

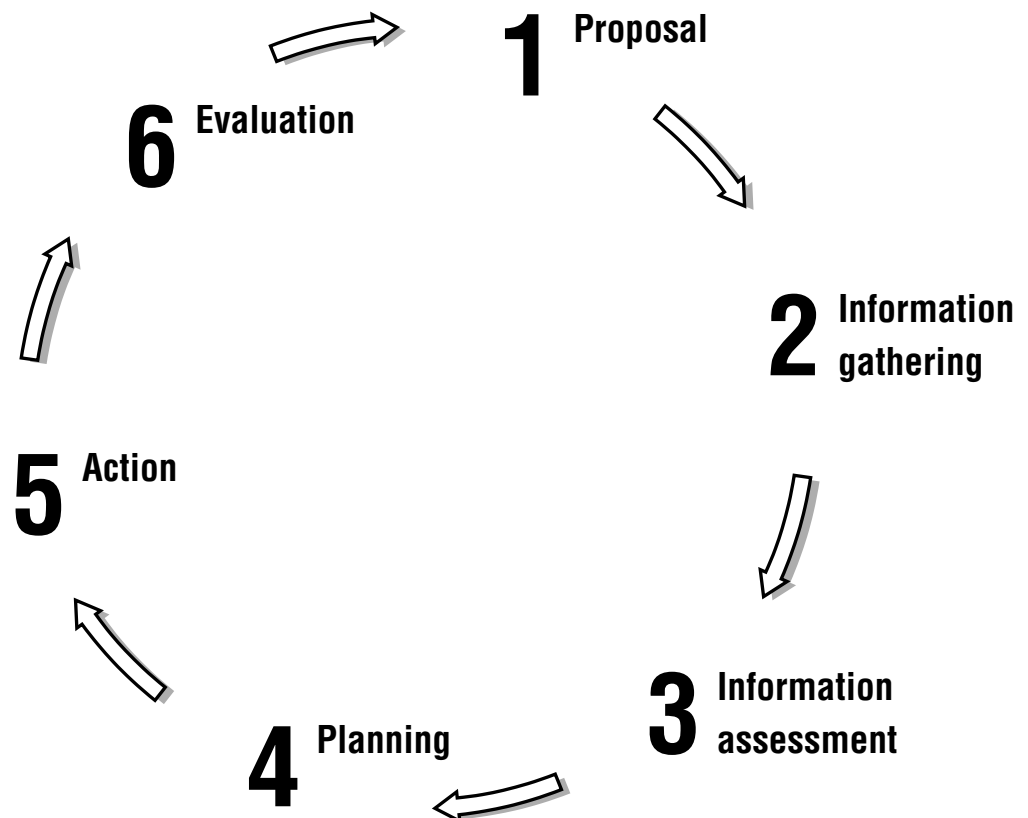
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What Can be Done?

Before you start to think about doing advocacy work, it is a good idea to be familiar with a process for planning it. To get the full picture we would advise you to read the *Advocacy Study Pack* produced by Tearfund. Here are some of the basic things to be aware of, reproduced from the *Advocacy Study Pack*:

THE ADVOCACY CYCLE

Any advocacy initiative can be divided into stages. In practice these stages will overlap. The time it takes you to complete all the stages and the necessary detail will vary greatly, depending on the urgency and complexity of your particular issue, the amount of information you need in order to act, and the advocacy methods you choose. The basic advocacy procedure is:



Within the advocacy cycle the key questions to be considered are:

- What is the problem?
- What are our objectives to solve that problem?
- Who is our target? ie: who has the power to make change happen?

- What methods and activities are we going to use to achieve our objectives, eg: meetings, letter-writing, press-releases, public demonstration?
- Who are our allies?
- Who are our opponents?
- What time-scale are we working to?
- What risks will we run if we carry out the advocacy? What risks will we run if we don't?
- Who has responsibility for the different activities?
- How can we measure whether we have been successful?

