

Increasing skills for advocacy

A toolbox



Preamble

This toolbox was developed within the framework of a pilot project to pilot Participatory Rangeland Management (PRM) in Kenya and Tanzania, managed by RECONCILE (Resource Conflict Institute). The aim of the project is to test and develop PRM in Kenya and Tanzania with the intention to improve, scale up and mainstream this approach. It is implemented in line with the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT). CELEP is involved in order to contribute to the overall project purpose, which is to attain secure and better use of rangelands (sustainable productivity) by local communities by developing a management model for PRM in Kenya and Tanzania. The project presents a platform for strengthening the role of CELEP in championing the tenure and property rights of pastoralists in Eastern Africa through its knowledge management, communication and lobbying activities. CELEP leads the advocacy component of the project through VSF (Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Belgium), with support from RECONCILE and other partners in the collaboration.

The toolbox is an adapted version of a previous toolbox on advocacy capacity development, developed in 2014 by VSF. The toolbox provides a general background on the meaning and modalities of advocacy and proposes exercises to better define advocacy challenges, propose solutions and recommendations, map stakeholders and evaluate advocacy activities in function of their impact and how they contribute to the results.

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1 What is advocacy?

1.1 Concept and definition

Advocacy has many meanings and definitions. According to the Oxford Dictionary, it means to create public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy. The Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) defines it as to support something or someone actively (an idea, an action or a person), and to try to persuade others of the importance of this cause (CIPE, 2009). According to CONCORD, the European Confederation of Relief and Development NGOs, it is about a process, the purpose of which is to change politics, practices or attitudes of individuals, influential people, institutions and groups (CONCORD, 2007).

By advocating, one establishes an interest in the political agenda, proposes a change and reinforces the support for this change. The goal of advocacy is to achieve measurable changes in politics and/or practices. Advocacy can be carried out at all levels: local, national, international and global. Advocacy is a strategic process that aims to influence politics and practices which impact people's lives (Saferworld, 2012). It is a question of convincing those who make decisions concerning politics and practices (AVSF, 2009). It is a different approach from that of the struggle, in which political influence on the balance of power becomes a power seizure.

Lobbying is not necessarily the same thing as advocacy. Some definitions have tried to distinguish between the two. In general, lobbying brings together a smaller number of individuals around shared interests, whereas advocacy brings together an unlimited number of individuals around interests transcending individual interests. As a result, the nature of the interests supported by lobbying and advocacy are very different.

Advocacy and lobbying have different methodologies: lobbying tries to influence in a secret and abstract manner, while advocacy challenges in an apparent and public approach. Advocacy stresses transparency and openness and the need to respect the most rigorous ethical norms during all stages of the advocacy process and especially during interactions with decision makers.

Advocacy includes several practices which aim to influence politics, especially through information and communication, participation and claims, confrontation and negotiation, raising awareness and dialogue.

1.2 Why engage in advocacy?

Advocacy is intended to influence change: at the very core of any advocacy process is a change that the advocates want to bring out, to take a situation from point A to point B by influencing certain policies or practices. Changes are made all the time and are inevitable. Through advocacy, it is possible to influence the type and direction of change and to influence those who have the power to bring about change.

In addition, advocacy allows for certain other things to happen:

- Advocacy can enable voices to be heard. Through advocacy, civil society organisations (CSOs) provide crucial and relevant information to the various key contributors who influence public policy. These include the media, legislators, regulatory authorities, bureaucrats and civil servants of the administrations, and researchers and universities. In this way, these contributors to public policy can give a voice to civil society.
- Advocacy can reinforce the work of those involved in the advocacy process. CSOs can advocate to eliminate the barriers that impede them in their work. For instance, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and farmer/pastoralist organisations can advocate for recognition of community animal health workers to provide quality services adapted to livestock keepers' needs. Thus, advocacy can be a process of "auto-reinforcement".
- Advocacy can improve democratic governance. Political advocacy equips CSOs with information, motivation and the necessary tools to encourage governments to respond to democratic processes.

1.3 Three approaches to advocacy

Advocacy approaches can be categorised according to the degree of involvement of the beneficiaries or

local communities (ACORD, 2012): advocacy for, with and by the beneficiaries of the action. In reality, the best way to lead advocacy activities is to combine different approaches at different times, while prioritising the participation of the beneficiaries of the action. Nevertheless, it is important to understand these different approaches and to know which one is best suited at what time.

1.3.1 Advocacy for the beneficiaries of the action / the local community

This is an advocacy approach which is often used by advocacy professionals, such as international NGOs who hire consultants to carry out their advocacy activities. The main goal of this approach is to change laws, politics and practices. The targets are usually political decision-makers. The advantage of this approach is that the professionals often have relatively easy access to information and political decision-making through their networks. The problem with this approach is that local groups and final beneficiaries are usually too little involved in the action.

1.3.2 Advocacy with the beneficiaries of the action / the local community

The goal of this type of advocacy is to change legislation, politics and practices and, at the same time, improve the access of the beneficiaries in the local community to the political decision-makers and to build their advocacy capacities. The advocacy issue is identified in the community by the beneficiaries themselves and action is planned in collaboration with them. The resources and activities are shared. The advantage of this approach is that the beneficiaries gain better access to decision-making and increased capacity to advocate. The disadvantage is that, in practice, the advocacy professionals often control the advocacy activities.

