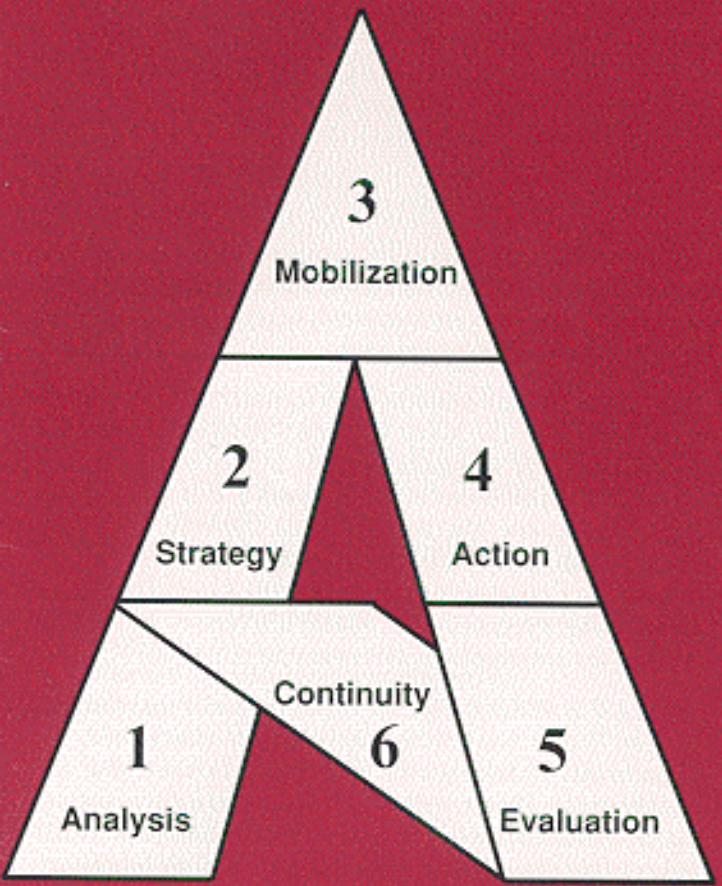
"A" Frame for Advocacy



Population Communication Services
Center for Communication Programs
Johns Hopkins School of Public Health

Johns Hopkins University Center for Communication Programs

The Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs (JHU/CCP) is a pioneer in the field of strategic, science-based communication for health promotion which endeavors to:

- implement health communication for behavior change in varied settings worldwide;
- increase audience and client participation in health promotion and advocacy;
- build capacity for strategic communication in public and private institutions, nationally and locally;
- expand the frontiers of health communication through innovative projects;
- develop and apply new concepts and technology to evaluate health communication and related behavior change; and
- encourage national and community leaders to support health policies and programs.

Internationally, the Center implements communication projects in the areas of reproductive health; maternal/child health; a healthy, sustainable environment; women's empowerment; and democracy and governance.

The Center for Communication Programs (CCP) was established in 1988 at The Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health in recognition of the proven importance of strategic communication in public health and in keeping with the leadership role The Johns Hopkins University (JHU) has played in this field. Major components of the Center are the Population Communication Services (PCS) and Population Information Program (PIP), which are funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

JHU/CCP is affiliated with the Department of Population and Family Health Sciences and collaborates closely with the Departments of International Health and Health Policy and Management. Center staff and faculty teach health communication courses in several departments. Students can obtain information about health communication courses by contacting these departments directly.

Inquiries about the Center for Communication Programs may be directed to: Phyllis T. Piotrow, Ph.D., Professor and Director; Jose G. Rimon II, Deputy Director and Project Director of Population Communication Services; or Ward Rinehart, Associate Director and Project Director of the Population Information Program.

Definition of Public Policy Advocacy

Public policy advocacy is the effort to influence public policy through various forms of persuasive communication. Public policy includes statements, policies, or prevailing practices imposed by those in authority to guide or control institutional, community, and sometimes individual behavior.

