn't agreed at the beginning or in the contract and the budget isn't sufficient. The donor says that if the NGO doesn't comply, it could affect future funding.



EXERCISE 11 'Power line'

Aim To understand who has power (both formal and informal) and how it is used and abused within the country or context of the training workshop

CONTEXT This exercise only works with a group. Please note: It is advisable to be cautious about using this exercise in some contexts where criticism of politicians is risky. It works best if it can be completed and left on display for the duration of the training workshop. If this is unsafe, take photos of it when it is complete and put the photos on a slideshow presentation that can be projected from a computer onto the wall when you need to use it and switched off quickly if necessary.

METHODS Small group work, 'power line', presentation, plenary discussion

MATERIAL Photos of people in power, a ball of string, pegs or paper clips, pins or sticky tape to attach the string to the walls

HANDOUT TOOL 8: Types of power

ADVANCE PREPARATION

1. Ahead of the exercise, do an internet search to find 12 to 14 royalty-free photos of individuals or groups of people who have power or lack power in the country or context where the training workshop is taking place. If the group is larger than 15, it is a good idea to have the same number of photos as the number of participants. Alternatively, if you do not have a reliable internet connection, cut out photos from newspapers. (In the absence of newspapers, you could draw people and write their names on sheets of paper.) Either way, categories to consider might include politicians, business people, communities, tribal groups, police, military, teachers, health workers, trade unions, overseas governments, NGOs, church denominations, other faith groups, the media and students.
2. Print off one complete set, one photo per A4 sheet, single sided. Alternatively, photocopy photos from newspapers to create a complete set. (If you are going to use Version 2, copy enough complete sets for one set per small group, allowing for six to eight people per small group.)

STEPS (VERSION 1)

1. Pin up a long piece of string, with one end in one corner of the room and the other end in the opposite corner, like a washing line. Make sure it is set at a height that the participants will be able to reach.
2. Give out the complete set of photos, ensuring that every participant receives at least one photo. Ask them to look at their photos and discuss who is represented in them. (If the group differs in their opinions, this adds to the richness of the discussions afterwards!)
3. Hand out pegs or paper clips, and ask the participants to attach their photos to the string, with the most powerful at one end and the least powerful at the other end. They should decide themselves what makes a person, organisation or group of people powerful. (It is normal for there to be disagreement over who has more or less power.) If space does not allow you to pin up string, the photos can be stuck to the wall with sticky tape or poster tack.
4. It is likely that there will be a lot of discussion and the photos will be moved around several times. Observe the group dynamics to see who most influences the decisions made. (Later on, say what you noticed if it seems appropriate.)

5. Allow some time and then draw everyone together and invite them to look at the power line. Facilitate a plenary discussion about where different photos have been placed on the string. Identify and discuss the different types of power that people have in the country or context. Use **TOOL 8: Types of power** as a guide.

STEPS (VERSION 2)

1. Split the participants into no more than four groups, with six to eight people in each group. Allocate each group a wall in the room and ask each group to pin up a long piece of string along the wall they have been allocated.
2. Give each group an identical set of photos, and ask them to look at them. Ask the groups to discuss who is represented in them. (If the groups differ in their opinions, this adds to the richness of the discussions afterwards!)
3. Hand out pegs or paper clips, and ask each group to attach their photos to the string along their wall, with the most powerful at one end and the least powerful at the other end. They should decide between themselves what makes a person, organisation or group of people powerful. (It is normal for there to be disagreement over who has more or less power.) If you cannot pin up string, the photos can be stuck to the wall with sticky tape or poster tack.
4. It is likely that there will be a lot of discussion and the photos will be moved around several times. Allow some time and then stop the groups and take everyone round to see the different power lines. Ask each group to explain their reasons for placing the photos where they did.
5. Facilitate a plenary discussion about the different types of power that people have in the country or context. Use **TOOL 8: Types of power** as a guide.



EXERCISE 12 Understanding politics

Aim To come to a common understanding of politics and the variety of contexts in which it operates

CONTEXT This is designed for work in a group but could be done as individual reflection. The facilitator needs to be aware that the issues raised in this exercise can be controversial, so it may be necessary to make sure that everyone's perspectives are heard, respected and understood before moving on.

METHODS Individual reflection, small group discussion, plenary discussion

MATERIAL Sticky notes or blank cards

- STEPS**
1. Give all participants some sticky notes or blank cards.
 2. Using one word or phrase per sticky note or blank card, ask participants to work in pairs to write or draw pictures or write words or phrases that come to mind when they hear the word 'politics'.
 3. Stick the sticky notes or cards on the wall or place them on the floor.
 4. Invite participants to group the ideas in themes.
 5. Lead a plenary discussion around the key themes, based on the answers given and draw out a common understanding of politics and the variety of contexts in which it operates.



EXERCISE 13 Power analysis

Aim	To analyse and understand the different factors that influence power dynamics and power relations
CONTEXT	This exercise works well in a group, but could be done as an individual reflection. The facilitator needs to be clear about how he or she would answer the questions in TOOL 9: Power analysis table ahead of asking a group to use it.
METHODS	Small group work, presentation, plenary discussion
HANDOUT	TOOL 9: Power analysis table
STEPS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Divide participants into four groups. 2. Hand out TOOL 9: Power analysis table. 3. Allocate each group one quarter of the table, so that one group is considering 'Who?', another 'Where?', another 'What?' and another 'How?' 4. Ask all the small groups to work together on the questions listed in the quarter of the table that they have been allocated and make a note of their answers. Allow at least ten minutes for this. Use the Facilitator's notes to help them if they find it difficult to answer the questions. 5. Draw everyone together and ask each group to present the findings for their quarter of the table. Record their answers on flipchart paper. Where there are differences of opinion between the small groups, explore why each group reached their conclusion. 6. Facilitate a discussion about what the power analysis has shown. Explain that power often reveals itself in more than one way, requiring advocacy to take place at more than one level and address more than one dimension of power at the same time to bring about lasting change.



EXERCISE 14 Assessing political space

Aim	To identify what political space is available and how this affects advocacy work
TYPE	Group exercise or individual reflection
METHODS	Case studies, small group work, plenary discussion
HANDOUT	TOOL 10: Political space chart
STEPS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Divide participants into small groups, or ask them to work alone. 2. Give each group or individual a case study, selected from the various case studies scattered throughout the toolkit, or ask them to choose a case study based on their own experience. If using case studies from the toolkit, be sure to choose ones that clearly demonstrate participation (or a lack of it) and transparency (or a lack of it). 3. Give out copies of TOOL 10: Political space chart and ask each group or individual to work through the steps. Allow plenty of time for this. (Please note: If there is disagreement in the groups as to which quadrant of the chart best describes the political context, you may need to intervene to ask questions to facilitate answers that will help them reach agreement.)

4. Invite feedback from each small group or individual about the political space they have identified and what they need to consider in their advocacy work to open, maintain, increase or use the political space available. If necessary, use the Facilitator’s notes to help you.