Gender in Food and Nutrition Security policy and legislation

Gender advocacy for food and nutrition security

Text-only version

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In this lesson

LEARNING OBJECTIVES............................................................................................................................................. 2
WHAT IS GENDER ADVOCACY? .............................................................................................................................. 2
WHY ADVOCATE FOR GENDER IN FNS POLICIES? ................................................................................................. 4
THREE REASONS WHY WE SHOULD ADVOCATE FOR GENDER ............................................................................... 4
ADVOCACY APPROACHES ....................................................................................................................................... 5
ADVOCACY RESEARCH ............................................................................................................................................. 9
THE INFLUENCE OF LAWS AND CULTURAL NORMS ON ADVOCACY ............................................................. 11
PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING YOUR ADVOCACY STRATEGY ..................................................................... 12
IDENTIFYING THE ISSUE AND THE APPROACH .................................................................................................... 13
FRAMING THE ADVOCACY PLAN .............................................................................................................................. 16
MAKING ADVOCACY HAPPEN ................................................................................................................................. 17
MONITORING AND EVALUATING ............................................................................................................................ 22
SUMMARY ................................................................................................................................................................. 26
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- **explain** what is gender advocacy for FNS;
- **identify** the different gender advocacy approaches and actions to influence policies and legislation;
- **describe** the main phases of a gender advocacy strategy.

WHAT IS GENDER ADVOCACY?

Currently, 925 million people are undernourished. Inequality in access to resources and services seriously hinders their ability to contribute to FNS and to reduce rural poverty.

What can we do to improve this situation and bring about change?

One of the possible strategies is to **intervene at policy level**. But politicians and decision-makers are not always aware of the gender dimension of policies and legislations: this is why we need **gender advocacy** for FNS. First of all, **advocacy is not the same as communication**. The goal of communication is to convey your message or information effectively, while the **goal of advocacy is to effect a change**. Let’s compare responses to effective advocacy with responses to effective communication:

- **Responses to effective Advocacy**
  - Government officials know exactly what to do with the information.
  - Your message will be acted upon.
  - Decision-makers have a better understanding of the topic.

- **Responses to effective communication**
  - Your message has been heard clearly.
  - Policy-makers understood your message.
  - Your audience was inspired to take action as a result of your message.
Gender advocacy for FNS can be described as actions that seek to advance the access and rights of poor women, men, girls and boys to sufficient and healthy food.

Gender advocacy addresses the effects of the laws, policies and corporate behaviours (and other processes) on FNS of vulnerable groups, with special attention given to women. Through advocacy we aim to modify the existing situation and to influence or change policy decisions taken by global, national and local institutions. Let us see what this entails.

- Gender advocacy recognizes that it is necessary to change the existing structures that cause poverty, food insecurity, malnutrition and gender inequalities. Without addressing the root causes of inequality and poverty, programmes and projects have limited effect.

- Poverty, loss of biodiversity, water scarcity and environmental degradation are major drivers of food and nutrition insecurity, but, in turn, they are the result of a combination of different political, economic, cultural and social factors. Gender advocacy aims to address these factors.

Here two further definitions of advocacy:

“Advocacy is putting a problem on the agenda, providing a solution to that problem and building support for acting on both the problem and the solution.”

“Advocacy consists of actions designed to draw a community’s attention to an issue and to direct policy-makers to a solution. It consists of legal and political activities that influence the shape and practice of laws. Advocacy initiatives require organisation, strategic thinking, information, communication, outreach and mobilization.”

1 Source: An introduction to advocacy: training guide, Ritu R. Sharma, Academy for Education Development

2 Source: Human rights manual, Marge Schuler
WHY ADVOCATE FOR GENDER IN FNS POLICIES?

Once you analyse and understand the factors causing inequalities and leading to food and nutrition insecurity, through your advocacy work you can produce a positive change.

THREE REASONS WHY WE SHOULD ADVOCATE FOR GENDER

Let us briefly consider three main reasons why we should advocate for gender:

1. A major reason to advocate for gender is the unequal access to and control over productive resources and services. The gender gap hinders agricultural production and threatens FNS.

   Although female farmers represent a major share of the agricultural labour force, they face serious constraints in accessing land, credit, technology, training, extension services and education. Gender differences in education are significant and widespread, reflecting a history of bias against girls. Education (considered as human capital) is usually a major factor in determining the opportunities for women and men to overcome poverty and malnutrition.

