

# Good practice in advocacy

**Description** This section will help participants link their understanding of good practice in existing development work with good practice in advocacy work. It should help people avoid the temptation of rushing in and doing advocacy work for others. It focuses on principles of representation and participation, accountability and legitimacy, which ensure that advocacy work is done with others or that they are enabled to do it for themselves.

**Learning objectives** By the end of the section, participants will be able to understand key issues involved in:

- participation
- representation
- accountability
- legitimacy

and consider ways to address these issues in their organisation.

**Links** This links with SECTION A1 (Poverty and development), SECTION A2 (Understanding advocacy) and SECTION A3 (Why advocacy?). It is also linked with SECTION C3.2 (Objectives), SECTION C3.4 (Stakeholders) and SECTION C4.2 (Networking).

## EXERCISE 12 Participation



**Aim** To explore the benefits and drawbacks of participation in advocacy work by those who are directly affected by a situation.

**Methods** Role play, plenary discussion

**Handouts** Participation and representation  
Accountability

This exercise will reinforce the importance of advocacy **by** or **with** the poor, rather than **for** the poor.

Role play

Divide people into two groups with a maximum of eight in each group. Remaining participants act as observers. Identify a leader in each group and set each group a simple practical task.

- **Leader 1** is to play the role of a controlling leader who must only allow his / her own decisions to be implemented. The leader does not tolerate others in the group trying to take over or ignore them. Even if they are unsure of the way forward they need to be firm and confident.
- **Leader 2** is much more democratic. The leader asks people for their opinions and encourages all group members to participate. The leader does not impose his / her own answer and does not mind if people do not reach a solution.

**Group discussion**

- What did the observers see?
- How did the participants in each group feel?
- How did the leaders in each group feel?
- Can the participants give examples of where they have seen this type of behaviour?
- What are the results of the different types of leadership?

Discuss the benefits and disadvantages of participatory advocacy and how the participants can ensure effective participation in their own work.

## EXERCISE 13 Representation



**Aim** To draw out principles of good representation.

**Methods** Role play, guided questioning, plenary discussion, presentation

**Handouts** Participation and representation  
Accountability

Role play

A worker is sacked from her job over a misunderstanding – she took some shoes home that she thought were being thrown out, and was accused of stealing. She goes home and tells her mother.

- **Situation 1** The mother is outraged as the daughter starts to explain the situation. She does not wait for the whole story but storms out of the house, goes straight to the shopkeeper and demands her daughter be given her job back.
- **Situation 2** The mother is upset for the daughter and asks her to tell her the full story. The mother then asks the daughter what she wants to do. They agree to go together to see the shopkeeper to explain the full story, in order to try to get her job back.

**Group discussion**

- What happened? What did you observe?
- How was each person represented? What was good and bad about this?
- Ask each person in the role play to talk about how they felt.
- From the case studies and from other experience, what can we conclude about principles of good representation in advocacy work?

EXERCISE 14 **Accountability**



**Aim** To help people see why, to whom and how we should be accountable.

**Methods** Buzz groups, flash cards, plenary discussion

**Handouts** Participation and representation  
Accountability

Participants work in pairs to define ‘accountability’ and share the definition with the rest of the group. Write the common themes on a flip chart and ask why is it important to be accountable in advocacy work and to whom advocates should be accountable. Brainstorm methods of accountability within organisations, such as clear job descriptions and regular monitoring and evaluation. Participants suggest ways to improve the accountability within their organisations.

EXERCISE 15 **Legitimacy**



**Aim** To understand our foundations of legitimacy.

**Methods** Plenary discussion, buzz groups, small groups, presentation

**Handout** Legitimacy

We often assume that we have legitimacy, so it is useful to understand on what basis we assume our legitimacy, and to whom we need to prove it.

Work in pairs to define ‘legitimacy’. Discuss the common themes in plenary. Split participants into two groups. The first group represents those doing advocacy work for someone else. The second group represents those doing advocacy work for themselves. Ask what groups or stakeholders the two groups of participants need legitimacy from and the basis of their legitimacy.

HANDOUT **Participation and representation**

In SECTION A2 the three approaches to advocacy show that advocacy can be done **for** those affected, **with** those affected and **by** those affected by a situation. Each one of these may be valid in certain situations, but to achieve long-term sustainability it is vital that, whenever possible, advocacy is done **by** those who are affected by a situation. Even if advocacy is being done for others at the start, it is vital that those being ‘represented’ should be included in all stages of the advocacy process, such as defining the problem, proposing the solution and determining the strategy.

**Participation**

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Solutions are likely to work better</li> <li>■ Solutions are more likely to be accepted by the community</li> <li>■ The capacity of community is built in the process</li> <li>■ It challenges the imbalance of power</li> <li>■ The community is less dependent on outside help</li> <li>■ It ensures greater accountability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ It takes longer</li> <li>■ It uses more resources</li> <li>■ The community is more vulnerable to risks</li> </ul>

**Representation**

If you are representing others, for whatever reason, there are some basic questions to ask:

- Have they asked you (directly or indirectly) to advocate for them?
- Have they given input to the position you are advocating and do they have ongoing input?
- Are they happy with the actions you are proposing?
- Are they adequately aware of the risks involved?
- Are they informed of progress?
- Are they building their capacity to advocate for themselves?

HANDOUT **Accountability**

Accountability considers how decisions are made, and to whom people are answerable for the decisions and actions they take. It occurs wherever there is a relationship, such as:

- in the local community
- between staff and co-workers
- between organisations
- between funders and beneficiaries.

The benefits of accountability include:

- ownership and participation of all involved in an advocacy initiative
- use of the skills of different people, which increases the likelihood of success
- increased sustainability of advocacy work
- increased legitimacy with policy makers
- prevention of people being marginalised in decision-making.

There are several key applications of accountability for an organisation, including:

- clear job descriptions and roles and a clear process for deciding policy
- identifying someone to whom everyone in the organisation is accountable
- ways for all stakeholders to comment on the organisation's operations and performance
- monitoring, reporting and evaluation of activities
- documentation of mission, vision, values and strategy.

## HANDOUT Legitimacy

Advocacy work depends on a long-term commitment to people and issues. This long-term commitment and partnership is a key basis for legitimacy. If you have legitimacy, people are more likely to listen to what you say.

The basis of legitimacy will differ according to the particular stakeholder to whom you are speaking. Some of the main relationships are shown below.

Some of the main legitimacy relationships

STAKEHOLDERS FROM WHOM SEEKING LEGITIMACY	BASIS OF LEGITIMACY (ADVOCACY FOR OR WITH THOSE AFFECTED BY A SITUATION)	BASIS OF LEGITIMACY (ADVOCACY BY THOSE AFFECTED BY A SITUATION)
Those directly affected by situation	Shared values and beliefs Participation by communities in identifying problems and solutions, and developing and implementing strategy Access and accurate representation of concerns to decision-makers Long-term relationship	Collective decision-making in community or group Realistic proposals Clear analysis of situation Ongoing support for those who are affected by situation Respect for variety of opinions
Policy-maker (eg: government, business)	Membership, income, etc of organisation Organisation's links (funders, supporters, networks, other policy-makers) Expertise Access to grass roots groups	Directly affected by situation Accurate information Relevant solutions Unity of opinion in analysis and proposing solutions
Coalition partner	Shared aims and values Skills and expertise Access to decision-makers Size and resources available	Directly affected by situation Shared aims and values Skills and expertise