

ADVOCACY
WORKS

BHUTAN

ADVOCACY TOOLBOX

Developing an ambitious but realistic advocacy
strategy in nine simple steps

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INTRODUCTION: What is advocacy, and what to expect from this toolbox

In the last two decades in Bhutan, there has been a transition in the governance system to a democratic constitutional monarchy, greater decentralization of responsibilities and resources to local government, and the emergence of new actors such as formal civil society organizations. This has meant greater opportunities to become involved in decision making processes than ever before. Advocacy in the new spaces created by these changes have been taking place. Hence, the term 'advocacy' is not entirely new to Bhutan. If you search the internet for a definition of 'advocacy', you will find lots of different definitions. A widely used definition describes advocacy as:

“The act or process of supporting a cause or proposal.”

This still sounds vague and leaves ample room for interpretation. In Bhutan, the understanding and usage of 'advocacy', differs, too. For example, it is used to generally mean awareness raising for changes related to health practices or anti-corruption behaviours. It is also sometimes equated to criticizing stakeholders or institutions and to acts of violent demonstrations, and hence has not found wide appeal. Consequently, let us first define what this 'Advocacy Toolbox' is all about. In the context of sustainable and inclusive development, advocacy may be best defined as:

“The deliberate process of influencing decisions within political, economic and social systems and institutions with the aim of making policies and processes more just, inclusive and pro-poor”¹

This also means that advocacy is not just about criticizing governments, but a deliberate and informed way of influencing decision-making processes in a systematic, transparent, and democratic manner – be it towards the state, the private sector or civil society. If you find these

¹Helvetas Advocacy Concept (https://www.helvetas.org/Publications-PDFs/concept_advocacyconcept_en.pdf)

definitions still too abstract, listen to the following little story which will help you to get the essence of what advocacy is²:

Imagine a little girl at home in her kitchen with her father. The little girl has a problem: She is hungry. But she knows the solution to her problem: she wants a cookie from the cookie jar on the top of the shelf. She also knows that her father, who is preparing dinner in the kitchen, has the power to give her one.

At first, she tries the direct approach and says, “Dad, dad, can I have a cookie?” But her father says, “No.”

She then says, “You gave a me a cookie yesterday,” so she is using historic precedent – she is a clever girl. Her father still says, “No.”

She then says, “You gave my little brother a cookie.” Her father again repeats, “The answer is no.”

She then thinks for a while and runs next door where her mother is working in the home office, and says, “Mum, Mum – Dad won't give me a cookie.”

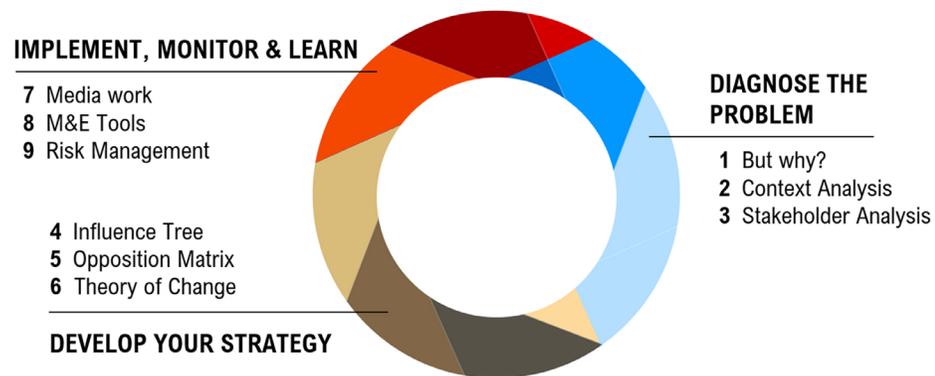


As simple as this story may be – it contains nearly everything you need to know about advocacy. The little girl has a clear understanding of her **problem** (she is hungry); she knows the solution to her problem (eat a cookie); she knows who has the **power** to help her solve the problem (her father); and she knows who might help her to **influence** her father (her mother). In addition, she is ready to use different **arguments and tactics** – and above all, she is **persistent** and does not give up after the first “No.” If you have children, you know very well that they can be really stubborn advocates.

²This is an adapted version of a story shared by British advocacy expert Jonathan Ellis (<http://jonathanelliscampaigns.com>)

Now in your case, you may not want to advocate for cookies, neither for any other direct benefits to you or your organization. Instead, you may want to convince your national parliament to adjust a certain law, or the director of a private company to improve working conditions in his/her factory. You may want to convince public or private decision makers to do something for a specific group, be it the young or the elderly, people with disabilities, or other marginalized groups. Or you might not even want to advocate yourself, but support others who advocate on their issues of concern.

Whatever it may be – this toolbox helps you to find out how to do it. By using the various tools, you will be able to develop, adjust and improve an ambitious but realistic advocacy strategy on your specific issue of concern.



The toolbox follows the logic of the **Advocacy Cycle** and consists of **nine distinct sections** that build on each other. Each section deals with a specific analytical or planning step which helps you to develop an advocacy strategy that responds to actual circumstances, is embedded in the existing institutional and political framework, and takes into consideration the resources at your disposal.

Section 1 helps you to better understand and properly define the problem you are dealing with, and to formulate a realistic solution that you are going to propose and advocate for (what is the problem, how can it be solved?). This may sound easy – but it isn't! This step forms the basis of your advocacy strategy.

Section 2 is all about analysing and understanding the wider

context in which you operate. Who has an interest in your issue? What are relevant policies, laws and regulations in the country, region or municipality you are working in? Who has the power to make the change you want to see? Who might be able and willing to help you, and who might oppose your ideas and plans?

Section 3 is about identifying the different ways and avenues for reaching out to those who can make the change you want to see. The 'Influence Tree' will help you to see how you can reach out to decision makers and to be clear about when and in what order you are going to do so.

Section 4 presents a selection of methods and techniques you can use for reaching out to decision makers. After all, advocacy can take many different forms, from confidential talks behind closed doors to public rallies and media work.

Section 5 is all about evidence: To be a credible and convincing advocate for your issue of concern, you must be able to proof what you say. However, there are different forms of evidence, and depending on your audience, you may want to present the same evidence in different ways.

Section 6 deals with getting your advocacy plan right. Using the building blocks established in section 1 to 5, you can now go on to draft your 'Theory of Change'. What are you going to do first, so that something else happens? And what comes next?

Section 7 discusses how you can best work with the media to spread the word and get your story told to a broad audience. Observing a few basic rules when dealing with journalists will help you to trigger and maintain their interest and ensure they understand your narrative.

Section 8 helps you find out to what extent your advocacy has been successful or not. Measuring progress and failure in policy processes can be challenging, but a few simple steps help you to get clarity on where you stand and whether you are still on track.

Finally, **Section 9** shows you how to identify and manage advocacy-related risks for you, your organisation and your partners.

If you are a newcomer and would like to draft your advocacy strategy from scratch, it is advisable that you follow these sections one by one. This will help you to carefully develop your strategy, understand how the different elements build on each other – and avoid coming up with some ‘fantasy advocacy’ that is overambitious and detached from reality.

At a later stage, or if you have already gathered some experience, each section can also be consulted and used on its own, especially if you already have an advocacy strategy that requires punctual reflection and improvement.