2. Another reason to advocate for gender is that the traditional knowledge, work and practices of smallholders (especially women smallholders) are often not adequately recognized or valued.

   Women smallholders, in particular, play a major role in reducing post-harvest losses. They are skilled in managing natural resources and biodiversity and in adapting to the local conditions. Often, however, these abilities are not sufficiently recognized and valued, so that traditional skills are replaced by modern intensified production systems and inputs. Powerful stakeholders are usually in a better position to influence agricultural policies.

3. A third reason to advocate for gender is that existing (international) agreements and policies are not implemented or adopted at regional, national or local levels.

   There are a number of international frameworks and agreements that provide key principles and strategies for the achievement of FNS, and include gender in their articles. There are specific international agreements on gender equality, like the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) commitments, which governments subscribe to and for which they are held accountable. Sometimes, politicians do not make the effort or do not have the capacity to translate these agreements into operational policies to reduce gender inequalities.
What's the difference between advocacy work and a project/programme for FNS?

Let’s see what our colleagues do answer:

“**They are not the same, but just like any project or programme, gender advocacy involves planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation. However, advocacy targets politicians and policies, and underlying issues like cultural, social and economic factors. This is something that projects and programmes might not do.**”

“**Gender advocacy can be carried out as part of a programme or as a set of independent initiatives. While a programme may implement a wide range of activities, gender advocacy comprises activities such as research, information, communication, outreach and mobilization.**”

Indeed, **advocacy work and a project/programme for FNS are not the same**, although advocacy can be carried out as part of a project or programme. Implementing **advocacy work implies** focusing your efforts and activities (research, communication, mobilization, etc.) to **promote change of the existing structures that cause poverty, food insecurity, malnutrition and gender inequalities**, and that influence decisions and policies at local, national or international levels.

**ADVOCACY APPROACHES**

There are a number of **gender advocacy approaches**:

- Women’s empowerment
- Multilevel advocacy
- Policy monitoring and public accountability
- Rooted gender advocacy

You can **focus on one approach or combine them** as needed. It is important to **choose them on the basis of the context** and according to your advocacy objectives.
Let us consider each approach in more detail:

**Women’s empowerment approach**

With this approach, your efforts focus on influencing policies and local norms to overcome inequalities in the access and rights to food and productive resources.

Empowerment is a **process of change**: by providing people with information and tools, we enable them to make choices and to transform these into concrete actions and results.

In relation to agriculture and nutrition, women’s empowerment is particularly important as an end in itself (from a social justice and equality perspective) and as a necessary means to achieve development goals and to ‘close the gender gap’ in agriculture.

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**Women’s empowerment and nutrition**

Food insecurity and malnutrition are closely linked to the access and rights to food and productive resources, education, participation and representation, information, labour markets, etc.

Many studies have demonstrated a close association between women’s empowerment dimensions and their own nutrition, and that of their children. For instance:

- In **Bangladesh**, greater empowerment of women (measured by attitudes toward abuse, decision-making power, mobility and education) was associated with increased dietary diversity scores and reduced child stunting.
- A study in **Andhra Pradesh, India**, found that measures of maternal autonomy (such as financial autonomy, participation in decision-making within the household, non-acceptance of domestic violence and freedom of movement) were associated with positive infant feeding and growth outcomes.

**Multilevel advocacy approach**

In a multilevel advocacy approach, stakeholders operating at different levels work together. This approach requires **good coordination and communication** between stakeholders, and established national and international networks, whether these are formal networks involving membership, or informal networks such as e-mail exchanges.

These networks enable:

- joint research with partners on issues of common interest;
- coordinated actions on common objectives, such as working with governments to include gender-sensitive FNS on the agenda of international summits;
- joint preparation of international policy conferences.
Policy monitoring and public accountability approach

You can use this approach when you need to assess to what extent the existing policies about FNS are being implemented (or are reaching the targeted groups). Almost all effective policy-related advocacy efforts start with observation, monitoring and reporting about the implementation and effectiveness of policies already in place. Governments and public bodies, especially in democratic societies, are sensitive to critical reports, especially when these are based on robust evidence and analyses generated from credible sources widely published and disseminated. To develop a successful system of policy monitoring and public accountability, you need to involve and empower the affected men and women, partners, civil society or community-based organizations. As a result, this approach is often combined with the rooted gender advocacy approach.
Rooted gender advocacy

Rooted gender advocacy aims to strengthen the capacity of relevant stakeholders (i.e. women and men at local level and civil society, in general) affected by a problem, giving them a voice and involving them as much as possible in advocacy work. It enables them to articulate their own needs and desires, giving them the confidence and capacities to influence decisions and policies that affect their own current and future situations.

