

# Concept, Theory and Practice of Advocacy

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We are change agents

*but*

we are not able to change society, the way it should be.

*Why? Because*

the path is different and difficult, the system is corrupt, the structure and system are closed.

*What we usually do is*

either we consider the structure as an enemy or use only force to open it.

*And therefore*

most of our efforts are misdirected because we only use one route to reach the goal.

*But*

the concept of advocacy presents many ways to get there.

It is said that the rule of advocacy is to know the system, get into the system, work within the system and use efficiently the system

*because*

the system in our society is closed and governing institutions (the State) have legal and institutional power.

*Therefore*

social advocates should use other sources of power like knowledge, information, and the people in which they themselves are strong and others are weak.

Advocacy gives social groups the bargaining power to open a closed system.

## **Why do we want to open the system?**

- Our policy makers are supposed to make policies in the interest of the public but they are not; instead they protect the interest of big people.
- Advocacy is a value-driven political process as well as a planned and organized action.
- Advocacy is not a permutation and combination of skills and strategies or substitute for grass-roots action.

- Advocacy is a political process
  - to effectively influence public policy;
  - to get it implemented;
  - to advance social justice and human rights.

For each process, different strategy can be developed.

## What is Advocacy?

“Advocacy is the pursuit of influencing outcome-including policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic, and social system and institutions- that directly affect people’s lives” (A1)[1]

“Advocacy is the deliberate process of influencing those who make policy decisions.” (CARE)[1]

- Advocacy is a logical argument for a change in policies and practices on a specific issue.
- Advocacy is the process of resolving a conflict or a problem in a democratic manner.

When the beneficiary is an individual, the advocacy effort could be considered as private advocacy. But when efforts are directed towards the benefit of the public at large, or a large group of individuals, they could be regarded as public advocacy.

“Public Advocacy is a planned and organised set of actions to effectively influence public policies and to have them implemented in a way that would empower the marginalised. In a liberal democratic culture, it uses the instruments of democracy and adopts non-violent and constitutional means” (NCAS).

“Advocacy is like a Swiss knife, consisting of several gadgets but collectively known as a knife” (NCAS).

According to David Cohen, the working definition of advocacy is:

“Organised efforts and actions that use the instruments of democracy to strengthen democratic processes. These instruments can include elections, lobbying, mass mobilisation, civil disobedience, negotiations, bargaining, and court actions. Efforts and actions are designed to persuade and influence those who hold governmental, political and economic power so that they will formulate, adopt and implement public policy in ways that lives of those with less conventional political power and fewer economic resources. Advocacy has a purposeful result: to change society’s institutions as well as the power relationships within and among the institutions such that those with less conventional political power and fewer economic resources acquire a greater share of each.”

Advocacy involves resisting patriarchy at various levels; from personal to public, from family to governance. It also includes:

- engaging institutions of governance to empower the marginalized as well as
- creating and using spaces available within the system;
- using strategically knowledge, skills and opportunities to influence public policy;
- bridging the gap between micro level activities and macro level policy initiatives;
- adopting non-violent and constitutional means.

## In public centered advocacy we do the following:

- Resist injustices, human right violations
- Engage public institutions

- Apply tools and methods
- Persuade policy makers

**The effectiveness and success of advocacy efforts depend on how efficiently the following techniques and strategies are employed:**

- Identifying and framing the issue
- Collecting information
- Mobilising interested people
- Networking
- Forming alliances
- Forming and sustaining coalitions
- Planning campaigns
- Involving the media
- Building pressure on the legislature
- Establishing contacts within the systems.

**In people centered advocacy we target the following:**

- People-directly or indirectly affected
- Public at large for changing public perception
- Decision makers: Members of Parliament, MLAs, Collectors, Judges, Bureaucrats
- Other institutions like National Commissions, Nodal agencies, Trade union, the Media etc.

**The following are the key principles in people centered advocacy**

- Listening to people
- Constant dialogue and counter questioning
- Patience
- Knowledge about systems, acts and rules (this gives you power)
- Mobilising people for the cause (not for project) and other resources
- Readiness to face consequences (availability of an alternate strategy)
- Appropriate knowledge, skills, information, tools and techniques
- Perfect timing (when the system is opening)
- Strategic planning

**What is Strategic Planning for Advocacy?**

- Strategic planning is a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and action that shape and guide what a campaign is, what it does, and why it does with a focus on the future

**Following steps to be taken for strategic planning:**

- Clarity of goals and objectives
- Analysis of strength, limitation, opportunity, threat (SLOT) of opponents and of our own group
- Collection of information about opponents: what they do, what they don't do, what they like, what they don't like, etc
- Know the key actors
- Hit where it hurts the opponents
- Choose the most appropriate time for best action

- Find out others who can influence the opponents

**The following key questions are to be considered for developing an advocacy strategy:**

- What do we want? (Strategic objectives)
- Who can deliver it? (Identify the key player/s)
- What does the audience want to hear? (Message development)
- Who do they want to hear? (Messenger / expert/ leader)
- How can we get them to hear? (Means of delivery)
- What kinds of resource are required? (Manpower/financial/knowledge, etc.)
- What have we got? (Resources)
- What do we need to develop? (Gap in resources)
- How do we begin? (First effort)
- How do we tell if it is working or not? (Evaluation)
- How do we modify if it is not working? (Strategic planning)