RENEW's advocacy on domestic violence in Bhutan

Formally established by Her Majesty the Queen Mother Sangay Choden Wangchuck in 2004, RENEW (Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the empowerment of women and children in Bhutan and promoting Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights, with specific attention to the survivors of domestic violence and Sexual & Gender Based Violence. In 2008, the National Plan of Action for Gender was established by the National Commission for Women and Children and the Gross National Happiness Commission. With this Plan as the basis, RENEW has been part of advocating for the introduction of a Legal Act to strengthen the prevention of domestic violence against women in Bhutan. As an exemplary case of systematic, evidence-based bottom-up advocacy, RENEW's engagement serves to illustrate and exemplify the various steps and methods of this toolbox. (<https://renew.org.bt/>)



1. 'BUT WHY?': How to know your problem and find a convincing solution

Remember the cookie story? If so, you will certainly remember that the little girl has a very clear understanding of a) what her problem is, and b) how this problem can be solved. Her problem is hunger and eating a cookie (or two) would make the problem go away.

Having a clear idea of what you want to advocate for is an essential precondition for any successful advocacy. Now this may sound obvious, and you may feel very confident in terms of the problem you want to address and of what decision makers would have to do. Yet before you start advocating, you want to be very sure that you are addressing the right thing, and that the solution which you propose is working. Even more, if you advocate together with others, (which is often the case) you need to ensure that everyone shares the same understanding of the problem and supports the same solution. In fact, many campaigns fail because (amongst other things) they address the wrong problem, propose the wrong solution, or because partners and allies start from the implicit assumption that they all share the same understanding of the issue – only to realize halfway that they don't. And finally, you cannot advocate for five issues at once. Instead, you need to focus in order to gain clarity and make sure others understand what you want.

The following, very simple exercises help you to avoid these pitfalls. In case you are planning your advocacy strategy together with partners, it is advisable to do this exercise – just like all the other, following exercises – together.

The 'But Why' exercise: Get to the root of the problem

Let us assume you are working for a civil society organization that supports women and other marginalised groups in Bhutan. Through your work with women in various parts of the country, you realise that there is a high level of domestic violence against women, and that no one dares to address this openly. To better understand the problem, you need to get to the root of it to get focus



and identify your priority issue. The easiest way to do so is to ask, “But why is this a problem?” – and continue asking until you have a good understanding of the root causes of your problem. Here is how this could work:

The immediate problem: Domestic violence prevails in Bhutan

But Why? Because there is a high level of social acceptance of violence against women based on the persistence of harmful sociocultural norms and practices.

Possible response: Start a sensitisation and awareness raising campaign to change social norms and habits.

But Why? Why is there such a high level of acceptance of domestic violence? Because women affected by domestic violence do not speak up and never bring perpetrators to justice.

Possible response: Encourage victims to speak up to so that perpetrators can be brought to justice.

But Why? Why are perpetrators never brought to justice? Because there is no legal basis to address domestic violence.

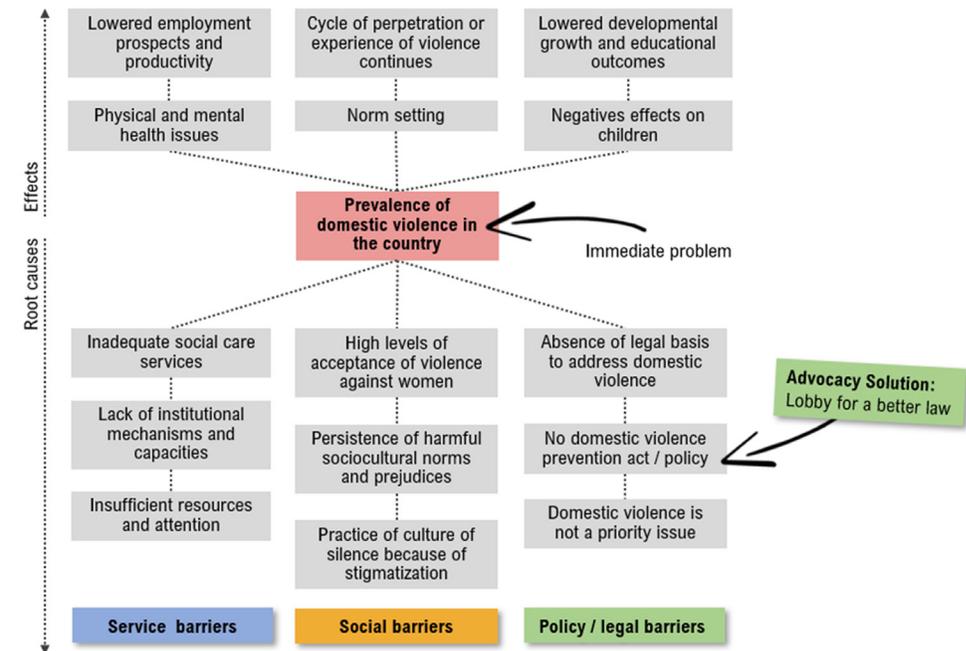
Possible response: Advocate the parliament to draft a Domestic Violence Prevention Act or Policy.

Let us stop here – although you could continue with this exercise for a long time. Some find it disturbing to continuously ask ‘But Why?’ It forces you to dig deeper and ask uncomfortable questions. Nonetheless, doing this exercise can be very revealing as it helps you to distinguish two things: First, you can tell symptoms from root causes. Second, you can distinguish problems that require a service-oriented solution (e.g. improving social care services) from problems that require an advocacy effort.

At the same time, you need to be sure that your immediate problem is properly formulated – it is never wrong to give it a second thought! For instance, if you realise that domestic violence happens only in a certain part of the country, you would probably get other responses when asking ‘But Why?’ – and come to a different conclusion on what needs to be done.

Problem tree: Find out where advocacy can help (and where not)

Many people find it helpful to visualize their problem analysis with the help of a Problem Tree. To do so, write your immediate problem in the middle of a big sheet of paper and start to develop various root causes from there. This will help you to quickly recognize interrelated problems. In a second step, you can add possible effects of your problem, i.e. what happens if the problem does not get solved. Using RENEW’s domestic violence example, a Problem Tree could look like this:



Once you have done this, take your time to discuss with your colleagues and partners which problems might be addressed through advocacy, and which ones rather not. Highlight them by using different colours. Then, try to **identify the single key problem you want to focus on** in your campaign. In case you wonder why you are repeatedly asked to keep it short, simple and focused – there is good reason for it.

Focus, focus, focus

Many advocates tend to overload and overcomplicate their campaigns. They try to solve all problems at once, thus losing focus and momentum. If you address decision makers with a dazzling array of problems and a long wish list, you are bound to fail. Politicians will pick the issue they feel comfortable with – and ignore the rest. Yet if you confront them with a specific problem and solution, there is no way for them to escape. Defining such a focus can be hard, so you need a few clear-cut selection criteria: Do you stand realistic chances for success? Is there a window of opportunity to address this problem now? Can you find enough partners and allies (see section 2)? Do you have the expertise to be credible and convincing? You will certainly find more selection criteria – the crucial thing is that **you know exactly why you choose a certain issue** over another.

Once you have identified your key problem, you should also be able to formulate a concrete solution for how the problem can be solved. This – problem statement and proposed solution – will form the basis of the following steps towards your advocacy strategy, so write it down by using only one sentence each.

Problem statement: There is a very high prevalence (77%) of domestic violence in the country.

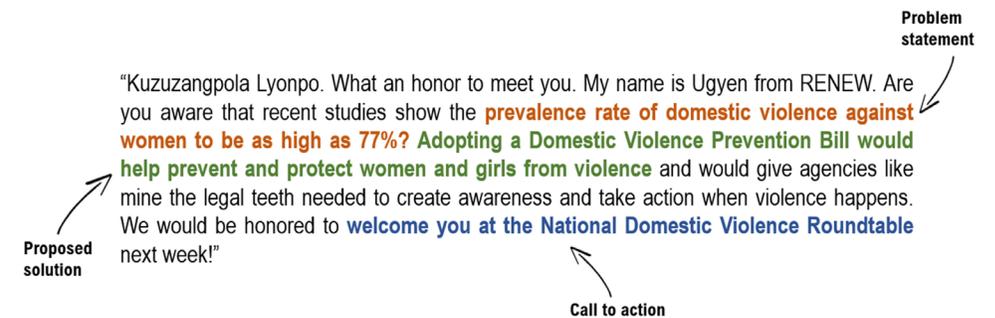
Proposed solution: Introduce a Legal Act to strengthen prevention of domestic violence.