Having integrity

When we do advocacy work, people will always look critically at our own organisation and its activities. Are we practising what we preach? Are we just saying the right things, or do our own activities reflect the standards we are putting forward? So we must make sure our own organisation reflects good practice in the water sector. Our activities, whether well-digging, irrigation or sanitation, should be able to withstand investigation so that we can speak with integrity about wrong practices and injustice done by others.

START WHERE YOU ARE – THINK LOCALLY

- What are the main problems to do with water supply and access in your area?
- Who are the different interest groups concerned with water?
- Who in the local government is responsible for water management?
- What other organisations working on water might be willing to join you in advocacy?

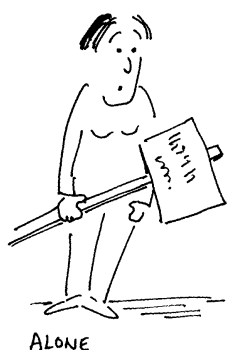
Being small

If you are a small organisation it is important to recognise your own limitations and assess your capacity realistically. Others may not think that you have anything to contribute to decisions about how the water needs of people in your locality are met. But don't be discouraged! There are ways to overcome this. Just because you are small it does not mean that your experiences and contributions to water project work are not valuable.

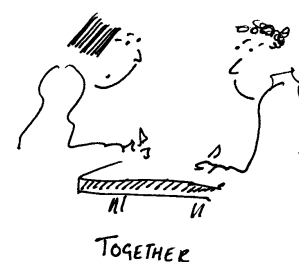
Credibility

You will gain credibility by working with other organisations, community groups and local government departments or officials to achieve your objectives. There are many other advantages in working with others, eg: increasing impact, working to each other's strengths and weaknesses, and sharing information.

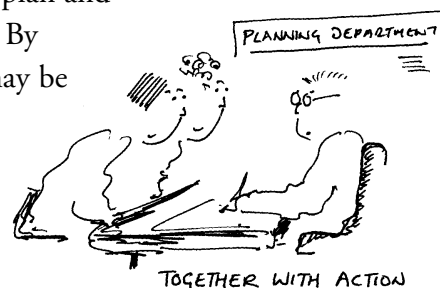
An example



You have a small community health project in a village. You think that the local authorities' solution for the lack of sanitation is impractical and that it fails to address the real needs of the village. Before approaching the relevant official, think about whether there are other organisations or groups working in another village nearby on a similar project. If they are having or have had a similar experience, propose working together. They could share with you their experience of persuading officials of a different viewpoint, or if their problem is ongoing you could approach the local authorities together and present an alternative proposal. Two organisations are much more likely to persuade the officials than one.



It may take much time and perseverance to persuade the authorities. You may first need to take them to the village and show the negative impact of their work. But if you are successful, could you suggest to the authorities that you collaborate on meeting the sanitation needs? Draw up an action plan and decide who will have responsibility for which bit. By working together with officials in this way, you may be able to solve the original problem of bad policies, pool resources and begin to co-ordinate your efforts. Ultimately the sanitation needs of the villagers may be met more effectively and fewer people will die from water-related diseases.



THINK NATIONALLY

- Does your government have a water policy or strategy?
- If they don't have a policy, should they have one?
- If they do, do you agree with it? Is it being implemented?

There are national-level water initiatives happening in many countries as a result of the activities of various international organisations. They could lead to new water legislation. If such a process is happening in your country, it could be important for you to have a say, as the policies will directly affect your work and the welfare of the poor.

What can you do?

- Find out more about your government's policies and initiatives by contacting the Ministry of Water/Environment/Health.
- Find out about processes initiated by external bodies but which are taking place in many countries, by consulting Appendix 2.
- Contact your Tearfund Regional Advisor and find out if Tearfund is associated with any other organisations working on water issues in your country. If so, you

might be able to work with them to lobby the government to reform, implement or introduce national water policies.

- Find out if there are other NGOs working on water who you could work with. The more organisations, the more influence you will have!

South Africa: What can be done when the political will is there

The Southern Africa region has been plagued with many water problems. All the major rivers in the region are shared by more than one country; the population growth is rapid, as is economic development. The water policies of the apartheid era gave water rights to those who owned land – the white population. By the time apartheid ended in the early 1990s the majority black population (10–20 million people) was without access to drinking water and sanitation.