Rooted gender advocacy is not easy or straightforward. You need to develop both short- and long-term strategies, build coalitions and partnerships, and identify and understand the ‘bottlenecks’ that block change or originate resistance.

Rooted gender advocacy of diarrhoea in Madagascar

Diarrhoea disease is the second most lethal illness among children under the age of five in Madagascar, as it leads to dehydration and malnutrition. It is caused by poor water supply and sanitation. In 2000, WaterAid supported its partner Taratra in strengthening local women’s and men’s voices in the water supply and sanitation sector through a series of ten ‘Toko Telo’ (i.e. ‘three rocks’) workshops. The workshops supported and voiced the concerns of the community by bringing together three stakeholders: the community-based water committee (including a women’s committee), the health sector and the government water department.

Women and men from the community and the leaders learned that by joining their forces, they could effectively advocate for their interests. The advantage of building the alliance from the bottom was that the committees could develop their ability and create relationships in the structured way needed to reach their objective. As a result, the local committees became a real catalyst for change.

You want to develop a gender advocacy approach for FNS in an agricultural valley where female and male farmers produce food for self-subsistence and for local and regional markets. Farmers have been affected by a policy which favours a big agribusiness company in terms of land acquisition and preferential access to water.

Is it possible to combine two or more approaches? If yes, which ones?
Yes, it is possible, for example you could combine:

- Multilevel advocacy
- Rooted advocacy
- Women’s empowerment

Rooted advocacy would be the main approach, combined with multilevel and women’s empowerment approaches. In this case, you or your organization cannot advocate against the policy that favours the agribusiness, but you can develop the capacity of local women and men to mobilize themselves to start to take actions. You can improve the chance of success for your advocacy activities by trying to influence the public opinion at regional and even at national levels, and by empowering local women’s organization. Empowered women can better mobilize, devise strategies and confront vicissitudes in case male leaders are arrested or persecuted.

ADVOCACY RESEARCH

A first, critical step in gender advocacy is collecting robust evidence and analysis of sex-disaggregated available data, which should come from credible sources, be widely published and disseminated.

In fact, before starting your gender advocacy, you need to carry out a social, cultural and institutional assessment of what the situation is in the area where you work. Your research needs to map out:

- The main stakeholder
- The policy environment
- The political players
- The interests at stake

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3 Do not use unreliable or relatively reliable information and evidence, as these can be contested. In many cases, the accountability of your campaign and/or advocacy organization will be questioned, and you will lose the support of the general public if you do not have the necessary evidence.
Main stakeholder
A stakeholder analysis for gender advocacy helps you to organize people into the following groups. You will have to tailor your advocacy activities to each of these groups.

- **Targets**: decision-makers; people who have the power to make the necessary changes; people with influence over decision-makers.
- **Constituents**: the people you work with and for; those who are expected to benefit from your advocacy.
- **Allies**: those who share your aims and can help to influence or put pressure on the decision-makers.
- **Opponents**: those who are opposed to what you want to achieve and will try to block the changes you want to see.

Policy environment
Through a policy analysis, you examine both existing and proposed legislation and policies to ensure that they take into account their specific impact on women and men. The goal is to pose gender-specific questions to identify gender inequalities in existing governmental policy and to develop a process that addresses these in future policies and strategies. We will consider areas for policy analysis in more detail later in this lesson.

Political players
It is important to identify the groups with the power of influence and to map out how they relate. For example, they may be:

- politicians and parties (elected, appointed) in formal government;
- civil servants;
- faith organizations and leaders;
- business associations and large companies;
- lawyers, judges, doctors, academics, teachers and other professionals;
- media, including television, radio, newspapers and magazines;
- trade unions and workers associations;
- consumer organizations and consumer groups;
- women’s groups;
- NGOs and civil society organizations;
Gender in Food and Nutrition Security

- regional institutions;
- international institutions such as the World Bank/International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization, United Nations agencies.