The Elevator Pitch: Problem, solution, call to action

Hence, you need to make sure your campaign stays focused, and keep your key message very brief and to the point. Here is how to refine it and to train how to deliver it with maximum impact: Imagine you step into an elevator – and run into the one politician you tried to meet for weeks and months already. How are you going to use the next 30 seconds, until the elevator reaches the next level? As time is very limited, you need to concentrate on three things:

- **Your problem:** What are you talking about?
- **Your proposed solution:** What do you propose?
- **Your call to action:** What should the politician do next?

Conveying these three key points in only 30 seconds can be hard – but it is feasible! Practice your pitch on a friend or colleague and use stopwatch to make sure you can do it in time. Here's an example on the topic used above:



Practicing your pitch might feel a bit ridiculous at the beginning – but it is hugely helpful as it allows you to convey your key message within no time and make everyone understand what you are advocating for. Have fun practicing!

2. CONTEXT AND POWER ANALYSIS: How to understand your environment

Once you are clear on your problem statement and your proposed solution, you need to orientate yourself: How does the wider political and institutional context for your issue look like? Who is taking important decisions in this respective thematic field? What are relevant laws, rules and practices in relation to your subject? In short: What is happening around you, and how could it be relevant for your advocacy work?

The starting point here is that we often tend to focus on our issue of concern only (e.g. domestic violence) – and forget everything around it. However, a problem never comes on its own, but always has multiple causes (as we have come to realize in section 1) and is embedded in various sets of rules and practices. At the same time, things tend to change – the government issues a new regulation, a private company changes its business practices, people change their minds, or an international trend has an unprecedented influence on a certain debate. To test whether you are a good observer, have a look at <https://vimeo.com/161908570>



Analyse your external environment: How does power work?

Analysing the external political and institutional context can be a lengthy exercise. If you search the internet, you will find many excellent tools – most of which can be pretty time consuming. For a start, you might therefore decide to do a first rough analysis, to which you can add more intelligence and insights at a later stage. To do so, follow two basic analytical steps:

First, **map all actors, organizations, institutions and processes** that you consider relevant in regard to your issue. These can be

- state entities (e.g. ministries, constitutional bodies, municipal authorities);
- private sector (e.g. national and international companies; business associations);

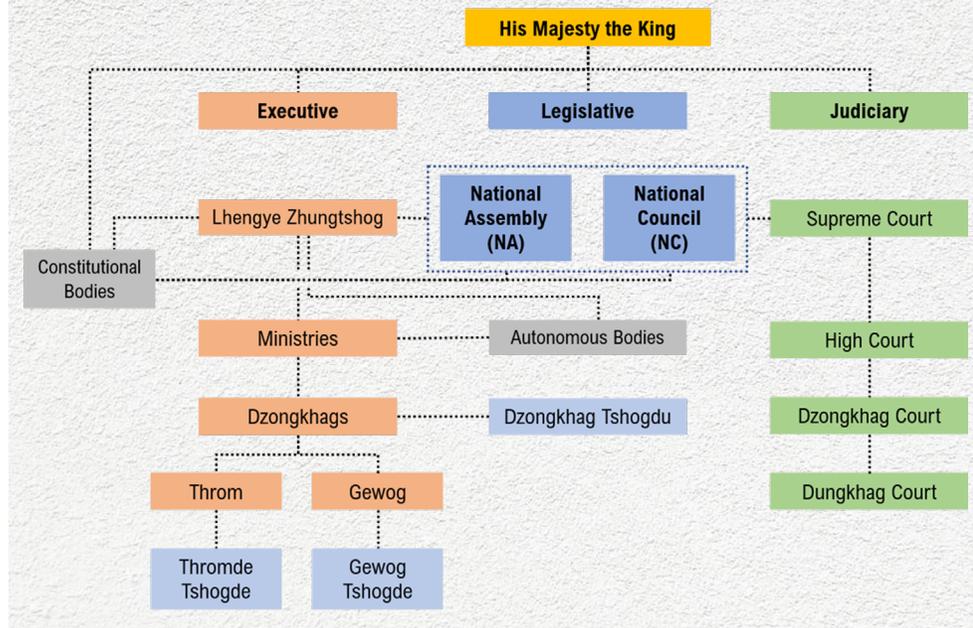
- civil society (e.g. other NGOs, social movements, community based organizations);
- universities and research institutes;
- specific laws, rules and regulations (e.g. domestic violence prevention act,; gender equality policy; laws specific to the rights of women, or other marginalised groups);
- relevant processes (e.g. an ongoing or upcoming legal reform, parliamentary debate, elections, public event)
- and many more.

The political landscape of Bhutan

In Bhutan, legislative authority lies with the Parliament which consists of His Majesty the King, the National Council (upper house), and the National Assembly (lower house). The Parliament carries out public review of policies, bills and other legislations, enacts laws, and also scrutinizes State functions. Bills are generally introduced by a Minister (government bills) or a member of the Parliament (private members' bills) and can originate in either house, except for money and financial bills which can originate only in the lower house. Public opinions on a bill can be provided online, through the members, and, according to the Rules of Procedures of the National Assembly of Bhutan 2014, under the Speaker's directive, the Secretariat shall send out directions to the people to submit their points of opinion on Bills which may then be submitted to relevant parliamentary committees. Motions may also be moved by members, and petitions can be submitted from local government or other agencies for deliberations in the houses.

Executive power lies in the Cabinet or Lhengye Zhungtshog, which is made up of Ministers headed by the Prime Minister. Each Minister heads a Government Ministry such as the Ministry of Finance or the Ministry of Health . The Cabinet plans and coordinates government policies and ensure their implementation, promote an efficient civil administration, and are collectively responsible to the Parliament. There are also several independent constitutional bodies such as the Royal Civil Service Commission, the Election Commission, the Royal Audit Authority and so forth which are accountable to the Parliament. Judicial authority lies with the independent Royal Courts of Justice which today comprises 4 tiers of courts (supreme, high, dzongkhag, and dungkhag).

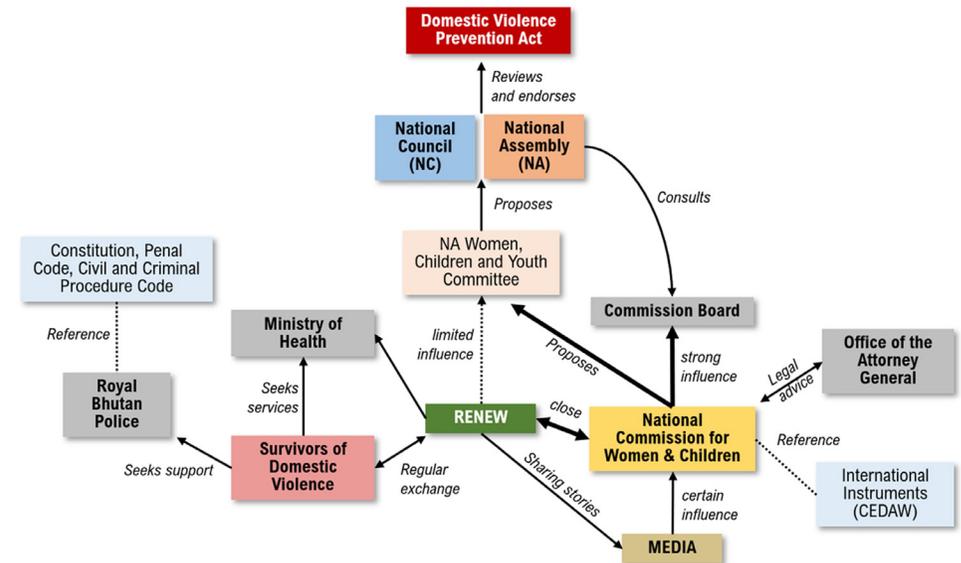
In the dzongkhags, thromdes and gewogs, the highest decision-making bodies are elected local governments which are expected to facilitate the direct participation of people in processes and decisions affecting their socio-economic, cultural, and environmental wellbeing. Local governments are supported by district, county and municipality administrations composed of civil servants from different Ministries of the government.