In response to this the South African post-apartheid government took radical steps to redress many of the inequalities and to deal with the problems of mismanagement and conflict over shared water resources.

One of the steps taken was to guarantee to all citizens in the constitution ‘the right to have access to sufficient food and water’, and to state that ‘every person shall have the right to an environment which is not detrimental to his or her health or well-being’.⁵

This constitutional right was the basis of the new water policy legislation, based on the following principles:

- Decisions about water use should be driven by demands and needs for community development
- Basic water services should be considered a human right
- The regional allocation of water resources should be more equitable
- The integrity of South Africa’s environment should be protected and maintained.

The process of deciding the content of the new legislation was completely different from what had happened in the past. Workshops were held around the country to get feedback on the principles from local organisations and particularly disadvantaged communities. The new legislation has now been passed; the great challenge now is to make sure it is implemented!

THINK INTERNATIONALLY

Decision-making

Many important decisions regarding water services, affecting your work and the lives of vulnerable local communities, are being made outside your country. Moreover these decisions are often made without the involvement and opinions of the poor being taken into account.

For example, at many international meetings the involvement of large multi-national water companies is promoted as the main way to solve the world water crisis! Whilst the involvement of the private sector is important, it is certainly not the solution to

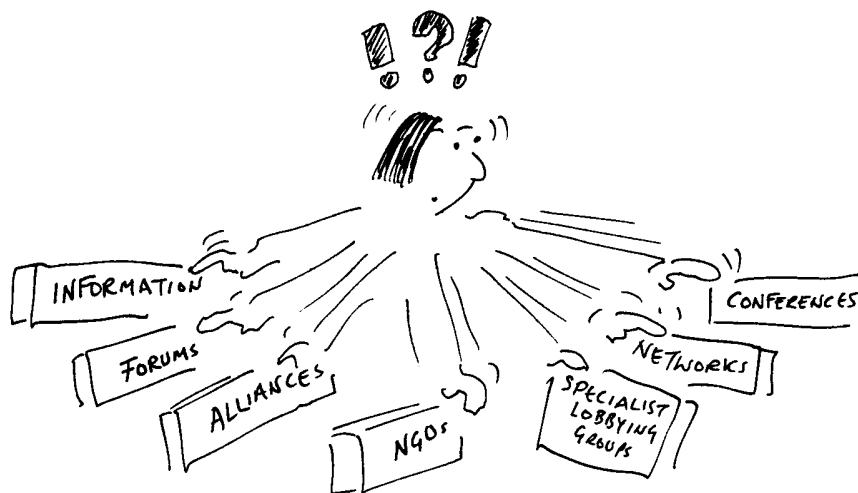
5 Gleick P (1998) *The World's Water: the biennial report on freshwater resources 1998–1999* Island Press, p159

all the water problems around the world. At international level Tearfund has been advocating for the participation of the poor in all levels of decision-making as the most important element in solving the water crisis.

People from developing countries are usually seriously under-represented and therefore it is all the more important that organisations who have good experience of working with poor communities attend and have their say.

A lot is happening!

There are currently many different international conferences and policy processes under way or due to take place that involve water issues to a greater or lesser degree. With so many events and processes, it can be a temptation to either dismiss all of them because of their number, complexity and lack of co-ordination, or to try to become involved in all of them and have a negligible impact because you have spread your organisation too thinly.



Tools for change

The way to approach these many policy processes is to view them as a tool for an ultimate objective. Your objective may be broad or it may be narrow, relating specifically to your project. Therefore, decide which policy process provides the best opportunity for you to fulfil your objective. Find out which, if any, processes your government and other NGOs are involved in. It is important to be realistic about what you can achieve, but also to make the most of opportunities that arise.

Join-up

Joining an organisation or network, whether national or international, is a key way to find out about international conferences that are coming up. For example, if you have e-mail, joining the freshwater CSD list-server (details given on page 41) will mean you will be updated with most major international policy conferences free of charge. In addition to this, Tearfund is promoting the Freshwater Action Network as a key group to become involved in (details on page 41) for accessing policy and campaign information.