1.3.3 Advocacy by the beneficiaries of the action / the local community

This type of advocacy has similar goals as above, but the beneficiaries of the advocacy process are at the centre of the action, identify the issues themselves and gain control of the advocacy process (ACORD, 2012). They develop knowledge, skills and

understanding of advocacy processes thanks to their intensive engagement in the action. As a result, the beneficiaries of the advocacy action realise that they have the ability to change things. The advantage of this approach is that the community uses primarily the means at its disposal to make their advocacy activities more sustainable and less dependent on outside funds. However, this approach takes more time to bring about change, as less resources and information are available, which impedes the efficiency and effectiveness of the advocacy process.

1.4 The fundamentals of advocacy

If an organisation decides to engage in advocacy, it should evaluate its capacities to provide certain elements that are essential to conduct advocacy activities (UNICEF, 2010). These are:

1. **Credibility.** A relationship of trust must be built with the governments, institutions, organisations and communities (who can be beneficiaries of the advocacy action but not necessarily) with which the advocating organisation collaborates in order to enhance the process. The questions to ask at this level include:
 - a. As an organisation engaged in advocacy, is it legitimate for us to speak on behalf of those who endure the consequences of the situation that one is trying to change? The question of legitimacy is very important.
 - b. As an organisation engaged in advocacy, is one recognised and respected by the political decision-makers?
 - c. As an organisation engaged in advocacy, is one regarded as a reliable partner both by the advocacy targets and by the beneficiaries of the advocacy action.
2. **Competencies.** Engaging in advocacy is a competence, a skill that combines an understanding of a subject with good judgment of a situation and the capacity to solve a problem. Questions that can help organisations evaluate whether or not they have the necessary competencies include:
 - a. Are there people with good analytical and communication competencies in the organisation? If not, can one rely on partner organisations for this?

b. Does someone in the organisation have the technical skills to develop an advocacy strategy and a plan of action?

3. **Coordination and leadership.** In order to be able to lead favourable advocacy activities, appropriate coordination and leadership is needed within the organisation. If a network decides to develop an advocacy action, the role of each member organisation needs to be clarified, as well as the organisation's relationship with the individuals involved in the action. It is also very important that everyone is aware of his/her place and role in the advocacy activities.
4. **Awareness of the role of possible partners and networks in view of the lobby targets.** If an organisation wishes to engage in advocacy, the capacity to build alliances and relationships is very important. This capacity is based on a good understanding of the dynamics of power. Reciprocity, responsiveness and awareness of responsibilities must be assured in order to establish good partnerships.
5. **The capacity to provide arguments and communicate on the subject.** An organisation engaged in advocacy must assure that it has good methods for research and analysis, as well as good managerial and organisational capacities to be able to provide the necessary arguments and solid proof of the solutions being proposed (UNICEF, 2010). It should also be able to tailor arguments and communication methods according to advocacy targets. Good communication requires a thorough understanding of advocacy targets and their interests, needs and constraints, timing (and therefore often the political calendar), etc.
6. **Resources.** Advocacy requires funds and working hours over a certain period. The availability of adequate resources will greatly influence the strategy and the plan of action that can be taken.

2 Planning the action: key elements to develop an advocacy strategy and activities

An advocacy strategy makes it possible to develop concrete and effective advocacy activities. It helps to identify the kind of change sought, the political environment, the stakeholders, the targets and the

needs of both the beneficiaries and targets of the advocacy, as well as the process of monitoring and evaluating the activities (UNICEF, 2010).

2.1 Identifying the goal and themes: what change is sought?

Each advocacy action starts with this phase to answer the questions: What is the goal of the advocacy one wants to develop? What does one want to change? This might seem obvious but exploring these questions is in fact a very important first step in developing advocacy activities. Most organisations who want to start engaging in advocacy usually know why do they want to do this and already have a particular targeted change in mind. However, further analysis might reveal to them that the change they initially wanted may not be the one that is most urgent or likely to be most effective in reaching their overall objectives. Therefore, to answer the question "what do we want to change through our advocacy" requires an adequate understanding of the underlying issues, challenges and potential solutions. Among the results of the advocacy process, a distinction can be made between intermediate and final results as well as between impacts on the content (for example, change of a law) and impacts on the process (for example, the relationship between individuals).

To identify the main challenge, first analyse the situation, then seek solid information for the argument, then prioritise principal challenges and finally set objectives (AVSF, 2009).

2.1.1 Analyse the situation – the problem/solutions tree and the Theory of Change

Analysis of the situation that one wants to change begins by asking questions. In this phase, an appropriate challenge should be identified that needs change and around which advocacy can be built. To help in identifying this, the following questions can help:

Once the advocacy challenge is identified, it is important to analyse the situation in its entirety. A very interesting and useful tool to analyse a situation is that of the problem/solutions tree. The problem tree helps to comprehend the immediate and underlying causes of the challenge and helps to

- Will tackling this challenge result in real improvement in the people's lives?
- Will the advocacy give people a sense of their own capacity?
- Will the proposed change be felt in a broad and profound way?
- Will this advocacy provide possibilities to forge sustainable organisations and alliances?
- Will it offer opportunities to women, e.g. to learn to better understand the field of politics and its personal implications?
- Will this advocacy promote awareness and respect for rights?
- Will this advocacy relate local concerns to issues of greater extent, perhaps even on a global scale?
- Will this advocacy offer possibilities for fundraising?
- What are the chances of success? Can a precise target be identified, a definite calendar and a clear political solution?

collect the necessary information (UNICEF, 2010). The solutions tree provides a visual structure of the solutions, which are in fact recommendations and show how the change can be made. It provides a vision of what should be realised (the central goal = the change one wants), to what results the attainment of this goal contributes (the ends and effects) and how to try out what solutions to achieve the central goal (the means). The solutions should focus on changes in policy (Allemano, 2017). An advocating organisation therefore needs to find out whether the advocacy challenge has already entered the policy process via a policy proposal, a resolution or even an international treaty. If so, at what stage is it being treated: proposal, vote, etc? If it has not yet entered the policy cycle, what kind of policy action would be needed: new law, application of an existing law, citizen vote, parliamentary resolution, etc? This will also define the recommendations identified in the solutions tree.

