

C

Overview of the Advocacy Cycle

Section C provides an overview of the main stages that are required in every advocacy initiative, using the format of the Advocacy Cycle, and it explains why advocacy capacity building is an important part of any advocacy initiative.

Section C is a vital part of the toolkit and it is wise to include it in a training workshop. It explains how the different stages in the Advocacy Cycle relate to each other. Each stage is then expanded, one by one, in the rest of the toolkit, Sections D to H.



Facilitator's notes

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

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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.

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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.

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SECTION C Facilitator's notes



What is the Advocacy Cycle?

The Advocacy Cycle is a useful way of visualising what needs to be done in our advocacy work. It takes us step by step through each stage of the process of developing an advocacy strategy, or an advocacy component within a broader project or programme strategy. If we are serious about doing advocacy, we either need to create a separate advocacy strategy or include it in the design of our projects and programmes from the outset.

Although it is referred to as the Advocacy Cycle, it is a version of the Project Cycle⁴ that has been specially adapted for advocacy projects. It enables us to be systematic, strategic and analytical, so that we avoid getting side-tracked. The reason it is referred to as a *cycle* is because developing, planning, implementing and reviewing an advocacy strategy is a *repetitive* and *flexible* process. Sometimes, the stages need to be followed in order but sometimes the stages are best run in parallel with each other. It is important to adapt as circumstances change rather than seeing the cycle as fixed.

For more information, please see **TOOL 15: The Advocacy Cycle**.



What is advocacy capacity building and why does it matter?

When we do advocacy, it is important that we try to build the capacity of communities who are poor, vulnerable, marginalised and disempowered, so that they learn how to speak for themselves about the issues that affect them. This process is known as advocacy capacity building. It is a way of enabling people affected by an advocacy issue to voice their needs and problems, their hopes and solutions, so that they have the confidence and capability to influence decision-makers for themselves and determine their own changes.

We also need to empower our organisations to advocate by developing the abilities of our staff, colleagues and partners, so that they learn how to speak with and on behalf of others. This, too, is advocacy capacity building.

In order to implement an effective advocacy strategy or an advocacy component within a broader project or programme strategy, the people and organisations involved need to have sufficient capacity in advocacy. Therefore, throughout an advocacy initiative, it can be a good idea to identify ways in which we can support those affected and those involved (particularly the church, in its unique role within civil society) to build their capacity to advocate. Capacity can be built through:

- Training workshops, using this toolkit
- Accompaniment, mentoring and coaching
- Participation in coalitions, alliances and networks to facilitate joint learning (see Section E2 on stakeholders)
- Accessing resources, tools, reports and other guidance materials
- Using in-country and/or in-region advocacy expertise
- Staff members dedicated to advocacy
- Peer learning
- Using **TOOL 16: Advocacy capacity assessment questionnaire**.

This is not a definitive list. It is wise to consider which approaches will work best in our own context.