Don't stop too early and do this exercise with your advocacy partners and allies – doing it together you reveal much more than if you do this on your own.

Second, think about relations and processes between these actors, organisations and institutions: How do they relate to each other? Who takes the important decisions? How does power work for your issue of concern?

Now this might sound a bit academic, so here is an example how it could look like for the domestic violence issue in Bhutan:



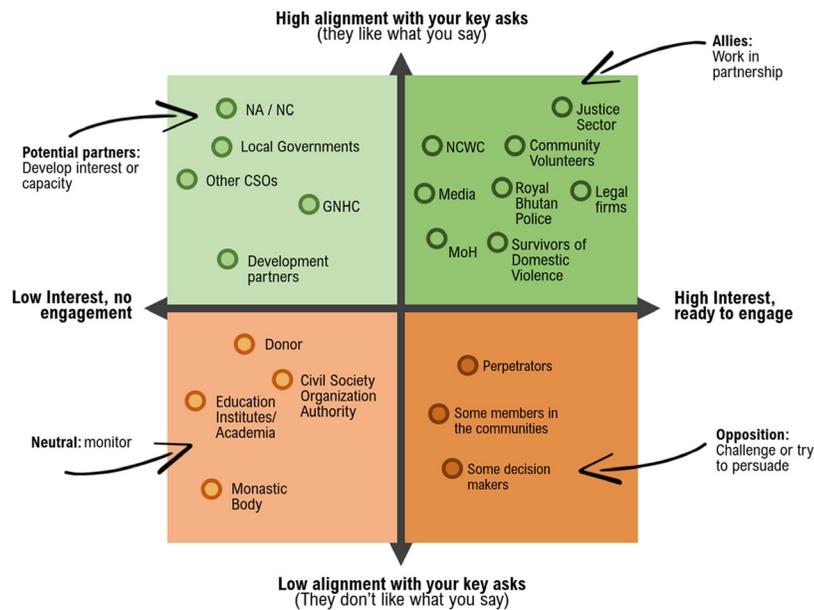
Use different types of arrows and different colours to indicate certain processes and/or the type of relationship between certain institutions – whether it is good or not so good, strong or weak. Be creative and use this rough analysis as a first basis to which you can add information as you learn more on the way. By doing this exercise, you will also realise that you still lack certain knowledge and intelligence, e.g. that you don't know all the laws and regulations dealing with violence and abuse. In that case, take your time to investigate and seek advice from those who know.

Influence and interest matrix: Who stands where?

Once you have a better understanding of the external context, you can start to position relevant actors in relation to your issue of concern. Who stands where regarding your key ask? Who might be willing to support your cause? Who might oppose your plans? Who might simply not care? And most importantly: Who might be ready to engage at all?

The Influence and Interest Matrix helps you to get clarity on this. It helps you to identify your potential partners and allies, but also your opposition. It is a very simple matrix, and you can use it like this (compare the example below):

- Take a large piece of paper and draw a simple X-Y matrix.
- The **vertical axis** reflects whether someone likes your key ask and proposal or not, i.e. whether someone agrees with what you say and propose. The higher up on the axis, the more support for your advocacy ask.
- The **horizontal axis** reflects whether someone is likely to engage in a political debate or not, i.e. whether someone has the resources (time, money, people) and the energy and motivation to support or oppose you. The further right on the axis, the more likely it is that they will become active.
- Go now back to your context analysis from before and start to **fill in all actors from your context analysis** into this matrix. Do it one by one – ask yourself whether a particular ministry, NGO or company might like what you say and whether or not they might engage. Do this one by one, until you have positioned all relevant actors on your matrix.
- In a second step, try to go beyond whole organizations like ministries, NGOs or donor agencies by **adding individuals**. After all, here might be someone in the Ministry of Finance who supports your ideas and might help you to convince others.



The result of this exercise will show you:

- **your allies**, who are likely to support your cause and with whom you should cooperate (upper right corner, green);
- **your opponents**, who will oppose your plans and with which you will have to argue (lower right, orange);
- **potential partners**, who support your ideas in principle but do not engage because of certain limitations or because they have other priorities, so you will have to talk to them (upper left, light green). If you manage to convince some of them to support your cause as 'surprising allies', it might considerably boost your advocacy work!
- **neutral actors**, who are not engaged and do not show an interest. For the immediate cause, you do not have to bother with a lot; however, if there are influential organizations/individuals, they could well become potential partners in the future (lower left, light orange).

By now you should know who might support your advocacy and might oppose it. In case you didn't know already, this exercise also helps you to identify the 'owner' of the problem, i.e. the group or organisation who is most affected and, thus, would be the most credible advocate (but doesn't necessarily have the means or capacities to do so). With this, you have made a big step towards your advocacy strategy! As with the exercises before, try to do this matrix repeatedly. As you start advocating, you will inevitably learn new things about others – what they think, how they position themselves, and why. You will also come meet new stakeholders you did not think of before. Use this matrix as a 'living document' to which you can add new intelligence, share it with your partners – and reflect any changes you may observe in your wider context.

3. INFLUENCE TREE: How to reach your target

Having completed the first two sections of this toolbox, you should by now be clear about your problem statement and your proposed solution; you should have a clear understanding of the political and institutional context relevant for your cause; and you should know the different actors and how they position themselves towards your key ask. With this, you have completed the analytical part and are now ready to start working on your advocacy strategy!

By now, you should also be in a position to answer the question “Who can make the change we want to see?” Or in other words: Who has the power to resolve your problem by initiating the desired solution? Remember the cookie story from the introduction? The little girl knows very well who can help her to solve her problem: It’s her father who has the power to open the cookie jar, give her a cookie and make her hunger go away. So, the little girl goes directly to the kitchen and asks her father for a cookie – she takes the direct route. When she eventually fails to convince her father, she takes another route and asks her mother – the indirect route.

This is exactly what this section is about: It helps you to identify your main target group and start thinking about the various routes you and your partners can take to reach out to your target. After all, if one route doesn’t work, you need to have alternatives. Let’s get started!