The problem/solutions tree is an excellent tool for defining the change one wants to achieve through advocacy. However, other tools can be equally useful. The more recent Theory of Change approach might also work very well (BOND, 2018). Besides the usual graphical representation of a Theory of Change (ToC), it is necessary to try and answer certain questions:

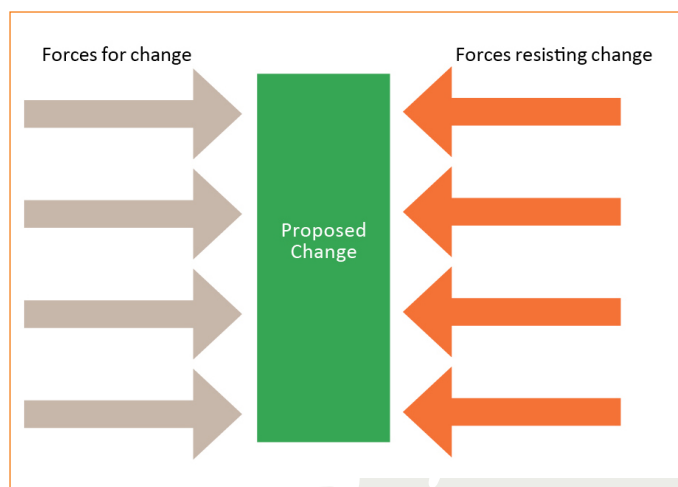
- What is the overall change sought?
- What are the pre-conditions for this change?
- What could be one's contribution as a change maker?
- How will one measure progress?

The first three questions are especially important in making a situation analysis for advocacy. The first question refers to the overall change one wants to see. It should be defined in a broad way, over a longer period of time. For instance, one might want to advocate for changing a situation related to food security for pastoralists in a certain area. Then the change in the ToC can be identified as "By 2025, food insecurity with pastoralist communities in area X has dropped by 30%". Obviously, this objective cannot be attained by advocacy alone, but it sets out a change that one wants to contribute to through advocacy.

After having identified this change, a question that needs to be asked is, what are the pre-conditions for this change to take place? What needs to happen? These are critical success factors and can be considered the opposite of the main obstacles that need to be overcome in order to attain the desired situation. To continue with the previous example, one could argue that one of the pre-conditions is that pastoralists in that area need to have rights of access to and co-management of natural resources. Another pre-condition could be that pastoralists need to have market access to be able to buy and sell foodstuffs and thus contribute to better food and nutritional security. A visual tool that can be used to analyse this is a forcefield analysis (Mindtools, 2018). In the middle, the proposed change is described, on the left side the forces in favour for change and on the right side the forces that are resisting change. Based on this map, several areas can be targeted in light of the proposed change and the possible impact they will have on the change. For instance, if one wants to achieve better food security for pastoralists in a certain area, focusing on natural resource access and co-management as well as market access could have a bigger and more direct impact rather than focusing on other things (e.g. land ownership and land usage rights), although this can be very context specific.

As a third step, one should consider one's contribution to the overall change. Different organisations can have the same analysis of a change they want to

Figure 1: Force field analysis



Source: Mindtools, 2018

bring about, including the pre-conditions for the change to happen, but their contribution will vary according to their nature. This is influenced by an organisation's knowledge, skills and experience. This also relates to the fundamentals of advocacy outlined above. For example, many different groups and organisations work on food security and nutrition in pastoralist areas, but not all of them are entering from the same perspective. Some of them might be focusing on human health, others on veterinary services, others on childcare, etc. It is important to understand to which of the pre-conditions one might best contribute. It need not contribute to all of them but rather can single out one or two. For instance, continuing with the example above, one could focus on land-use rights for pastoralists as a pre-condition for improved food security and nutrition. This choice can be made because the organisation has knowledge, skills and experience in dealing with land-use issues in pastoralist areas.

The issues around measuring progress are discussed in Section 3 on monitoring and evaluating the advocacy action.

2.1.2 Research to provide solid arguments and to understand the political playing field: do your homework

After having analysed the situation and defined the change sought, it is important to look for scientific proof, information and arguments to make a case. This stage is crucial. In-depth research leads to well-based and solid argumentation and is essential for

all advocacy activity (UNICEF, 2010). The arguments developed at this stage provide legitimacy for all stages of the advocacy process. Gathering and analysing information needs to be done at several stages throughout the process. This research is essential for selecting the challenges, defining the objectives, formulating the messages, creating alliances and monitoring progress. Research and analysis of findings should ensure a good understanding of the challenge and the analysis should be supported by both qualitative and quantitative data.

Next to searching for scientific proof for the proposed change, it is also necessary to conduct research to understand the policy context of the change being sought before engaging actively in advocacy activities. Analysis of the existing political environment allows us to identify opportunities and openings to launch advocacy activities. It requires good knowledge of the subject as well as a good understanding of the stakeholders involved in the policy change (see below). It is important to be able to put the subject in its appropriate political context and to understand what political level is responsible for the policy change at what time.