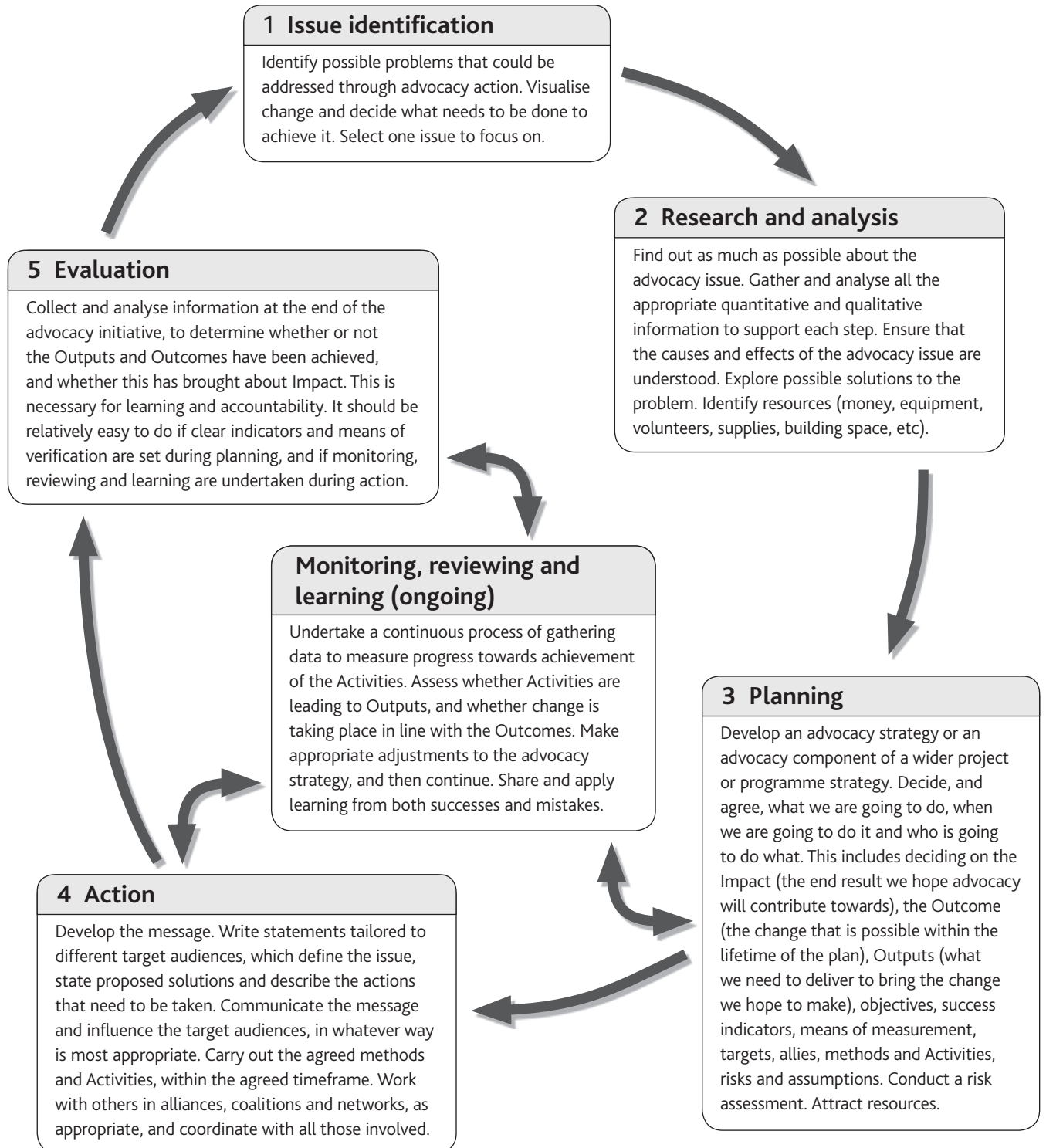
⁴ ROOTS 5 – *Project cycle management* (2005) can be downloaded from the TILZ website, <http://tilz.tearfund.org>.



TOOL 15 The Advocacy Cycle

An advocacy initiative can be divided into stages, although in practice these overlap. The time it takes to complete all the stages and the necessary detail will vary greatly, depending on the urgency and complexity of a particular issue, the amount of information needed to be able to act and the advocacy methods chosen.

The basic Advocacy Cycle is:





TOOL 16

Advocacy capacity assessment questionnaire

STEP 1
Table of
advocacy
capacities

Capacity	Score (1–5)
A Vision, values, mission, strategy	
1 Clear mission and purpose of organisation or community group	
2 Clear and agreed values underpinning organisation or community group	
3 Understanding of how advocacy links with core values and mission and as an integral part of development	
4 Strategy for action, linking to mission and values	
5 Understanding the servant nature of advocacy and appropriate use of power	
6 Commitment to building capacity of others to speak for themselves	
B Internal systems and structures	
1 Clear and accountable process for decision-making	
2 Theological reflection on issues	
3 Commitment to advocacy at highest level	
4 Clear idea of who you represent and how you represent them	
5 Clear understanding of own legitimacy and what this is based on	
6 Participation by all stakeholders in advocacy and other development work	
7 Clear lines of communication within and outside the organisation or community group	
8 System for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of work	
9 Experience in conflict resolution	
C Skills, experience and understanding	
1 Understanding of how local, national and international policies affect local problems	
2 Understanding of policymaking and power relations	
3 Understanding the views and influence of key stakeholders	
4 Skills in research and access to good information	
5 Skills in community mobilisation and awareness-raising	
6 Skills in law or access to such skills	
7 Skills in strategy development	
8 Skills in lobbying	
9 Experience of working with the media	
10 Support from others, such as partners or networks	
11 Understanding of risks and how to plan to reduce them	
D Resources	
1 Human resources committed to advocacy	
2 Financial resources committed to advocacy	