Draw your Influence Tree

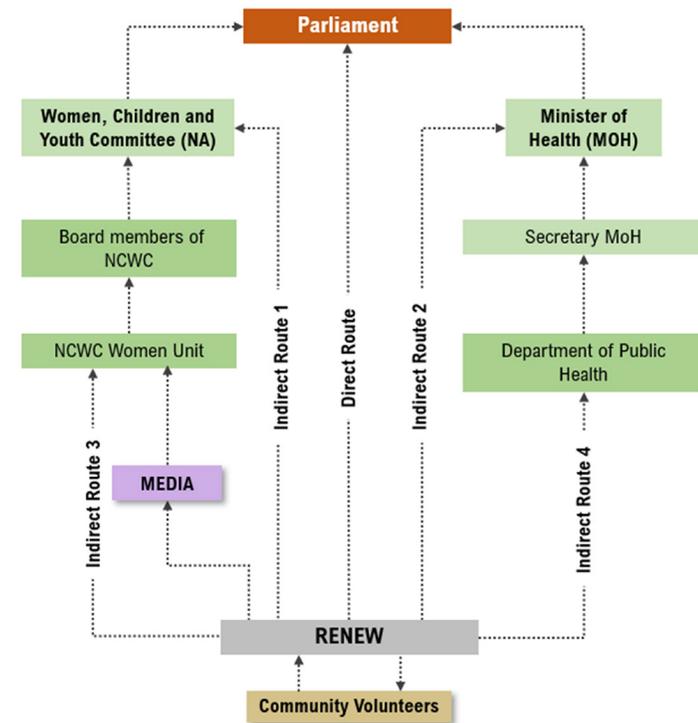
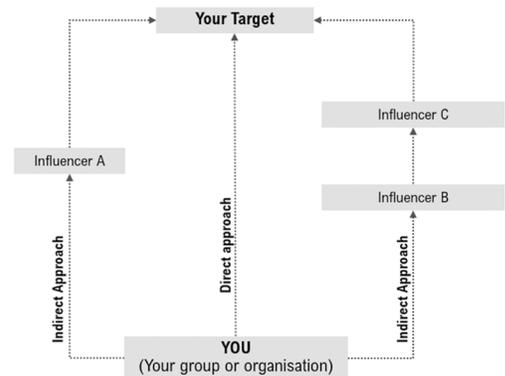
To do this exercise, take another large sheet of paper and pens of various color. Then follow these steps:

- At the **bottom of the page**, draw yourself, i.e. you and your partners, or your alliance.
- On **top of the page**, draw your main target, whether it’s a ministry, the prime minister, a certain company or anyone else. Just make sure it is the one person or organization that has the power to make the change you want to see.
- Now start thinking about different ways how you could reach out to your target group. As a first choice, you may want to try **the direct approach**. After all, you could just ask the minister for a meeting and

explain her/him what s/he should do. Sometimes it works – so you should always give it a try.

- In most cases, however, the direct route does not work. Ministers are usually hard to reach, and even if you can talk to them, they are usually hard to convince. This is why you need to think about **alternative routes**: Who might help you to reach out to your target? Who has better access to the minister, who is a close advisor or friend? And who can influence these advisors or friends, if you cannot? Here you start to think about **influencers**. To do so, go back to your Interest and Influence Matrix (section 2) to see whom you might ask for help.

The figure on the right illustrates the logic of the Influence Tree: Which routes or approaches can you take to reach out to your main target group? And if the direct approach does not work, who can help you? Who are your main influencers, and how can you reach them?



To make things more concrete, let us come back to the example of domestic violence in Bhutan. From our previous analysis (section 2), we know that the main power to draft a respective Bill lies with the parliament – it has the power to endorse new laws or to change existing legislation. Hence, it was identified as the main target of RENEW’s advocacy for the protection of women from domestic violence.

The influence tree above features four distinct routes or approaches: First, the **direct route** between RENEW (cooperating with community volunteers) and the Ministry – difficult, but certainly worth a try! Second, RENEW identified various **indirect routes**. One of these indirect routes goes through the Women, Children and Youth Committee of the National Assembly, another one through the Minister of Health. Yet another indirect route works its way from the bottom upwards, seeks the support of the NCWC Women Unit with the idea to eventually build pressure from below. After all, the Stakeholder Mapping (see section 2) showed that the NCWC is highly interested and willing to address domestic violence against women. A fourth route approaches the Department of Public Health, hence works its way upwards through public administration. All of it combined, this will increase public pressure on the parliament, so that it must address the issue and come up with a meaningful draft bill.

When doing this exercise, it is essential that you build on your previous analysis. Use your Context Analysis and your Interest and Influence Matrix from section 2 to draft your influence tree. Ask yourself were your partners and allies might come in to help, and how they might influence important actors you have no access to. After all, advocacy is all about building strong alliances and networks!

4. METHODS: How to find the right tone of voice

When hearing the word ‘advocacy’, many people tend to think of street protests, public ‘naming and shaming’ campaigns and the like. Yet advocacy is so much more than this! Remember the introductory section? It defines advocacy as a “deliberate process of influencing decisions”. Thinking of the cookie story, you will also remember that the little girl does not just shout at her father but instead tries different ways and arguments to persuade and convince him. And this is exactly what advocacy is all about: You need to be creative by trying different ways and approaches to reach out to your target groups and convince them of your cause. There are plenty of things you can do – this section introduces you to the wide range of advocacy methods, helps you choose the right ones, picks out a few to look at in more detail, and helps you to strategically build them into your advocacy strategy.

Insider vs. outsider route

In general, advocacy methods can be differentiated by the ‘insider’ and the ‘outsider route’. On the one hand, the insider route includes those methods that are not geared towards a broad audience and are not intended to mobilize a large number of people for building public pressure. Instead, they seek to convince decision makers and other key stakeholders by virtue solid evidence presented face-to-face meetings and behind closed doors. Advocacy methods like confidential talks, lobbying in parliament or smaller roundtables fall into this category. On the other hand, the **outsider route** describes those methods that seek to build broad awareness to raise public pressure on decision makers. This can include online petitions, collaboration with mass media, or even public protests and rallies.



The above figure contains a few examples only to illustrate that there is a whole range of methods between the insider and the outsider route – it's not just black or white. As a matter of fact, many advocacy campaigns start along the insider route: They first try the direct approach by proposing **bilateral talks** with policy makers, with the idea to convince them by virtue of solid evidence and strong facts and figures. They may then follow up with a **roundtable**, involving a few more stakeholders, to discuss possible solutions and eventually come to an agreement. In such a case, there is no need for the outsider route.

Very often, however, the insider route is not enough: If a regional governor repeatedly refuses to meet with you and your partners, if a roundtable ends without agreement, or if policy makers reject or ignore a public consultation process, you might want to use other methods. This can include **citizen engagement** through **public gatherings or consultations**, an **online campaign**, **filing petitions**, **media reports** or even **public protests**. The aim of any method along the 'outsider route' is to increase the number of people knowing and talking about your cause, so that public pressure on decision makers rises – and eventually forces them to address the issue.

This does by no means imply that the outsider route is always confrontational and provocative. Instead, many **non-confrontational ways** can be used to inform people, raise public awareness, and build people's confidence to speak out and spread the word by themselves. Cultural activities like community exhibitions or participatory filming can be a great way to enter the outsider route without risking too much exposure from the very beginning.

Choose the right methods

Obviously, it is up to you and to your partners and allies which advocacy methods you want to use. However, there are a few criteria you need to consider when developing your strategy:

- **Your organization's desired positioning:** If you want to position yourself as a trusted advisor to the government, you will certainly choose the insider route. If you cherish your independence and want to be seen as a critical observer, you might choose the outsider route.
- **Your partners and allies:** Make sure that your partners and allies