Interests at stake
Mapping the interests at stake means that you not only identify the main problem, but also the related consequences and risks if you start to develop the advocacy work.

For instance, in some regions strong religious or cultural norms prohibit women’s participation in public events, or deny women’s rights to access and control over productive resources. In this context, you cannot implement a media advocacy or a public campaign against religious or cultural norms because many interests are at stake. Instead of advancing the achievement of your advocacy objectives, you would run the risk of hindering your campaign.

What are the benefits of carrying out advocacy research?

You can:
- provide support towards the aimed objective(s);
- gain valuable allies;
- break resistance or provide counterarguments to opponent groups;
- overcome the lack of political will and bureaucratic inertia.

THE INFLUENCE OF LAWS AND CULTURAL NORMS ON ADVOCACY

Once you have completed your advocacy research, you should have an idea of what is legally or culturally possible to implement in your campaign and you can adapt your strategy accordingly.

For example...

... in countries where women are denied participation in public events, you cannot force them to campaign publicly. In cases where religious dogma is behind this prescription, you cannot openly campaign against it. If you do, instead of advancing the achievement of your advocacy objectives, you may obstruct your campaign.

At times, therefore, it is important to raise the awareness of the local (religious) leaders and decision-makers while planning the campaign, to ensure a global social mobilization.
Here are three common scenarios you may encounter that involve government and civil society, although these are not the only players. The point is that your specific context will guide decisions about what type of advocacy work to carry out.

**Scenario 1**

- Government/institutions and civil society are ready for a gender discussion that will change policies.
- In this case it is possible to implement a gender advocacy strategy.

**Scenario 2**

- Government/institutions are ready for a gender discussion that will change policies, but civil society is not.
- This is rare, and is normally connected to a lack of capacity from civil society organizations.
- In this case, while engaging in policy discussions and normative work with government, you could adopt a rooted gender advocacy approach and work to build the capacity of civil society organizations.

**Scenario 3**

- Government/institutions are not ready for a gender discussion that will change policies, but civil society is.
- In these instances, it is preferable not to work on gender directly through public campaigning on gender issues. Alternative entry points should be identified that work from within, in order to change the agenda and institutional views step by step. At the same time, it is crucial to identify champions within the key ministries and civil society who can push for change from within. A thorough assessment is very important to identify constraints, opportunities, champions as well as points of entry within existing policy and normative discussions.

**PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING YOUR ADVOCACY STRATEGY**

We will now look at how to implement gender advocacy work. Once you have completed your research, you can move forward with the planning and implementation of your advocacy work. The principles of advocacy planning are similar to those you would use to plan any other programme: you need to be clear about the objectives, targets, advocacy actions, and the monitoring and evaluation system.
If you follow the four steps listed below in the advocacy cycle, it will be easier to address the main challenge of gender advocacy, which often involves highly sensitive issues and different stakeholders with their own interests and political agenda.

1. Identifying the issue and the approach
2. Framing the advocacy plan, by identifying:
3. Making advocacy happen through:
4. Monitoring and evaluating

IDENTIFYING THE ISSUE AND THE APPROACH

a. Identify the problem

The problem might:

• be identified through research, or by comparison with good practice from elsewhere;
• be brought forward by grassroots organizations (e.g. women’s organizations) or by specific target groups;
• have a normative basis.

➢ What is the priority gender-related food insecurity or malnutrition issue to be addressed?
  Why is it important and to whom?
  Does this problem have a policy dimension?
  What current policies reinforce the problem?
  Is there any specific gender concern to this problem that is affecting men and women differently?

b. Analyse the policy environment

As mentioned earlier in this lesson, you should start with a gender audit of the relevant policies and of political institutions. It is also important to be aware of relevant international treaty obligations, laws and standards (i.e. CEDAW).

➢ What policies are already in place (e.g. national policies or laws)?
  Are these policies reflected in current laws and regulations?
  What changes in policies could lead to improvement?
  Who is responsible for those policies?
  Who benefits from them?
  Are special measures taken to target the most vulnerable socio-economic groups?
c. Define goals and approaches

At the preliminary stage, it is helpful to define the **goal and the approach** of the proposed gender advocacy initiative.