TOOL 16 continues on next page

Capacity	Score (1-5)
E External links	
1 Access to/relationship with grassroots groups	
2 Access to/relationship with policymakers	
3 Access to/relationship with other local NGOs and churches	
4 Access to/relationship with international NGOs and churches	
5 Access to established networks (eg coalitions, alliances, etc)	
6 Relationship with journalists	
7 Committed volunteers and supporters	
8 Access to experts in your issue	
9 Access to trainers and other advocacy resources in-region	

How to allocate score

- 1 **SEED** Just beginning to define itself in this area, has potential to develop
- 2 **EMERGING** Starting to become established
- 3 **GROWING** Beginning to gain momentum and confidence
- 4 **WELL-DEVELOPED** Good degree of competency and is seen to be very effective
- 5 **MATURE** Highly competent

STEP 2
Score sheet

Indicator	Staff score	Facilitator score	Comments
Clear mission statement?			
Good research skills?			
Clear lines of accountability?			
Strong links with other groups?			

STEP 3
SWOT/BEEM analysis

S trengths	How to B uild on them
W eaknesses	How to E liminate them
O pportunities	How to E xploit them
T hreats	How to M inimise them

SECTION C Training exercises



EXERCISE 18 Stages in the Advocacy Cycle

Aim To provide an overview of the main stages that are required in every advocacy initiative, using the format of the Advocacy Cycle

TYPE Group exercise

TIPS Although the suggested order follows the model laid out in the table on the next page, other orders can be suggested as long as they can be justified by the group. The longer version is recommended but is reliant on preparation time, so an alternative is provided for when time is limited.

METHODS Small group discussion, drawing, feedback presentation, plenary discussion

MATERIAL For Version 1, flipchart paper, pens, poster tack or glue; for Version 2, sticky notes or blank cards

HANDOUT TOOL 15: The Advocacy Cycle

STEPS 1–4
(VERSION 1)
– ADVANCE
PREPARATION

1. Ahead of the exercise, print or copy the strips on the next page on single-sided paper.
2. Depending on the number of participants, print or copy enough for each small group to have one complete set.
3. For each complete set, cut along the horizontal dashed lines, leaving the vertical dividing lines in place, so that each piece is a paper strip, which has two parts, with the cycle stage on one part and the definition on the other part.
4. Cluster each complete set of paper strips together and shuffle each set like a pack of cards. Use elastic bands to keep each set intact.

STEPS 5–10
(VERSION 1)
– AT THE TRAINING
WORKSHOP

5. Divide participants into small groups of four to six people. Give each group a complete set of strips, together with a flipchart piece of paper, flipchart pens, and poster tack or glue.
6. Ask each group to look at the set of strips they have been given and to discuss, and agree, the order in which the strips should take place. Get them to stick them on the flipchart paper and use the pens to draw arrows between them.
7. Please note that some groups may do this as a cycle or circle. Others may create a ladder. Others may do a strange-looking shape! Emphasise that there is no right or wrong, as long as they can justify why they would do things in a given order.
8. After sufficient time, ask each group to present back in plenary, explaining why they have put things in the order they have, and which stages were most difficult to place and why. Then allow for questions from other groups.
9. Explain that there are generic tried-and-tested models that demonstrate that the Advocacy Cycle is a particularly good way of working. Link this to the stages that we use in the toolkit, but highlight the sub-categories that have been used in the exercise.
10. Keep the different versions up on the wall and refer back to them during the course of the training workshop, if appropriate, as each stage is gone through.