Good policy analysis allows the advocating organisation to grasp opportunities, create alliances, raise awareness and convey messages. In order to maximise these opportunities, the organisation must have clear ideas about what it wants to achieve through these opportunities.

2.1.3 Defining the priorities and objectives.

Sometimes when analysing a certain situation one wants to change, several changes and solutions can be distinguished to be attained through advocacy. However, to keep the focus very specific, it is important to prioritise according to the realities of the context and resources available. Proposed solutions/recommendations can be evaluated according to: i) their potential impact; ii) their prospects for success; iii) their internal justification; and iv) their external justification. According to this prioritisation, one or more solutions can be pursued. These solutions form part of the advocacy action's general goal, which is defined according to the description of the problems and the research findings. Consequently, the general goal groups a certain number of solutions

as to which ones contribute to the different types of actions. These solutions must be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Acceptable, Realistic and Time-bound. The questions mentioned in the beginning can help to prioritise certain solutions and recommendations over others.

2.2 Identifying stakeholders

Once the goal and the subjects for change have been defined, it is important to understand who can play a role in the process of change and, in particular, which institutions and which individuals must be targeted to make the change. This includes those with the official authority to make changes (such as political decision-makers or private companies) and those with the capacity to influence these official authorities (organisations that work on the same theme, for example).

It is important to identify stakeholders and targets for advocacy. Making a distinction between targets, beneficiaries, opponents and allies can help to identify and categorise the stakeholders of the action (Saferworld, 2012). This distinction is not necessarily permanent; along the way, the people, organisations or institutions attributed to a specific category can change their category:

- **The targets.** The people/institutions with the capacity to push for the desired change; they have the greatest possible influence on the change sought through the advocacy.
- **The beneficiaries.** The people who can improve their lives thanks to the change to be attained.
- **The opponents.** Those who are opposed to the selected change, but they can become allies along the way.
- **The allies.** Those who will support the selected change because they will benefit from it directly or indirectly.

If the advocacy action is being developed through a ToC approach, the proposed change can be linked to the target. For instance, if the proposed change is to create an enabling environment for pastoralism in Africa and EU development policies have been identified as the target, the proposed change can be finetuned to define how the EU could

create an enabling environment for pastoralism in Africa. Certain actions of EU institutions that might contribute to this can be proposed. In this way, targeted advocacy activities can be developed and the impact of the advocacy action can be more specifically measured.

2.2.1 Identify and analyse the advocacy stakeholders.

It is important to identify all these stakeholders. Then they should be evaluated according to certain criteria, including evaluation of their attitudes towards the change being sought, making it possible to avoid surprises when formulating advocacy activities. Stakeholder analysis also provides relevant information for partnerships, for identifying targets and to see how certain advocacy allies and opponents are related.

To identify and analyse the stakeholders, the following questions can be asked:

1. To identify the stakeholders:

- a. In the end, who will benefit (most) from the change being sought? (beneficiaries)
- b. Who will “lose” from the change one try to realise? Whose situation will be affected in a negative way? (opponents)
- c. Who has the capacity to change things? Who can make the change happen? (targets)
- d. Who can influence those who have the capacity to change things (at the secondary level) (allies)?

2. To analyse the stakeholders:

- a. Evaluation of their interests: What are the expectations of the stakeholders relative to the advocacy? Which benefits do they hope to gain from the action? What resources can they mobilise? (this is particularly interesting when identifying allies) Do all interests of presumed allies correspond to the advocacy objectives?
- b. Evaluation of the stakeholder’s position regarding the proposed change. Did the stakeholder publicly take a stand in favour of/against the change? In the past, what was the position of the stakeholder regarding the change? Has this positioning changed over time?
- c. Evaluation of the influence of the stakeholder. What is the economic, social, and political

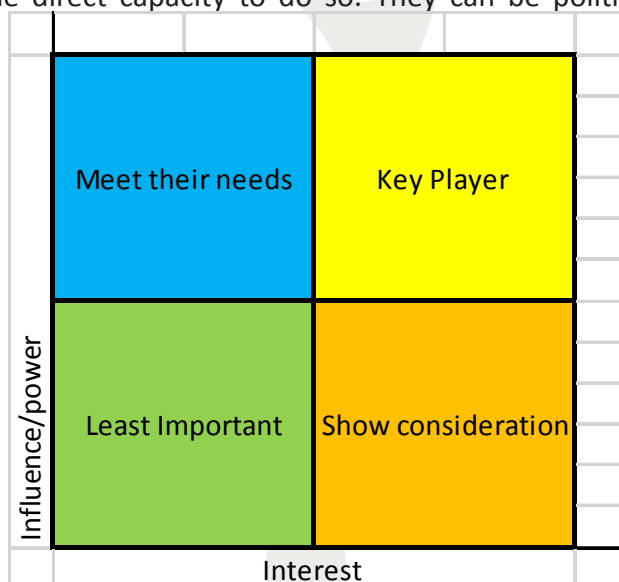
position of the stakeholder? Is the stakeholder well organised?

- d. Evaluation of the importance of the stakeholder. The importance of a stakeholder is not necessarily the same as its influence. The influence refers to the direct capacity of stakeholders to impact the change. The importance is more underlying. In some cases, it could be argued for instance that the beneficiaries do not have much influence but are in fact very important.

To visualise stakeholders and their power/interest for a particular change, a power matrix can be developed. This is a visual representations of stakeholders according to their potential influence/power and interest to push for a change or to make a change happen. The higher their interest and power, the more they can be considered a key player (be it a target or an ally). If they are not important and not influential, then most likely one should not consider them in advocacy activities. This is of course related to a certain timing, and this exercise should be done at different times throughout the implementation of advocacy activities to make sure changes are noted and duly dealt with.

