

DISABLED PEOPLE'S INTERNATIONAL AFRICAN REGION



ADVOCACY FOR THE RIGHTS
OF PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES

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ADVOCACY & POLICY-MAKING: BASIC CONCEPTS & DEFINITIONS

- Advocacy= a set of activities around mobilising in support of a specified goal and target group.
- Policy-making= a process to draw up a set of values and principles on specified areas of life such as the rights of persons with disabilities.
- There is a continuum from advocacy to policy-making because they are not separate activities but are inter-related & form an interactive & dynamic process

BUT: advocacy does not have to lead to policy.
It is very important to know when, where and why you want a policy.

UNDERSTANDING POLICY-MAKING

- **The first question is: do we need a policy?** Why? Can we get what we want from existing policies and/or regulations? Can we get what we want if existing policies were properly implemented? Or if the government could co-ordinate its work better? Don't *assume* that a policy is necessary or desirable.
- Policy-making brings us into the political realm of trade-offs and compromises, and we must be flexible and understand the *political realities* we are working with. Know where you are prepared to *compromise* and where your bottom-lines are.
- Policy-making is a *process* and an *outcome*; and policy adoption is the *beginning* of the journey, not the end.

POLICY-MAKING (cont'd)

- **The second question – assuming a policy gap exists – is what kind of policy we want – a detailed, prescriptive document or a broad set of principles, goals, target groups and outcomes? Do we want deliverables that are specific to persons with disabilities or do we want to mainstream disability in existing policies, programmes & institutions?**
- **When formulating policies, we still need the qualities/attributes discussed earlier.**
- **It is vital that policies are based on accurate data. But the roots of the policy are the **needs of the people** – if you get that wrong, everything will collapse. Most important, we need full participation of persons with disabilities in democratically elected structures.**

POLICY-MAKING (final)

- **The third question – how to ensure that the policy works in practice?** Drafting a policy is one step – arguably more important is our belief that policy may be worthless without an implementation strategy and roll-out plan.
- Specify responsibilities, budgets, timeframes and outcomes. Since disability issues are commonly cross-cutting, ensure that this is visible (explicit) in all components including the budget: if it is a budget line item, it has a far better chance of happening.
- Vision and commitment are also critical at this point – we must stick with the process when the excitement of advocacy & lobbying give way to the day-to-day work of implementation, as well as monitoring and evaluation. **Advocacy must not stop** – there are many plans of action & resolutions regarding disability but implementation is lagging behind.

AVOCACY : WHY DO IT? TO:

- Create awareness (in a cost-effective way)
- Educate persons with disabilities as well as society about persons with disabilities. We should not compartmentalize persons with disabilities or their own issues (Or keep other social actors away)
- Mobilize people and resources →

To effect change – the key goal

DEVELOPING AN ADVOCACY STRATEGY: WHAT QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- Do we need advocacy? Why?
- For whom?
- By whom?
- What resources are needed?
- What channels exist?
- What are the risks and challenges?
- What are the intended outcomes?
- How will we measure impact & effectiveness?

POTENTIAL ANSWERS....

- ❖ **For whom?** – for PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES BUT WITHIN THEIR CONTEXT (COMMUNITY, ETC)
 - Identify relevant stakeholders
 - Form alliances & partnerships – with adults & parents at local level, with other sectors at strategic level (e.g. other marginalized groups, community-based organizations, etc.)
 - Don't create divisions (if persons with disabilities obtain resources, how does this affect other groups?)
- ❖ **By whom?** – LED BY PERSONS WITH DIASBILITIES BUT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS ACROSS SECTORS.

POTENTIAL STEPS...

- Identify the problem (s);
- Organize yourself;
- Ensure participation of target group in problem analysis, followed by developing a shared vision *and* strategy;
- Undertake credible research and implementable recommendations & use research to refine your strategies – negotiation and/or mobilization, communication - set the ‘tone’ (e.g. passion balanced with technocratic language);
- Identify partners & entry points (multiple not singular);
- Initiate a pilot project, evaluate rigorously and communicate the results;
- Market your successes through a good communication/PR strategy.

WHAT QUALITIES DO WE NEED TO DO THIS WORK?

- ✓ Resilience & patience
- ✓ Capacity to strategize
- ✓ Targeting
- ✓ Lobbying skills
- ✓ Communication/marketing campaign design
- ✓ A sustainable institutional base
- ✓ Subtlety
- ✓ Flexibility
- ✓ Negotiation skills
- ✓ Media liaison

CHANNELS FOR ADVOCACY

- ➔ Strategize & plan your campaign including the identification of IT tools
- ➔ Identify channels as well as who can effectively sell your campaign – put the correct ‘face’ on the campaign
- ➔ Then consider:
 - ✓ Opinion-formers/makers from all sectors;
 - ✓ Like-minded NGOs & NGOs/CBOs from other sectors
 - ✓ International partners/allies, academia & Business leaders, Media (journalists, editors, etc.), MPs/civil servants (often overlooked but can make great impact), Local artists, sports stars, business & religious leaders, etc.

Remember to *strategize* – make personal contacts, use personal approaches, don't stick to formal channels only, ID and use multiple entry points

ADDITIONAL POINTS ON ADVOCACY

- You must develop a good strategy *before* you implement; and continually review your strategy
- Advocacy is not a one-off process but on-going - and must continue once a policy is in place. Policy adoption is not the final goal – effective implementation is.
- Vision and commitment are the basis on which advocacy rests – the process will probably be long, tough and uneven, and commitment to the vision will get you through it.
- It is important – from the outset – to identify your opposition and develop strategies for challenging or co-opting them

IN SUM...

- Social inclusion of persons with disabilities is about societal development. Societal development is part of the global set-up.
- North/South inequalities directly impact on all social groups and in particular persons with disabilities.



- Ultimately, therefore, we are fighting for global social and economic justice. The linkage between the local & global contexts are clear & cannot be dissociated.

Notes
