



Tools to support community transformation

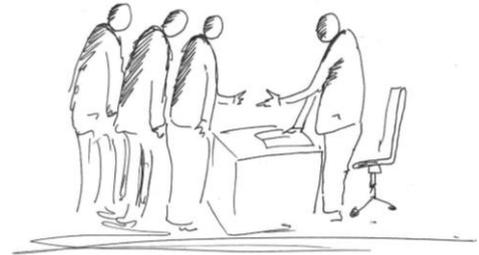
C1 REVEALING WAYS OF TAKING ACTION

Making the most of meetings with decision-makers



Why use this tool?

Meeting with decision-makers can be an important and useful advocacy activity. This tool can help you prepare for such meetings and make them effective.



A brief description

This tool includes guidance on how to prepare for and carry out successful meetings with decision makers such as a local government official, business leader or religious leader.



Explaining the words we use

Advocacy - influencing the decisions, policies and practices of powerful decision-makers in order to bring about change



Keys to success

- Prepare well – book the meeting; re-confirm it is happening and how long it will last.
- Plan the meeting – who will say and do what?
- Have clear goals for the meeting and stick to them.
- Follow up after the meeting, including thanking the person or people you met with.



What to do

Before the meeting

Think about who you will meet with.

- Make sure you are meeting with the right person. Check that you understand the person's role and how much authority he or she has. Will the person need to request permission for the meeting?
- If you have had previous contact, recall what was promised. Has it been delivered?



Awareness-raising

Children & youth

Climate & environment

Conflict & peace-building

Corruption & governance

Disaster risk management

Discrimination & inclusion

Food & livelihoods

Gender & sexual violence

Health & HIV

Influencing decision-makers

Migration & trafficking

Water, sanitation & hygiene

C1 MAKING THE MOST OF MEETINGS WITH DECISION MAKERS

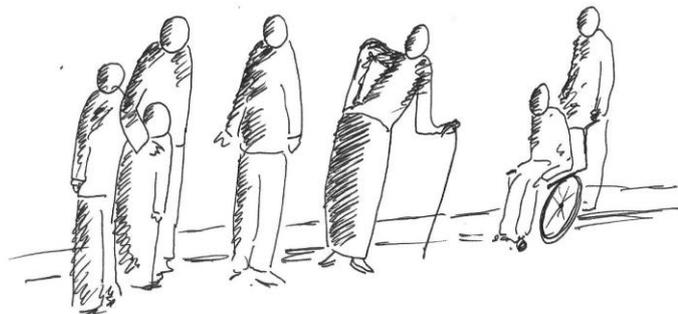
- How do you think the decision-maker views you? Does the person consider you to have power, influence or knowledge? How can you use that to make your requests more persuasively?
- Consider what the decision-maker may want to gain from the meeting – information, commitment to work together to solve the problem etc – and how you can provide this.
- Think about the appropriate way to dress so that you will be received well and not feel out of place. Should you wear a suit or smart clothes?
- Be careful not to give or accept any gifts that could be construed as trying to persuade someone to do what you / they want – which could be seen as a bribe.

Arrange the meeting

- Contact the person to arrange a meeting. If possible, ask someone known to the person to introduce you.
- If you do not have a way of getting in touch directly, write a brief formal letter requesting a meeting.
- Confirm the date and time of the meeting, asking for confirmation in writing. Make a phone call or visit the office the day before to say you are looking forward to the meeting and to check again that the person is expecting you at the time agreed.

Plan who will attend the meeting with you

- Make sure the people going with you will represent the community. Consider taking someone who will be directly affected by the action you are asking for and can speak about it clearly.
- Do any other local groups have the same questions? If so, consider inviting them to the meeting too, but check that the person you are meeting will be happy with this.

**Plan how to present your requests at the meeting**

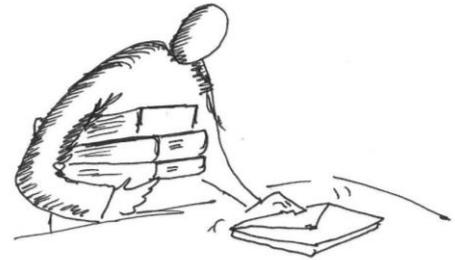
- If there is more than one of you attending the meeting, agree who is going to say what (for example, who will speak first and who will share the main messages) and who will take notes or keep a record of the meeting. It is easy to forget the details after the meeting so, if possible, keep a record of what was said and agreed.
- Decide what you will ask the decision-maker to do. For example, will you ask the person to review the situation? Or pass on your requests to someone else?
- Make sure that you are asking for something that the person (or the department he or she represents) is able to give.
- Think about what arguments the decision-maker will find persuasive and be ready to use them.
- What questions do you expect you might be asked? Make sure you have worked out your responses to possible questions.