2.2.1 Identify and analyse the advocacy targets

Part of the stakeholder identification is obviously to identify advocacy targets. An important distinction can be made between direct and indirect targets (AVSF, 2009). The direct targets are those who make the final decision to make a change. They have the direct capacity to do so. They can be political



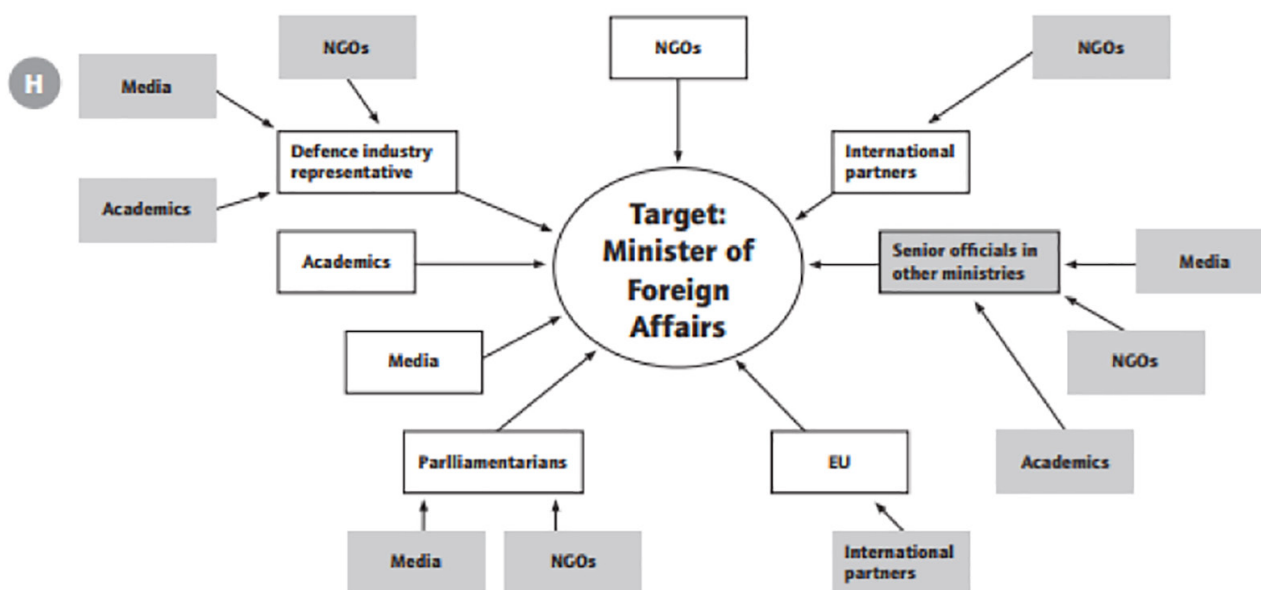
decision-makers, but also economic actors such as private companies. Besides the direct targets, there are often indirect targets. They could play an important part in influencing a direct target to make a decision that is favourable for us. Sometimes, it is recommended to pass through an indirect target to be able to influence a direct target. These indirect targets then become allies. Consequently, the distinction between direct/indirect targets refers also to the preferred method to engage the target.

A distinction can also be made based on the nature of the target:

1. If the target of the advocacy action is a political player/decision-maker, one could initiate a direct dialogue and/or choose an indirect approach by focusing on the “general public”. i.e. mobilising the “general public” in favour of ones claims. This often goes through the media. This approach assumes that the political players are sensitive to popular mobilisation.
2. If the target of the advocacy action is an economic player/private company, the direct dialogue approach often proves to be rather difficult and an indirect approach may be more successful (AVSF, 2009). In this regard, the political players can become indirect targets that can be mobilised along with the general public.

To identify the targets, it is important to limit their number. It is also important to understand the relationships between the various targets and how they can be mutually influenced. Targets should also be analysed according to a stakeholder power matrix to understand their influence and their interest in the advocacy cause.

To visualise the relationship between all stakeholders, an influence map can be designed (Saferworld, 2012). This is a chart with the target(s) in the centre and all around are the various players who could have an influence on the target. These players are also influenced by other external players. An influence map will help to distinguish between direct and indirect targets and to identify opponents.



Source: Saferworld, 2012

2.3 The definition of the message and the activities

2.3.1 How to come up with messages and how to spread them?

Once the goal is defined along with the the stakeholders and the particular targets, it is time to move on to the messages. These may differ according to the targets, but have a common basis, which is that of the core policy problem that the advocacy action seeks to change (AVSF, 2009). A message must clarify which goal one wants to obtain, the importance of this goal and how the target must act to attain it. The target must understand the change that is pushed forward, why this change is necessary, and how it must act to accomplish it. A good message entails a specific action. It specifies what is expected of the target of the message.

Before adapting the message to the target recipient, one must formulate the primary message (UNICEF, 2010). This message can then be adapted according to the target and hence will become a secondary message. The primary message should consist of a statement, proof, example, goal and desired action.

- **Statement.** This is the main idea of the message or the analysis of the problem. The statement explains why things should be changed.
- **Proof.** The proof reinforces the statement. The proof must be presented in a simple and informative way and is composed of scientific facts and figures.
- **Example.** The example / case study helps to make the things more tangible and to put a human face on the situation evoked in an advocacy message.
- **Goal.** The goal explains what one would like to realise through the action and refers to the desired result of the action.
- **Required action.** The required action refers to what must be done to achieve the main goal. This is the solution (partial) to the problem. This is the basis of any advocacy and differentiates advocacy from other types of communication.