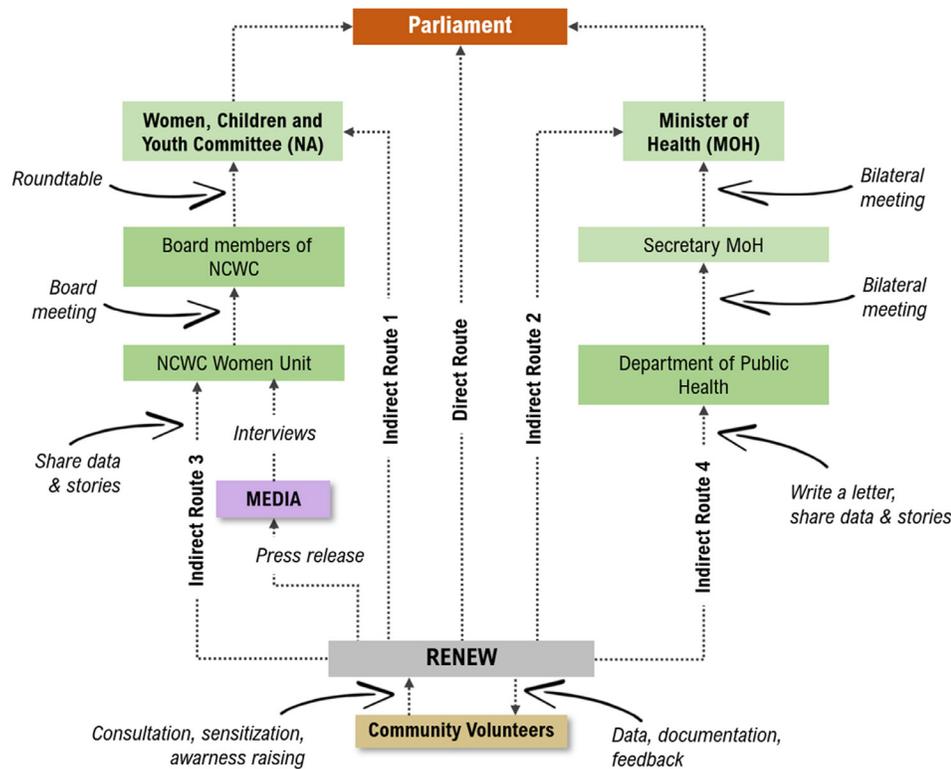
agree with the chosen strategy – you don't want to define their agenda and run them into trouble. In fact, if you work with an INGO like Helvetas, it will rather be your partners who lead the advocacy campaign, so make sure they feel comfortable with the chosen paths and methods.

- **Your preferred tone of voice:** If you want to be seen as a trustworthy, reliable counterpart which is open for constructive dialogue, you may rather start along the insider route. If you don't care and think it's time to stir things a bit – choose the outsider route.
- **Your understanding of the external context:** In some contexts, it is not advisable to speak out loud about sensitive issues, so you better do not organize large public gatherings (on risks, see also section 8).
- **Your knowledge about your target:** While some decision makers are easy to contact and open for bilateral meetings with civil society, others just never listen. In such a case, you will need to go public to build up pressure.
- **Your resources, skills and capacities:** Choosing the outsider route can be costly, as organizing meetings and printing material has its price. At the same time, facilitating a roundtable or a public consultation requires certain skills, so make sure you are ready for it. But remember: If you don't have the necessary skills or resources, maybe one of your partners does.
- **Your success:** Sometimes the direct route works perfectly, so there is no need to use the outsider route.

Build the methods into your strategy

Since you now know about different advocacy methods, you can start building them into your strategy. To do so, go back to your Influence Tree (section 3), and follow these steps:

- Look at each approach or route you have foreseen in your Influence Tree and think about which method might work best to reach a certain actor / stakeholder.
- You might foresee different methods along a certain route, depending on whom you try to reach.
- Write down your methods along the respective arrows.



Parliamentary lobbying: A few tips and tricks

Whether in Bhutan or elsewhere, you should consider a few basic tips and tricks when lobbying elected policymakers. First, know the parliament’s rules and procedures: How are laws and bills discussed and processed, what do the administration, the committees and the plenary do? Second, consult the agenda so that you know when ‘your’ issue comes up. Third, update yourself on the debate by reading minutes and press releases, so that you know the latest arguments in favour and against your issue. Fourth, do not approach parliamentarians too early or too late – either they are not yet ready to deal with your demand or they may already have formed an opinion. Fifth, consider yourself a service provider: Politicians need expert knowledge. If you can help them gaining a knowledge edge over others, they will listen to you. Sixth, keep it short and simple: Don’t send lengthy emails and letters, they won’t read it. Just remember the elevator pitch (Section 1)!

As a last step, think about **timing**: Will you use all routes at the same time, or will you try one after the other? This is a delicate but important aspect. Many decision makers react negatively if they realize that an issue is already in the media before confidential talks have even started. And some mind if there is too much pressure from different sides, while others don’t. Again – the better you know your target, the better you can decide what to do when. Finally, be prepared for failure and don’t give up if a certain route does not work as expected. After all, advocacy includes a lot of ‘trial and error’ and requires creativity along the way.

5. OPPOSITION AND EVIDENCE: How to use and convince your opponents

One of the main reasons why certain advocacy campaigns fail is that they do not care enough about their opposition. You now may wonder ‘Why should I think about my opponents at all? Isn’t it enough if I care for my own campaign?’ And it’s only natural and fully understandable if you focus on your preferred messages and those facts and figures that convince yourself. But in the end, you don’t advocate to yourself and don’t need to convince those who are already with you. Hopefully, you and your partners are already convinced by what you say and do. Instead, you need to convince others, show them why your cause is right and eventually let them make the change you want to see. As an advocate, you should therefore really care about opposition, try to understand their specific perceptions, their fears and concerns. This will help you to understand why they oppose your plans – and to figure out how to best change their mind.

So, this section is all about understanding and convincing your opposition. The first tool helps you to systematically analyze your opponent’s concerns, while the second part looks at different types of evidence and how to use them towards different audiences and target groups.

The Opposition Matrix

This is another very simple tool – but a very powerful one. You should use it repeatedly as your advocacy unfolds, as you will hear many new concerns and criticism brought up against your key asks. Here is how to do it:

- Take a sheet of paper and draw three columns and a few lines.
- Go back to have a look at your Stakeholder Mapping (section 2) and your Influence Tree (section 3) to see who is likely to oppose your plans and whom you will have to convince of your proposed solution as you go along.
- To begin with, select one particular opponent (e.g. a minister or an organization) and try to figure out what s/he might say against your ideas and proposals. What different arguments might they raise to oppose you, what fears and concerns might they have?

- Write these concerns one by one and below each other in the **first column** of your sheet.
- Once you have done this, think about how you can counter each critique. What can you say in favor of your campaign? How can you best answer to these concerns? Write down each response in the **second column**.

Against your idea	In favour of your idea	Supporting evidence
Concern 1	Supporting argument 1	Evidence 1
Concern 2	Supporting argument 2	Evidence 2
Concern 3	Supporting argument 3	Evidence 3
...

For certain concerns, you may have several good and convincing counterarguments, while for others you may struggle to reply in a convincing manner. These are the ones you need to focus on! Discuss in your team, with your partners and allies to find good arguments to support your advocacy work. In addition, try to find out which concerns feature highest in your opponents’ minds. What scares them most, what are their primary concerns? Focus on these and be sure you can really address and counter them.

Finally, make sure you can prove what you say. Referring to hearsay only and citing questionable sources will make you vulnerable and damage your credibility. Do you have solid and reliable evidence to prove what you say? Can you back up each of your supporting arguments with proven facts and figures? Most of your opponents won’t be convinced by kind words alone but will want to see a proof for what you say. So, in the **third column**, write down what evidence you have.

Going back to the **domestic violence example** from Bhutan, major opposition may arise from conservative politicians who may try to downplay the issue or argue that existing laws and regulations were sufficient to combat domestic violence. Hence, a first Opposition Matrix for the case may look like this:

Against new Act	In favour of new Act	Supporting evidence
Violence against women is not a big issue	Violence against women is prevalent	Study reports and data (RENEW, National Commission for Women and Children, Ministry of Health)
There are already laws in place such as the Penal Code of Bhutan	These laws do not specifically address domestic violence	Domestic violence categorized under battery and assault
Relevant agencies are in place to address those issues	Those agencies lack legal teeth	Testimonials, case studies
...