1. Analysis

Analysis is the first step to effective advocacy, just as it is the first step to any effective action. Activities or advocacy efforts designed to have an impact on public policy start with accurate information and in-depth understanding of the problem, the people involved, the policies, the implementation or non-implementation of those policies, the organizations, and the channels of access to influential people and decision-makers. The stronger the foundation of knowledge on these elements, the more persuasive the advocacy can be.

Key questions are:

- What are the problems?
- What are the existing policies that cause or relate to these problems and how are they implemented?
- How would changes in policy help resolve the problems?
- What type of policy change is needed (legislation, proclamation, regulation, legal decision, committee action, institutional practice, or other)?
- What are the financial implications of the proposed policy change?
- Who are the stakeholders associated with the desired policy change?
  - Who are the advocates and supporters?
  - Who are the opponents?
  - Who are the decision-makers?
  - Who are the undecided or swing voters?
- How are changes in policies made at different levels?
- Who and what influences the key decision-makers?
  - Whom do they believe?
  - Who are their influential constituents and co-workers?
  - What arguments are they most likely to respond to?
  - What are their priorities—rational, emotional, personal?
- What is the communication structure related to policy-making?
  - What are the channels that reach policy-makers?
  - What is a credible message for policy-makers?

2. Strategy

Every advocacy effort needs a strategy. The strategy phase builds upon the analysis phase to direct, plan, and focus on specific goals and to position the advocacy effort with clear paths to achieve those goals and objectives.

- Establish a working group to develop a strategy and plan activities.
- Identify your primary and secondary audiences (pro, undecided, and your competition).
- Develop your SMART objectives (specific, measurable, appropriate, realistic and timebound).
- Position your issue to offer key decision-makers a unique and compelling benefit or advantage.
- Follow a model for policy change that suits the situation and advocacy objectives.
- Identify your resources and plan to build coalitions and mobilize support. Seek out and work with appropriate partners, coalition advocates, spokespeople, and the media. Identify your competition.
- Plan the activities that are the most appropriate for your intended audience.
- Refine positions to achieve a broader consensus. Minimize the opposition or find areas of common interest as often as possible.
- Prepare an implementation plan and a budget.
- Plan for and combine multiple channels of communication, including personal contacts, community media, mass media (print, radio, TV), and new information technologies such as E-mail and the Internet.
- Develop intermediate and final indicators to monitor the process and evaluate the impact.
- Give the proposed policies or policy change an appealing name, easily understood and designed to mobilize support.

JHU/PCS Advocacy at Work

Bangladesh: Advocacy for a Strategic Approach

The process of developing a National Family Planning/ Maternal Health IEC Strategy with the more than 40 stakeholders, public and private, became a powerful means for advocating health centers that can provide "one-stop" shopping for health services. The Green Umbrella logo identifies and promotes the centers.

3. Mobilization

Coalition-building strengthens advocacy. Events, activities, messages, and materials must be designed with your objectives, audiences, partnerships, and resources clearly in mind. They should have maximum positive impact on the policy-makers and maximum participation by all coalition members, while minimizing responses from the opposition.

- Develop an action plan describing the situation, intended audience, the audience impacted by change, advocacy objectives, key activities and timelines, and indicators to evaluate each activity.
  - Encourage all coalition partners to participate actively.
  - Plan events incorporating credible spokespersons from different partner organizations.
  - Develop schedule and sequence of activities for maximum positive impact
- Delegate responsibilities clearly to coalition members to implement and monitor specific events and activities.
- Network to enlarge coalitions and to keep them together.
- Organize training and practice in advocacy.
- Identify, verify, and incorporate key facts and data to support your position. Compile data/documentation which supports your position and which shows importance of taking action.
- Link your position to the interests of policy makers.
- Present information in a brief, dramatic, and memorable fashion.
- Incorporate human interest and anecdotes into your messages.
- Specify desired actions clearly.
- Emphasize urgency and priority of recommended action.
- Plan for and organize news media coverage to publicize appropriate events, present new data, and credit key players.
- Rally visible grassroots support.