The secondary message is adapted to the targets. In this message, one can have more information regarding the subject, according to the needs of the targets. In secondary messages, the part concerning the required action is much more detailed, considering that it is about a more specific message.

A primary message often requires several secondary messages according to the number of public targets recognised.

Formulating and defining the message

Apart from the content, several other aspects are very important in formulating and defining the message:

- The language and use of words. Sometimes it is important to use a certain vocabulary to communicate a message clearly, even different words for different targets. The language used to address the “general public” is not the same as to address a government minister or deputy.
- The source and the messenger. It is important to know which messenger the targets would find credible and respond. In certain cases, for example, it will be preferable to send a message as a coalition than as an individual player.
- Time and place. When is the ideal moment to deliver the message? Where is the best place to have the message heard? Timing overall is very important in advocacy. Advocates should always have a clear view on the agenda of the political decisions they want to influence.
- The form of the action. There are several possibilities: meetings, letters, conferences, brochures, advertisements, mass mobilisation, etc.

Once the messages and the targets are defined, the best way to get the message across needs to be chosen. This relates to the form of the message, as mentioned above. Several “forms” or methods exist: from energetic personal meetings to mass mobilisation and campaigns. Methods should be identified according to advocacy objectives, context, resources, opportunities, etc. (UNICEF, 2010).

Inside and outside advocacy

In advocacy one can choose between inside (directed exclusively at decision-makers) and outside advocacy (including also the general public and the media) or one could try a combination of both.

- “Outside” advocacy can be very effective. The “general public” can be mobilised on particular

occasions such as World Milk Day in the case of advocacy for pastoralism, but can also be mobilised through petitions that show how the proposed change is supported by a large part of the population. Statements of well-known people during these types of mobilisation are also a way to attract the attention of decision-makers. The media can play a huge role in raising awareness of the “general public” and convincing them to support the proposed change. The messages targeting the general public must be simple, clear and understandable.

- In “inside” advocacy, political players are concerned directly. Here one can distinguish between various types of action such as formal and informal encounters, conferences and seminars, sending letters, making briefings, presentations, etc. In these activities, it is important to question each time the capacity and the will of the political player to act. It is important to initiate relationships with political players and administrations and disseminate supporting materials such as presentation booklets, policy briefs, etc. (UNICEF, 2010). These materials and advocacy tools permit a much larger influence.

2.3.2 Spreading messages through different avenues

In a recent book entitled *Lobbying for change: find your voice to create a better society*, Aberto Alemanno (2017) distinguishes several avenues/pathways that can be followed to obtain a change and a number of advocacy tools that can be used according to the different avenues. These avenues summarise well how messages can be spread through different types of advocacy:

- **The judicial avenue.** Policies can be challenged in court. This is somewhat different in a sense that it is more about forcing change than trying to influence it. It is more of a remedy of last resort. It demands a lot of resources and skills. It can become important in a sense that it can become a precedent. In that sense, it is in between advocacy and lobbying. An example is the case of the Ogiek People at the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights.
- **The administrative avenue.** If the change one

wants has to be made by a target in a ministry, department, agency or other part of government, it usually involves advocating for better implementation of existing policies. Examples would be if one would want specific research to be done regarding the activities of a certain company or if one would want a document to be disclosed to the general public after having influenced the policy process in order to have enabling policies but their implementation is still lacking.

- **The political-legislative avenue.** In professional advocacy activities, this is often the preferred option to influence the legislative process or start a new legislative process. Questions that should be asked when choosing this avenue include:
 - Which level of government is in charge for the topic?
 - How many layers of government are involved?
 - Has the topic been dealt with in the past? If yes, one might want to change the existing policy.
- **The campaigning avenue.** This involves building public support and a momentum for your cause. It can be used together with other avenues such

as the administrative and the legislative avenue but not necessarily. This helps to put pressure on decision-makers.

2.4 Designing the action plan

Once the goal to attain has been established, the stakeholders and the targets have been identified and categorised, and the messages have been defined, an action plan can be drawn up (AVSF, 2009). This step combines the specific objectives, the targets, a calendar, human resources, budget, etc. In addition to the goal, objectives and advocacy targets, the action plan gives an insight on: i) who does what, ii) when and iii) with what means. It is important to designate a manager for each action and to include hypotheses or constraints.

Example of table to implement advocacy actions (Volz, 2009):

Advocacy goal: What is the final goal one wants to contribute to?						
Advocacy manager: Who is in charge of coordinating the advocacy activities?						
Specific objectives: What will be the specific and tangible results of the advocacy?	Targets: Who can push for your specific solution?	Activities: e.g. petition, roundtable meeting, hearing, etc.	Available financial resources: budget	Available human resources	Timeline	Anticipated challenges
e.g. new law, implementation of an existing law etc.		A.1.	Available: To find:			
		A.2.	Available: To find:			
		A.3.	Available: To find:			

The model of the action plan suggested above gives a summary of the general advocacy goal, the managers within the organisation who engage in the advocacy, the specific objective (results) pursued by the players according to the target, the agreed advocacy activities, the resources at hand and to find, timeline and anticipated challenges. It is important to evaluate each activity according to the budget and the number of people available. Budgetary needs appear with each stage of the advocacy. At least a small budget should be considered when organising advocacy activities, not just for human resources but also for instance to finance scientific studies, to produce advocacy materials, or to organise trainings of campaigners and partners.