- What positive change can be expected if the initiative is successful?
- Is the initiative intended to improve access to information, promote dialogue or strengthen voiceless and powerless men and women?
- Will it contribute to increasing the capacity of women to participate in policy dialogue?
- Will it contribute to all of these things or to broader development goals at different levels?
- Who will be the primary beneficiaries of the initiative?

d. Build coalitions

Building coalitions and allies is **essential for any successful advocacy effort**, and should be done early on. Before engaging in detailed policy analysis and planning, consult women’s organizations and other partners working at the national or local level, especially those who share similar goals and interests. Together, you can analyse the policy environment and ask:

- Have advocacy initiatives been tried before on this issue?
  - If so, what were the results?
  - Is anything similar being planned now?
  - What was the impact of similar initiatives on different groups and on women, in particular?

**Example**

For instance, you may find out that the increase of *malnutrition and gastrointestinal diseases in a certain area is caused by the consumption of polluted food*, which is produced locally. Agricultural soils and water are contaminated by a mining company located near this area. In this case, you may build partnerships with the organizations or research institutions working on human rights, FNS, or with environmentalists and women’s organizations.

e. Assess credibility

The credibility of the organization, partnership or coalition that is advocating change is a **key factor** in its success.

- Does the organization have a clear mandate to speak on behalf of those who are expected to benefit?
- Does it have specialized expertise?
- Can it influence the decision-makers?
Does it use reliable information/data to support its advocacy work?
What could be done to strengthen the credibility of the initiative? For example, could there be further research and consultation, or stronger alliances?

Example
Imagine that you or your partners may need to implement quantitative research to document the amount and degree of food contamination in ‘x’ years as a result of land and water pollution. You will need to find out which vegetables, beans or cereals have been most affected (i.e. because they are more sensitive to contaminated water).

- What kind of diseases have originated in the area after the food pollution?
- How is this contamination affecting women, men and children?
- Are your partner organizations (a university, for instance) able to establish the correlation between the new diseases or/and malnutrition and the pollution of food and water?
- Was the local knowledge of men and women taken into account?

f. Identify targets

How can we better target those affected by a particular problem or involved in a specific issue?

Imagine, for instance, that you are targeting leaders with political influence and power:

- How will you influence or convince them to bring about the desired change?
  - What do they know about the issue?
  - What is their attitude towards it?
  - What do they really care about?
  - Who can influence them?
  - What influence or power do they have over the issue?

g. Evaluate resources

Before framing your plan you should consider what kind of resources besides money (i.e. time, people and expertise) you have at your disposal.

As a resources analysis starts, you may also need to review the existing expertise in your organization, search for people with relevant knowledge and experience among your partners, and analyse their reputation among the target audience. Part of the advocacy work involve raising finances or leveraging additional resources.

- Does your organization have the required financial and human resources to carry out an action?
Here are some examples of scenarios with the respective most efficient advocacy approach:

- “I work in an area where food insecurity and malnutrition are closely linked to women’s lack of access to productive resources” → Women’s empowerment approach

- “The poor access to food is a generalized problem in the country, so I am developing a campaign by focusing at both local and national levels.” → Multilevel advocacy approach

- “My organization doubts that existing policies in relation to gender and FNS are reaching the targeted groups” → Policy monitoring and public accountability approach

- “I want to increase the capacity of local women and men affected by the problem and to involve them as much as possible in the advocacy work” → Rooted gender advocacy approach

FRAMING THE ADVOCACY PLAN

A practical way to frame your plan is putting it in a logical framework including measurable progress indicators, starting with a baseline survey. Consider the following example, developed in Zambia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Impact indicators</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improve women’s access to irrigated land in Zambia</td>
<td>Local traditional leaders</td>
<td>Capacity development</td>
<td>40 percent of women gain access to irrigated land</td>
<td>Within five years</td>
<td>The leading organization of advocacy work</td>
<td>• Gender budget • Local leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agricultural department decision-makers</td>
<td>• Document data on women’s access to land • Advocacy research • Public campaigns</td>
<td>Policies that guarantee women’s access to land</td>
<td>Three years after the public campaign</td>
<td>The leading organization and partners</td>
<td>• Own and partners’ experts • Co-financing with partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ministry of Gender</td>
<td>• Lobbying • Media work • Submit reports</td>
<td>Number of submissions presented at international conferences</td>
<td>Two submissions are discussed and negotiated</td>
<td>Women leaders, leading organizations, partners, etc.</td>
<td>• Public budget • Own and partners’ experts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As you can see, the participation of the targeted groups and key actors (i.e. local leaders, women’s organizations, youth organizations, etc) is essential.
Furthermore, you should ensure that your action plan is flexible enough to make changes when required. Periodic review of your plan and reflective learning will help you to assess whether you need to adjust your plan accordingly. The periodic assessment should be made with the active participation of the most relevant stakeholders.