 Set of strips to print/photocopy, cut out and use in Version 1 of Exercise 18

Identify the issue	Identify possible problems that could require advocacy action and select which one to focus on.
Research the issue	Find out as much as possible about the advocacy issue.
Collect and analyse information	Gather and analyse all the appropriate quantitative and qualitative information to support each step of your advocacy.
Identify solutions	Explore possible solutions to the advocacy problem identified.
Identify resources	Identify and attract resources (money, equipment, volunteers, supplies, building space, etc) to carry out your advocacy.
Visualise change	Decide what you would like to see change in your community/society/context as a result of your advocacy.
Identify decision-makers	Establish who has power, authority and/or responsibility to bring about the change that you visualise, and who you will need to target and influence.
Decide on desired advocacy Impact	Decide the end result you hope your advocacy will contribute towards.
Set advocacy Outcomes	Decide what change is possible within the lifetime of your plan that will move you nearer to contributing towards the Impact.
Set advocacy Outputs	Decide what you need to deliver to bring the change you hope to make.
Assess risks	Consider the risks in undertaking advocacy, or not undertaking advocacy, and plan for how to mitigate and overcome them.
Make a plan	Decide, and agree, what you are going to do, when you are going to do it and who is going to do what.
Implement a plan	Carry out your agreed actions in the agreed time frame.
Develop a message	Write statements tailored to different audiences that define the issue, state your proposed solutions and describe the actions that need to be taken.
Use channels of communication	Deliver your message to various target audiences, eg radio, television, flyers, press conferences, meetings, etc.
Influence decision-makers	Target the decision-makers you are trying to persuade to support your advocacy issue.
Work with allies	Develop relationships with other groups, organisations and individuals who are committed to support your advocacy issue, and build or join coalitions, alliances and networks with them.
Monitor	Gather data to measure progress towards achievement of the Outputs and Outcomes.
Review	Assess progress in your advocacy, make appropriate adjustments to your plan and then continue.
Evaluate	Collect and analyse information to determine whether or not the Outputs and Outcomes have been achieved.
Learning	Identify lessons that have been learned along the way and capture stories of success and failure in order to make improvements.

STEPS (VERSION 2)
– MINIMUM
PREPARATION TIME

1. Display a flipchart sheet of paper with a large circle drawn on it.
2. Give participants five to six sticky notes or blank cards each.
3. Ask participants to brainstorm the key stages or activities involved in an advocacy initiative, writing each separate stage on to separate sticky notes or blank cards.
4. Once this has been done, invite them to place their sticky notes or cards on the circle on the flipchart paper in a logical sequence, grouping cards together where they have written the same or similar words to other participants.
5. Draw round the key groups of cards that represent the main stages in the Advocacy Cycle. Distribute **TOOL 15: The Advocacy Cycle** to each participant once the exercise has been completed.



EXERCISE 19 Can our organisation do advocacy?

Aim To assess, build strengths and reduce weaknesses in advocacy capacity

TYPE Group exercise

TIPS This exercise works best with people from the same group or organisation working together. It is designed for participative use, not individual work.

METHODS Small group work, presentation, plenary discussion

HANDOUT **TOOL 16: Advocacy capacity assessment questionnaire**

- STEPS**
1. Ask participants to work with others from their group or organisation, to list the key capacity constraints that they consider relevant in their (actual or anticipated) advocacy work.
 2. Using **TOOL 16: Advocacy capacity assessment questionnaire**, invite participants to score their group or organisation on a scale of 1–5 for each indicator and add comments as appropriate.
 3. When done, ask them to discuss the findings and implications. Do they agree with each score? What do the scores tell them? What are the main trends, themes and issues?
 4. Ask participants to focus on the main strengths and weaknesses they have identified. Complete a SWOT/BEEM analysis if necessary.
 5. For the strengths, invite them to work out how they will build on them and, for the weaknesses, ask them to identify how they will reduce them.
 6. Invite people to share one main strength and one main weakness as part of a plenary discussion, together with related plans.
 7. Facilitate plenary discussion.
 8. Emphasise that it is possible to start advocacy work, even with just half of the capacity criteria in place.