JHU/PCS Advocacy at Work

Bolivia: Advocacy for Reproductive Health

The 45-member IEC Technical Committee that was established to link private and public sector health agencies persuaded the Minister of Health and the Vice President to speak out on national TV promoting reproductive health. As a result of the Committee's advocacy, the government and leading political parties now support nationwide reproductive health services whereas ten years ago this would have been politically difficult.

4. Action

Keeping all partners together and persisting in making the case are both essential in carrying out advocacy. Repeating the message and using the credible materials developed over and over helps to keep attention and concern on the issue.

- Monitor and respond rapidly to other views and opposition moves. Be flexible.
- Carry out planned activities continuously and on schedule.
- Establish a means to keep all coalition members informed of activities and the results.
- Develop and maintain media support with personal contacts, press releases, press conferences, and professional assistance.
- Do not fear controversy and try to turn it to your own advantage.
- Avoid any illegal or unethical activities.
- Hold policy—makers accountable for commitments.
- Keep a record of successes and failures.
- Monitor public opinion and publicize positive changes.
- Acknowledge and credit the role of policy—makers and coalition partners.

5. Evaluation

Advocacy efforts must be evaluated as carefully as any other communication campaign. Since advocacy often provides partial results, an advocacy team needs to measure regularly and objectively what has been accomplished and what more remains to be done. Process evaluation may be more important and more difficult than impact evaluation.

- Establish and measure intermediate and process indicators.
- Evaluate specific events and activities.
- Document changes based on initial SMART objectives.
- Compare final results with indicators to measure change.
- Identify key factors contributing to policy changes.
- Document unintended changes.
- Share results. Publicize successes in a clear and understandable manner to stakeholders.

6. Continuity

Advocacy like communication is an ongoing process rather than a single policy or piece of legislation. Planning for continuity means articulating long-term goals, keeping functional coalitions together, and keeping data and arguments in tune with changing situations.

- Evaluate resulting situations.
- If desired policy changes occur, monitor implementation.
- If desired policy changes do not occur, review previous strategy and action, revise, repeat advocacy process or identify other actions to be taken.
- Develop plans to sustain/reinforce change.
- Persevere.

JHU/PCS Advocacy at Work

Ecuador: Advocacy for Safe Motherhood

A satellite teleconference linking the First Ladies of Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, and the United States used the latest technology to call high.level political attention to maternal survival. This advocacy precipitated two critical decisions on the part of Ecuadorean Minister of Health: (1) a '98 decree announcing maternal mortality as the highest national priority and (2) the creation of the National Program for the Reduction of Maternal Mortality within Ministry of Health (MOH) services.

Indonesia: Advocacy for Public-Private Partnerships

A summative review of the country's IEC programs and urban initiatives became the vehicle and the platform for advocating greater private sector participation. This culminated in the government's creation of the Blue Circle Program, one of the largest privatization efforts for family planning services in the world.

Jordan: Advocacy with Religious Leaders

Seeking religious support, an advocacy program to promote child spacing and reproductive health began with a survey of religious leaders. When the data showed high levels of support among these leaders, a campaign for more support from men was launched with high level endorsements from the royal family and the key ministries. With these endorsements, the MOH is now committed to improve the quality of family health services.

Kenya: Advocacy for Youth Programs

Support for youth programs can be sensitive, but an advocacy program that began with community leaders, parents' groups, and religious organizations created a more youth-friendly environment. This allowed a popular radio *Youth Variety Show* to address issues in reproductive health that were not included under the formal family life education programs in schools.

Population Communication Services
Center for Communication Programs
Johns Hopkins School of Public Health
111 Market Place, Suite 310
Baltimore, MD 21202 USA
Tel: 410-659-6300
Fax: 410-659-6266
E-mail: webadmin@jhuccp.org
Website: http://www.jhuccp.org

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