**Local traditional leaders**

Traditional leaders are targeted because they have authority and power to decide on local access to resources (i.e., land, water, and forest) and they can ensure that the behavior and expectations of local people are aligned with the overall customary norms (such as those related to gender and age). They can be key agents in promoting changes towards gender equality.

**MAKING ADVOCACY HAPPEN**

Once you have followed the preliminary steps and framed your advocacy work into a plan, it is time to implement it. Approaches to gender advocacy for FNS comprise several advocacy actions, which can be grouped as follows:

- **Lobbying**
  
  Lobbying can be described as direct attempts to influence decision-makers, such as politicians, corporate chief executives, or local, national, and international leaders. Lobbying can be formal (for example, through letters and scheduled meetings) or informal (for example, through informal meetings while participating at international conferences and conventions).

- **Public campaigning**
  
  These are activities to engage the public and to mobilize visible support for your position; for instance, giving speeches at open public events. Public campaigning can include such means as websites and blogs, social media, leaflets, and other materials for public distribution, posters or advertisements, petitions or demonstrations. The main objective of public campaigns is to demonstrate to the target group (for instance, politicians) that there is significant public concern about the issue, and to gather greater support for your position by involving a wide audience.

- **Media work**
Media work consists of using television, radio and the press to raise public awareness for your issue, providing messages in an attempt to change opinions, attitudes and behaviours to achieve greater equality and women’s empowerment. The media offer the opportunity to reach decision-makers and to influence public opinion. Therefore, your advocacy work should treat the media as both a tool for advocacy, but also as an influential target of your advocacy.

Also, keep in mind that:

- When lobbying, you should be clear about what you want to achieve, how to assess the issue you want to target and how well-informed your targeted audience (i.e. decision-makers) is about the FNS issues affecting women, men, girls, boys and children.

- As one of the objects of public campaigning is to have a direct influence on public understanding and opinion about a particular problem or issue, you need to ensure that the targeted people (both men and women) are well-informed, empowered and capable of campaigning.

- When using media, you need to consider the sociocultural context where you will carry out your advocacy work, what kind of media you will use, the specific messages you want to convey and the audience you want to target.

In particular, here are some tips for each of these types of action.

1. Tips for successful lobbying
   - Gather reliable information, facts and statistics. Use data disaggregated by sex, age, etc. that document all the areas of concern well.
   - Coordinate your lobbying with your allies (i.e. researchers, women’s organizations, father’s organizations, etc.).
   - Prepare a solid report to influence politicians with key messages to address gender concerns (you may also need to look at someone who is skillful in presenting and negotiating such issues at meetings).
   - Write statements with suggested alternatives when drafting policy text. For example, write a policy brief, which is a concise summary of a particular issue, the policy options
Gender in Food and Nutrition Security

to deal with it and some recommendations on the best options.

2. More Tips for lobbying

Prepare in advance
• be ready to present evidence backing your case;
• know the views of the people to be lobbied about gender concerns;
• understand what is in it for them and why they should change their views.

Develop your messages
• be simple and explicit;
• define the issue;
• be clear about what you want them to do about it;
• use examples that will engage their interest;
• prepare a short policy brief and use large type.

Plan and rehearse
• consider the best time and place for a meeting that will be acceptable to all target groups;
• be sure you know the venue;
• arrive on time;
• dress appropriately;
• be polite and acknowledge status.

1. Tips for public campaigning

• In order to make people well-informed, empowered and capable of campaigning, implement rooted or empowerment advocacy work in advance.
• To influence public opinion, use media and publicity, a manifesto, mass writing and petitions, or take public actions.
• Back your position and statements about the targeted issue by strong evidence and facts.
• Give your audience an easy way to recognize your campaign, designing, for instance, a logo or series of images and messages.