Doing this exercise helps you to quickly identify whether a) you have a good understanding of your opposition and their ways of thinking; b) you can counter their most important critique; and c) you can really prove what you say.

Repeat this exercise as your advocacy evolves. When talking to different people you will hear new arguments and critique you have never thought of before. Include it into your Opposition Matrix, complete the list and make the evidence check. This way, you always have an up-to-date list with your key arguments which you can also share with your partners and allies.

Different types of evidence...

When doing the opposition matrix and the evidence check you might realize that you do not have convincing and reliable evidence to support each of your arguments. In such a case, you will have to invest a bit to find the evidence you need. There are many different forms of 'evidence', such as:

- A scientific report with facts and figures about your subject.
- A legal study that analyses a certain law or regulation you want to change.
- First-hand accounts of concerned people
- A documentary or investigative media report
- Anecdotal evidence proving that certain things do happen (e.g. photos, short films)

You can certainly think of more than this and will know examples from other campaigns. Think about other campaigns that you liked – what evidence did they present, and how?

...and how to use them

Sometimes you must first generate the evidence you need because it does not yet exist. In such a case, you might want to contract a study or analysis, or reach out to the media so they investigate and report on a certain issue. Sometimes, however, evidence is already there and all you need to do is to present it in a way so that people listen. But not everyone listens to the same messages! Some people are more receptive to dry facts and figures, to thorough and detailed analyses. Others want to hear surprising stories and first-hand accounts, real quotes from real people who recount their experiences and share their point of view. So, depending on your main audience, you may want to repack your evidence and present it in different ways and formats. The table below gives you a few ideas on which forms of evidence resonate best with different audiences³.

Audience	Evidence they might respond to best
Elected policymakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big ideas • Compelling stories • Positive visions
Civil servants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective and rigorous • Credible methodology • Data and technical details
Corporate executives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company-specific findings • Credible methodology
Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-focused • Generated with their participation
Activists and the broad public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human face to the story • Simple facts easy to remember
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controversial, new • Human face to the story • Simple facts with numbers

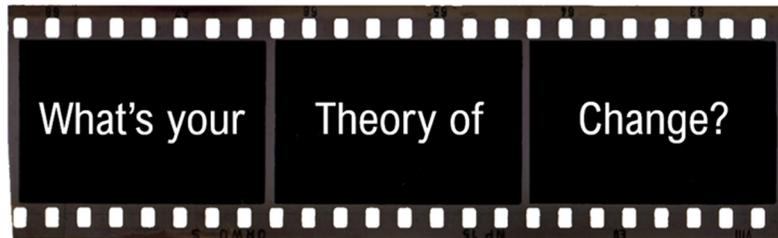
(Oxfam 2016)

Obviously, policy makers like ministers or members of parliament listen and respond to other evidence than civil servants, activists or the media. This means that if you have a well-researched analytical paper, you might have to process it into different formats: A two-page policy brief for politicians (because they have not time to read more than this); a full-fledged report for civil servants (because they want all the details), and a catchy story with some 'killer facts' for the media (because that sells). Section 7 will go into more detail on how to work with the media to convey your advocacy message.

³Mayne et al. (2016). Using evidence to influence policy: Oxfam's experience. Palgrave Communications, 2016. (www.nature.com/articles/s41599-018-0176-7)

6. 'SO THAT': How to build your Theory of Change

If you have followed this toolbox until now, you now should have a pretty clear understanding of the problem you are dealing with and of the solution you are going to propose; you know who has the power to make the change you want to see; you know your natural partners and allies as well as your potential opposition; you have a plan for reaching out to your main targets; and you have pondered on opposition and how you are going to use evidence to overcome it. The only thing that is missing now is – action! The best advocacy plan is utterly useless if never put into action. Obviously, you could go on for days and months improving your advocacy plan, adding more intelligence, doing more research, scrutinizing your opponents. This is known as the 'paralysis of analysis' – to remain inactive just because you think you don't know enough to give it a go.



This section helps you to translate your analysis into an action plan, or in other words: to draft your Theory of Change. How is your story of change going to evolve? What will be the sequence of action and reaction that will ultimately lead to the change you want to see? Having a well-structured Theory of Change does not only help you to be clear on what to do when and why. It also helps you to convince others to support your cause, because you have a compelling story to tell.

The 'so that'-chain

So that – these two words will help you to build your Theory of Change. To do so, follow a few simple steps:

- Go back to your Influence Tree (section 3) to see which direct and indirect routes you want to take, and what advocacy methods (section 4) you want to use.
- Start with the first thing you will do to get things going.

- Think about why you are doing it, and what you want to achieve with it: We do A **so that** B happens.
- You then continue with this **so that**-chain: B happens so that C can happen, and so on.
- In a **first round**, focus on the big steps. This may look like this:

We collect evidence so that we can present it to the authorities so that they begin drafting a Bill so that a draft Bill can be presented to the Parliament so that the Parliament reviews and endorses the Bill so that the Bill becomes an Act so that domestic violence can be prosecuted by law so that women's rights are better protected

- In a **second round**, add the smaller, incremental steps that are needed to make the big steps happen. This is not so attractive, but absolutely crucial to stay realistic. In the case of RENEW's advocacy for a Domestic Violence Act in Bhutan, a more detailed Theory of Change may look like this:

We collect stories and data so that we can share evidences with the NCWC so that NCWC builds a solid case to hold consultative meetings on the need for a Bill so that NCWC begins drafting the Bill so that NCWC presents the Bill to its Board, the Office of the Attorney General and the Cabinet so that NCWC receives feedback, legal advice and go-ahead so that NCWC can present it to the Women, Children and Youth Committee so that the Committee presents it to the Parliament so that the Parliament reviews and endorses the Bill so that Royal Assent is accorded and the Bill becomes an Act so that... so that... so that...

Planning your advocacy step by step

Your Theory of Change is like a movie screenplay – it contains the whole story and tells you and others how the various scenes follow each other. But like with a film, you also need to know **who does what when**. After all, you and your organization are probably not the only ones to advocate but ideally act together with partners and allies – or you even 'only'

facilitate and support the advocacy work led by other actors.

In a **next step**, you therefore enrich your Theory of Change with additional information. This can be a very revealing exercise when done in a group with partners from various organizations. Once you have jointly elaborated your Theory of Change, think about who would be best placed to do what, and start to assign roles and responsibilities. For instance, you may have a lot of experience in mobilizing people and organizing community theatres, while your partners know how to work with national media. Use your comparative strengths to make the best out of your plan! Here's a great way **how to do this exercise in a group**:

- Ask everyone to write their / their organization's name on a few sticky notes and put them on the Theory of Change where they feel most skilled or comfortable to contribute. Like this, you will quickly see for which steps you have sufficient support and where you need to find someone to do the job.

Step	Who	When
1 Evidence collection	RENEW WHO ELSE?	Mar-Apr
2 Analyse data & prepare policy brief	...	
3 Presentation to the National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC)	RENEW	May
4 Stakeholder consultations	NCWC	June
5 Bill drafting and presentation to the Commission Board, Office of the Attorney General etc.	NCWC	July-Aug
6 Presentation to the Women, Children and Youth Committee (NA)	NCWC	Aug
7 Review and presentation to the Parliament	COMMITTEE	Aug-Sep
8 Review and passing of the Bill	PARLIAMENT	Sep

Who to support evidence collection and write a policy brief?

Obviously, you also need to consider the resources and time needed for each step and come up with a first budget estimate for what you are going to do. However, when adding such planning details, always bear in my mind that you are probably going to change your plan once you start advocating. As soon as you get going, you will realize that some things don't work as expected – so be prepared for setbacks and changes! This will be easier if you consider your Theory of Change a living document, rather than a strict 5-year plan. Hence, and if possible, foresee some organisational and budgetary leeway in your planning.