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- If you are not local, make yourself aware of any local customs or taboos. Is it ok to shake hands? To look someone in the eye? To sit with your feet pointing towards them? Should men and women sit together or separately?

Logistics

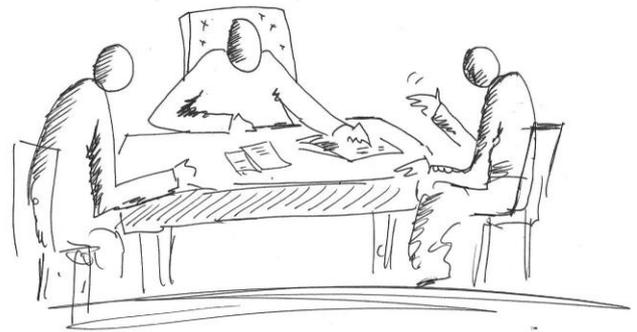
- If more than one of you is going to be involved in the meeting, arrange for all involved to have a meeting beforehand to plan how you will present your requests.
- Prepare materials to bring to the meeting if appropriate (documents to discuss, petitions to present etc), making sure your main points are presented clearly.
- Check how much time you are likely to have, and plan how you will close the meeting quickly if your time is cut short.
- Allow plenty of time to get to the meeting so that you will not be late.



During the meeting

Introductions

- Make sure that everyone in the room is introduced. Summarise what happened in previous meetings if you had any.
- Explain why you are meeting and agree how to proceed.
- Agree for someone to take notes and gather the contact details of everyone present (ensuring that everyone agrees on how the contact details can be shared).



Keeping on track

- Have a clear, achievable goal.
- Know your main points well and present your requests or concerns clearly.
- Ask questions if you do not understand what the decision-maker is saying.
- Focus on your most important concerns first and leave smaller issues until the end.
- Your aim should be to build confidence and trust. Give encouraging feedback where possible. Do not accuse or criticise the decision-maker: try to see him or her as a partner or friend, rather than as an enemy.
- Always be respectful, even if the meeting is going badly and the decision-maker is negative or uncooperative.
- Remember that we are all equal, and we are all just people. If you are nervous, it's quite possible the person you're visiting is nervous too. Don't get worried if you think you've said something wrong; just apologise lightly and move on.
- Summarise progress at various points and say what has been agreed at the end.

Awareness-raising

Children & youth

Climate & environment

Conflict & peace-building

Corruption & governance

Disaster risk management

Discrimination & inclusion

Food & livelihoods

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Water, sanitation & hygiene

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After the meeting

- Write a short record of the meeting so you can remember what was said and share it with others.
- Send a brief letter thanking the decision-maker for seeing you, summarising the main points and reminding him or her about what agreements were reached and what promises were made by both of you, and noting how you will follow up on this meeting.
- After a while, contact the decision-maker again to report on your progress and to find out if he or she has done what was promised.



Finding out more

- Tearfund (2014) *Advocacy toolkit* – especially pages 147–189:
http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/roots/1_and_2_advocacy_toolkit/
- Tearfund (2014) Footsteps 93 – *Mobilising local resources*
http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps_91-100/footsteps_93/



Notes

This tool is adapted from an article first published in Tearfund (2014) Footsteps 93 – *Mobilising local resources*, which was based on a tool in Tearfund's *Advocacy toolkit*.

Related tools:

- B – Advocacy work (Bible study) [*B: Influencing decision-makers-1*]
- B – Being an advocate (Bible study) [*B: Influencing decision-makers-2*]
- C1 – Ways of taking action [*C1: Awareness-raising-1*]
- C1 – Advocacy – communicating with people in power [*C1: Influencing decision-makers-1*]
- C1 – Mobilising people [*C1: Influencing decision-makers-2*]

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