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4 Adapted from Hilary Coulby for International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC)
5 A manifesto is the cornerstone of any public campaign. It is a short outline of your message which is available to the public. It uses clear and accessible language to explain your position. A manifesto should state the reasons for your campaign, the problem you are addressing and the proposed alternatives.
• Try to strengthen the self-esteem and negotiation skills of some vulnerable groups when designing the campaign.

2. The campaigning toolkit:
• leaflets and other materials for public distribution;
• posters or advertisements;
• public meetings;
• media work, e.g. newspapers, radio or television;
• social networks;
• events to attract media attention;
• use of celebrities to support your cause;
• letter-writing campaigns;
• petitions;
• competitions;
• mass lobbying, demonstrations, mass events, e.g. fasts, cycle rides, street theatre;
• an active Web site.

Tips for media work

Media (especially television, radio, internet and social media) can play an important role in public advocacy work.

• To use media successfully, you need to consider:
  • the socio-cultural context where you will carry out your advocacy;
  • which media you will use;
  • what kind of messages you want to convey; and
  • what kind of audience you want to target.

For example, many rural communities do not have access to television, but do have access to radio. Some members of your audience may only speak the local language, so while elaborating gender-sensitive messages, use the language that is most spoken and understood, taking into account the education and information level of the audience.
An important element of making advocacy happen is writing the message for your campaign, taking into account the views of local men and women (i.e. the ultimate beneficiaries).

A message is a concise and persuasive statement about your advocacy objective that captures:

- what you want to achieve;
- why you want to achieve it (i.e. the positive or negative consequences of no action);
- how you propose to achieve it;
- what actions you want the audience to take.

**How to write your message:**

- summarize the change you want to effect;
- include the reasons why the change is important; (be short and punchy using just one or two sentences);
- be understandable even to someone who does not know the issue;
- include the deadline for achievement of your objective.

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**Tips for writing your message**

- Messages should encapsulate everything you need to say. They are not the same as slogans or sound bites.
- You should use the findings of your research to document your issue and to tailor your message around the features of the targeted audience.
- You need to find the most persuasive way to present your core message to the targeted audience:
  - What information do they need?
  - What key action, in particular, do you want them to take?
  - Which practical frame will make your message more effective?
  - What language will be most effective?
• You should **test your message** with people (both men and women) from the local context to get their feedback before launching a wider campaign.

**Example of an effective message**

“There are **600 million adolescent girls in the developing world. They are an undeniable force for social and economic impact.** However, around the world girls are denied a formal education because of social, economic, legal and political factors. By denying them an education, society loses one of its greatest and most powerful resources, and misses a critical opportunity to fight poverty and hunger. We want to change that. Together, we can make a difference and take ten million girls back to school over the next two years. “

**MONITORING AND EVALUATING**

Once you have carried out your gender advocacy lobbying, campaigning or media activities, it is **time to assess whether your objectives have been achieved.** But monitoring and evaluating advocacy activities for gender equality in FNS can be a challenging task. Goals are:

- Outline the inputs
- Review the indicators
- Record the results
- Evaluate the impacts.

Consider this case, a colleague tells us:

**Example of successful advocacy work**

📣 “My organization has long been doing advocacy work in a rural region to **change a policy that prevents unmarried women from owning and using land.** The two-year plan involved lobbying, awareness-raising activities and dissemination of printed materials.

Recently, the **case of a widow and the mother of six children**, who was left with no land or assets as a result of this policy, was brought to public attention. International organizations joined in, started a campaign on all social networks and launched a petition worldwide, which was signed by more than one million people. As a result, **local groups also mobilized support and the policy was eventually modified.**”
This example shows how challenging it may be to ‘measure’ the change of opinion and behaviour of the target group: what can be attributed to your advocacy work or to other factors? In fact, advocacy typically involves multiple networks and coalitions, and could be affected by many (internal and external) factors. Furthermore, gender advocacy is often a long-term process and sometimes changes are unpredictable.

What do you do to evaluate your gender advocacy work effectively?

A first option is to outline the resources you have dedicated (inputs) and the actions you have taken, and to record the corresponding immediate results (outputs):

a. **Number of proposals for lobby plans** (inputs)

   **Outputs:**
   - Number of meetings with lobby targets
   - Minutes of meetings
   - New agreements (and policies)

b. **Number of training sessions** to raise awareness about the importance of equal access to land, water, inputs and extension services (inputs)

   **Output:**
   - Number of men and women trained

c. **Number of press releases** (inputs)

   **Outputs:**
   - Information sought from you about the campaign
   - Press coverage

d. **Number of policy briefs** produced (inputs)
Output:

- Change in policies or new policies

Monitoring and evaluation requires planning. In fact, it should be considered at the beginning of the process, when developing your advocacy action plan.