The action plan can be completed with a specific calendar (timeline) that indicates more clearly at what time an action must be started and accomplished.

2.5 Summary: putting the pieces of the puzzle together

The following questions can help to better integrate the various elements suggested in this toolbox:

- Vision: What is the main change one wants to realise (general objective)?
- What are the necessary sub-objectives/results (specific) to contribute to the general objective?
- Who (target) can push for these solutions? What actions should they develop?
- How can targets be pushed towards that action: Which activities does one need to develop? With whom? At what time? At what costs?

This table can be a checklist to see whether all of the elements of the strategy and the advocacy plan of action were included (UNICEF, 2010). To illustrate this better, the table on the right page was adapted to the example related to pastoralism.



To what change do we want to contribute?	This refers to the overall vision: what does one want to attain. For instance, our overall vision can be for pastoralists to have access to good-quality animal health care at all times.
What solution/sub-change one proposes to add to the overall change? To what part of the change will one contribute?	This refers to the part of the change one wants to contribute to through advocacy. For instance, one could want a formal (legal) recognition (=legislation) of the position of Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs) to recognise their essential role in providing good-quality animal health services in pastoralist areas.
Who can make the change?	The definition of the targets, they can be on the national and international level. Allies can also be sought in international organisations, e.g. at OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health) level.
What do they want to hear?	The definition of the messages: primary message and secondary messages. In this example, the primary message would be composed of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A statement explaining the importance of good-quality animal health services related to pastoralism • Figures, adding weight to the statement • Challenges, explaining what the problem is now (e.g. lack of veterinarians) and why it is urgent to act (e.g. upcoming zoonotic diseases) • Solution: recognition of CAHWs • Example of how CAHWs have improved animal health in herds of pastoralist peoples in countries where CAHWs are integrated into national legislation (e.g. Niger). The secondary messages can be much shorter and adapted to the targets.
Who should spread the message?	Identification of the stakeholders associated with the targets (individuals and organisations/institutions), e.g. these could be pastoralist CSOs.
How can one make sure that the targets hear the message?	Approaches and opportunities (meetings, conferences, seminars, media, etc.). This is part of the activity plan and the choice of pathway/avenue.
What does one need / what must one develop?	Evaluate the capacities according to the Human Resources and the available budget, as well as the tool requirements to reinforce and spread the message.
How can one start?	Plan of action: how to proceed, who is responsible for what action, etc.
How can one verify if ones strategy works?	Plan for monitoring and evaluation (see below).



3 Monitoring and evaluating the advocacy

There is an important difference between monitoring and evaluation. According to UNICEF (2010), monitoring refers to the progress measured in the realisation of the specific results established in a strategy implementation plan. The evaluation is used to determine in an objective and systemic way the value and importance of a strategy.

With respect to the advocacy action, two types of evaluation can be determined:

1. Evaluation of the impact. This attempts to measure how the strategy and the advocacy activities have produced results for the community / the beneficiaries of the action.
2. Formative evaluation. The purpose of this type of evaluation is to measure the quality and effectiveness of the strategy. The emphasis is placed on the evaluation of the strategy according to the specific results obtained and on the way in which the activities have contributed to the realisation of the results.

In general, the formative evaluation is often the only type of evaluation used in advocacy. However, the evaluation of the impact remains important. The more precise the solutions have been formulated in the advocacy strategy, the easier it will be to evaluate if the strategy has had any impact. For instance, if a change in a particular law is sought, then the impact can be measured if the advocacy efforts have led to a change in the law or not.

With regard to a formative evaluation, the list of questions below gives some guidance for measuring the effectiveness and the quality of the advocacy strategy.

1. Advocacy objective

- What were the obstacles encountered in trying to realise the advocacy objective? How were they dealt with throughout the process?
- At what point did the political / programme change related to an objective? Was one's advocacy objective reached in part, completely or not at all?
- What can one do differently to achieve one's advocacy objective?

2. Transmitting a message / communication

- Does one's message reach the key public? If not, how it better be reached?
- Did the target audience respond positively to one's message? Which messages were well received and why? Which ones were not well received and why?
- Which transmission formats worked best? Which were the least effective and why? How can the formats be modified or improved?
- Did any media/press coverage support the advocacy efforts? In what ways can the relationship with the media be improved?

3. The use of research findings and existing data

- How did the use of research findings and existing data reinforce advocacy efforts?
- Were the data presented in a clear and convincing way and was the presentation adapted to the target audience? How could one improve the presentation?
- Did the advocacy effort generate new research questions? Is additional data necessary to support the advocacy objective? If so, are the data readily available or should one conduct new research?

4. The decision-making process

- Did the efforts open up the decision-making process and, if so, how?
- Will it be easier to reach and convince decision-makers next time? Why (not)?
- How could one improve the way in which the decision-making process was facilitated?
- Which alternative strategies can be used to advance the discussion? Should one target different decision-makers? Should one consider different activities?

5. Evaluating coalitions and relationships with stakeholders

- Did taking part in coalitions reinforce the support for the advocacy objective? How did one's network help the advocacy? How can one's network be extended?
- Was there a high level of cooperation and exchange of information amongst the members of the coalition? How could the relationships between the members of the coalition be strengthened?

6. Global management and organisational problems

- Was the advocacy action financially viable? How were additional resources found?
- How could financial resources be used in a more efficient way?