In addition to recording the outputs produced by your activities, you could monitor and evaluate your gender advocacy activities and their impacts referring to the indicators previously identified and included in your logical framework. A colleague tells us about common challenges you could have to deal with:

”I have been working for many years on advocacy actions aimed to empower women, men, girls, boys and community-based organizations. The idea is to help them campaign to ask the government to protect their local biodiversity against genetically modified organism (GMO) seeds. But how can I measure ‘empowerment’?”

How do you address this challenge?

First of all you should define intermediary indicators, such as the number of:

- women, men, girls and boys participating in public campaigns to protect local seeds;
- women’s and farmers’ cooperatives organizing open days or tours to demonstrate the importance of local biodiversity;
- manifestos written by women’s or small farmer’s organization and sent to parliamentarians;
- girls and boys collecting signatures to deliver a petition;
- female and male leaders giving speeches in public or being interviewed, etc.

Moreover you should measure the quality of your speeches in terms of gender-sensitive language and messages, the change of opinion or behaviour of the targeted audience, the media coverage, etc.

For each of these additional variables you should build intermediary indicators.

Measuring progress gives you the opportunity to reflect on how things are going, make adjustments and plan your future actions. Tamara and Paulette are colleagues working for an international human
rights organization and over the past three years they have developed public campaigns to promote women’s access to land.

“The monitoring and evaluation reports indicate that, after three years, there is little evidence that our objective will be accomplished.”

“We need to find out why, and discover where the weakness of our advocacy work is.”

“Maybe we need to change our advocacy strategy to reach traditional leaders and empower local women and men to carry out their own rooted gender advocacy? Maybe there were not enough financial resources to implement gender-sensitive training to engage policy-makers and other stakeholders in lobbying campaigns? Or maybe we need to adjust our indicators and timing to be more realistic?”

The type of monitoring and evaluation that Tamara and Paulette are doing is a continuous process of reflective action where they ask questions and adjust and shift their plan to improve their strategy. Reflective monitoring and evaluation helps you to develop critical thinking, self-awareness and analytical skills. It can help you to see (by doing) what activities or strategies work in concrete situations. When you find or identify obstacles or something does not work in practice, then you may ask yourself what needs to be done differently. For example:

- Should you continue working with a particular partner?
- Should you focus your effort first on empowering poor women and men?

To conclude, let us analyse this case. Imagine you work in a region where locally-produced agricultural products are being exported. Instead of consuming their own nutritional food, farmers start buying industrialized food (flour, noodles, white rice, sugar, etc.) with the money they get from selling their products. Before the exportation activity began, women were the main producers of these local products, but when the commercial value of the products increased, men replaced women in the production cycle.

Which advocacy action (or actions) and approaches would you prioritize?
Your advocacy work you can successfully combine media work with rooted gender advocacy.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, we can say that gender advocacy for FNS is one of the key strategies to bring about change at policy and local levels, and to improve the food availability, access, utilization and stability for millions of poor women, men, girls, boys and children.

By attempting to improve the policies related to FNS and make them gender responsive, you can, in turn, address the root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition of poor and marginalized men and women, boys and girls.

SUMMARY

• Gender advocacy for FNS can be described as actions that seek to advance the access and rights of poor women, men, girls and boys to sufficient and healthy food. Through advocacy, we aim to modify the existing situation and to influence or change policy decisions taken by global, national and local institutions.

• There are a number of gender advocacy approaches: the multilevel advocacy approach, policy monitoring and public accountability, the rooted gender advocacy approach and the women’s empowerment approach.

• Before starting your gender advocacy, you need to carry out advocacy research: this involves collecting robust evidence and conducting an analysis of available data (if possible, sex-disaggregated data) to assess the social, cultural and institutional situation in the area where you are going to work.

• The main phases in the gender advocacy framework are:
  ✓ identifying the issue and the approach;
  ✓ framing the advocacy plan;
  ✓ making advocacy happen (through advocacy actions such as lobbying, public campaigning or media work);
  ✓ monitoring and evaluating.