Source: Action Contre la Faim (2013), *Boîte à outil de plaidoyer*

4 The “policy brief”: an important tool in advocacy activities

4.1 What is a policy brief?

A policy brief is a document that suggests a political change through recommendations based on an analysis, solid arguments and case studies. It defines an urgent political issue, identifies and evaluates political options and makes recommendations for political alternatives. As in a research document, a policy brief contains an analysis (= research) but the emphasis is put on formulating recommendations that encourage the reader to act or to make a decision. The policy brief is short and less detailed than a research paper. It does not attempt to include a maximum amount of data, but rather only the data that are the most convincing related to the political changes being sought.

To develop a policy brief, it is essential to understand the political decision-making environment. Political solutions cannot be proposed if one doesn't know which policies already exist concerning the issue one wants to tackle through advocacy. Consequently, it is not enough to analyse the issue and the solutions to solve the problems; one also needs a historical analysis of the issue and the political solutions that were proposed and attempted in the past.

This summary suggests the most important characteristics of a policy brief (Mundy, 2010).



- A policy brief is limited to the objective it wants to achieve. It is important that the language, the design, etc. are appropriate for the objective. A policy brief should be limited to a specific issue.
- A policy brief has a professional character. A policy brief is not an academic document. Consequently, the focus must be on using significant scientific research. A policy brief is based on concrete evidence that demonstrates how the recommendations can have a positive impact on the situation.
- The policy brief should not be too long. A policy brief should not exceed 8 pages (3000 words maximum). The ideal length of a policy brief is 4 pages.
- A policy brief is easy to understand. The language should not include jargon.
- A policy brief is accessible. The structure of the policy brief must render the contents of the document accessible.
- A policy brief is promotional. The page layout must be appealing.
- A policy brief is practical. The policy brief must be based on what happens, on facts.

4.2 The importance of a policy brief

A policy brief is a useful tool for sending a message. It makes it possible to inform a maximum number of people and to encourage them to take certain actions. By its nature, the development of a policy brief requires that the authors reflect on what they want to achieve and how (by their actions) their targets can act. It requires the authors to position themselves regarding the main objective of the advocacy strategy and to identify solutions to resolve the situation. The policy brief makes it possible to disseminate recommendations on a large scale and to generate support to implement the proposed solutions. The dissemination of a policy brief also makes it possible for an organisation to have some visibility on a specific issue.

4.3 The framework and elements of a policy brief

A policy brief consists of several main elements. If the structure and layout of the policy briefs does not change significantly each time a new policy brief is published, the readers will recognise the visual identity of the organisation that authored the policy briefs. In general, the following elements can be distinguished in a policy brief (Mundy, 2010):

The first page:

- The title. Start with a good title to engage the readers and motivate them to continue reading the document.
- The author(s). The authors' names should be placed clearly on the document so that the readers know who is responsible for the content of the document.
- The summary. A summary should be put at the beginning of the policy brief. It is essential to make a summary of the document, which many readers will not read entirely. A summary must give the reader an impression of what they will discover in reading the policy brief and must capture the main conclusions. The most convincing arguments must be included and the connection between the activities put forward by the authors and the recommendations must be clarified. The summary can also clarify how the authoring organisation is involved in the subject of the policy brief.
- The recommendations. This part proposes concrete political solutions for the issue as it had been presented in the policy brief. The recommendations should have a very visible place, preferably on the first page. They must be specific and concrete and adapted to the capacities of the readers to act in order to change a situation. For instance, if the issue requires actions by the national parliament, then the recommendations should be formulated in terms of specific actions that national parliamentarians can take.

The corpus:

The corpus of the policy brief begins ideally with a description of the issue. This identifies, defines and explains the nature of the issue, including a brief history, the current situation and the surrounding political environment. An outline of the previous and current challenges and solutions should also be included in the corpus. Young and Quinn (2017) identify the elements which must be included in the description of the issue:

- Identification, definition and development of the nature of the issue.
- The description of the issue must convince the reader that the matter requires urgent action.

- Ideally, the description of the issue analyses its relationship with the political and historical environment.
- The description of the issue must provide a framework in order to understand the political options that are presented.

The description of the issue gives concrete arguments to encourage political decision-makers to act. To reinforce the arguments, several tools can be used such as case studies, bibliographical references, figures and tables. It is important to include not only arguments in favour of what is being promoted but also arguments that have been used against it and to show why these do not hold up under scrutiny.

After describing the nature of the issue, several options for solutions in the form of political measures should be presented and compared. The political options should be limited to the most crucial ones and it should be clarified how each option can resolve a specific challenge. The solutions and the measures proposed must be SMART.

After presenting, evaluating and comparing the political measures that could be taken, conclusions and recommendations must be formulated. This part includes a call to take action. The conclusion is not the same as the summary since it also makes important connections between the main arguments and the political recommendations. The latter are actually a series of logical and concrete steps which must be followed and implemented according to the political option that is taken.

4.4 Dissemination, monitoring and evaluation of a policy brief

Once the policy brief is finalised, its dissemination needs to be ensured. Depending on the budget, several copies can be printed and disseminated at key occasions such as meetings, seminars and conferences in the presence of political decision-makers and donors. It is difficult to assess who has received a policy brief. However, before its dissemination, lists can be drawn up to identify the recipients of the policy brief and the people responsible for its distribution. Publication of the policy brief on the websites of the authoring organisation or coalition members also assures a

large circulation. The websites and networks of other stakeholders can also relay information about the publication of the policy brief or the document itself. Of course, the policy brief should also be shared with the authors and be sent around to advocacy targets, donors, etc. of the authoring organisation or coalition.

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