7. WORKING WITH THE MEDIA: How to spread the word and get your story told

There are only few advocacy campaigns that can do without at least a minimum of public communication and media work. Sooner or later, most advocates seek publicity through a newspaper article or a TV report in – whether to sensitise the broader public for their issue or to strategically place a surprising story with convincing evidence ahead of a key debate in the parliament. To do so, it is essential to know your media landscape – what types of newspapers, TV and radio channels, important channels and influencers on social media exist? Which audiences do they reach? And how can you convince them to report on your issue of concern?



What to do: Essential tools

Following a few basic rules when dealing with the media helps a lot to avoid unpleasant surprises.

First, understand that in media, there is a process through which information is filtered for public consumption. It is called gatekeeping. What is ultimately published, or broadcast is a product of personal biases, socio-cultural prejudices, political forces, and editorial policies and standards, among others. This means there is room for you to exert your influence. Second, understand that the audience is more likely to treat an issue that the media cover frequently and prominently as more important than others irrespective of their intrinsic importance. This is called agenda-setting. The media can subtly influence people to think in a certain way. This means there is room for you to exert your influence. Based on this, the following communication tools are essential for all CSOs.



Get to know editors and reporters – professionally as well as personally. Keep in touch with them. Call them up and write to

them to touch base or to discuss issues. They are humans and can be persuaded and influenced.

 **Press releases**, well written, are critical to getting media coverage. They must be concise, succinct, and persuasive with contact details for more information. The contact person should always be reachable and prepared with a sound bite⁴ or quote.

 **Social media postings** can be a quick way to get the attention of the media. Your social media posts can be a reproduction of your press releases or a custom-written version of them. But a social media post with just a scanned image of a press release is hardly attention-grabbing or legible.

 **Phone calls:** While press releases and emails work, they cannot replace a phone call to explain and persuade. Unlike press releases and emails, a direct call has the warmth of human touch, particularly if you know the reporter or editor.

 **Multimedia content:** At a time when media houses are increasingly becoming multimedia, newsmakers are advised to make their press releases multimedia. A press release could be accompanied by photographs and audio and video clips. Textual, photographic, audio, and visual content will get published by all forms of media. Most newspapers in Bhutan today produce and publish video content on their digital platforms.

The media landscape of Bhutan

The media houses in Bhutan are concentrated in the capital Thimphu. Therefore, Bhutan's media content is highly urban-centric. Radio has the widest reach. Print circulation of all the newspapers is decreasing but their e-circulation is increasing just as their social media presence. Bhutan's news media entered a new era when it was privatised in 2007. The next few years saw several new entrants. By 2012, Bhutan had 12

⁴«In the context of journalism, a sound bite is characterized by a short phrase or sentence that captures the essence of what the speaker was trying to say, and is used to summarize information and entice the reader or viewer.» (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sound_bite)

newspapers, seven radio stations, and two news magazines. The liberal licensing policy adopted by the government allowed easy entry to the media industry for aspiring media entrepreneurs. The drastic growth of the number of media houses severely affected their sustenance. For a small population, the number was highly unsustainable, because the media houses depend on government advertising for up to 80% of their revenue. In 2022, the numbers are down to one television channel, seven newspapers and five radio stations.

The media industry has seen growth only in numbers and not professionalism, reach, and depth of reporting. The fierce competition for the government's limited advertising led to, as some media partitioners put it, cannibalisation in the media industry.

Building understanding and trust: The current relations between the media and CSOs are characterised by a lack of understanding of and trust in each other. Therefore, the first step towards engaging with the media is to get the media to understand CSOs better. Currently, the media's view of CSOs in Bhutan is coloured by negative reporting in foreign media about the proliferation of unprofessional CSOs in the region. Hence, the media view the teething problems of CSOs in Bhutan through this sceptical lens.

On the other hand, the CSOs do not understand the media well enough. A single critical story in the media ruffles too many feathers. And what is immediately noticeable are knee-jerk reactions based on opinions rather than facts and figures. That complicates the matter. First, not all news on CSOs can be positive. The news media are not spin doctors. Second, every critical or negative story unfairly told has a remedy, which includes explanation, persuasion, and putting issues in the correct perspective.

What NOT to do

 **Never pick a quarrel** with the media but persuade and seek redressal. Always try to explain an issue and put it in the right perspective for them to understand. Then, seek redressal in the form of a follow-up story, a letter to the editor or a panel discussion.

 **Do not always expect glowing stories:** It is unrealistic to always expect positive stories about you in the media. The media's role as a watchdog is to critique and highlight wrongdoings, real or perceived.

Avoid knee-jerk reactions: Do not give in to the tendency to react without thinking and rashly to critical stories in the media.

 Analyse them, discuss with subject experts, and plan a strategic response. Sometimes, a knee-jerk reaction can make you seem overtly reactive and guilt-ridden.

 **Do not expect the media to publish everything you said:** It is unrealistic to expect the media to publish or broadcast everything you have spoken to them, particularly for a news story. There are dozens of news stories vying for space or airtime. So, the media will pick and choose your best lines for a soundbite or quote. Instead, prepare a short soundbite or quote for the media. The length of sound bite for BBS TV news is 40 seconds. So, it is unrealistic to expect BBS to air three minutes of your interview

How to control the narrative in the media

Once you have given an interview or issued a press release, you eagerly wait for the respective article to be published – only to realise that the journalist tells the story in a totally different way than you expected, neglecting some of your key arguments and giving ample room to counter arguments. While this can never be fully avoided, there are a few tips and tricks to 'steer' your story in the expected direction:

- **What is your narrative?** To begin with, it is critical to forge your narrative. As a sector, does Bhutan's civil society have a united front and a common narrative? What is the narrative? It is important for civil society to have a shared grand narrative. If individuals and groups within the sector forge and advance disparate narratives, the sector cannot control the narrative that appears in the media. For individual CSOs, consistent messaging helps control the narrative. What goes out to the media must be organised, well-packaged and consistent. Having a good communication strategy helps. For example, Bhutan Media Foundation has consistently advanced the narrative that the government has the responsibility to support the nascent media in Bhutan until they become vibrant and strong.

- **Planting your narrative:** Having forged a common narrative, it is important to keep pushing it to reporters and editors at informal meetings, press conferences, workshops, and training. For example, at the sector level, your narrative will answer the following questions substantiated by solid facts and figures: Why is the growing number of CSOs not a concern for Bhutan? How are CSOs contributing to nation-building alongside the government and private sector? At the level of individual CSOs, the narrative could answer questions such as the following: Why is your organisation important to society? Why is your organisation's work critical? How does your organisation's vision align with the grand national vision? For example, Bhutan Stroke Foundation could build its narrative around the fact that stroke is the 6th highest cause of death in Bhutan, yet there is no public healthcare dedicated to prevent and combat stroke.
- **Sustained commentary:** Sustained commentary helps you advance and strengthen your narrative. A commentary is written by sector experts with authority on the subject, and can also include former politicians, private sector leaders, or academics. Commentaries come in the form of columns, letters to editors, and reactions to news stories. They maximise the positive and minimise the negative by putting things in perspective with facts and figures rather than arguments and opinions presented in a confrontational tone.
- **Getting social media influencers to tell your story:** Social media influencers are powerful means to advance your narrative. A social media influencer in Bhutan today has the potential to reach more audiences than the print circulation of all the newspapers combined. However, you should be mindful of the pitfalls of social media, which magnify positive as well as negative effects equally. Just as your social media use in general, your engagement of social media influencers should be organised, strategic and nimble for damage control.

8. M&E FOR ADVOCACY: How to know when you succeed (or fail)

You have now elaborated your advocacy strategy and are ready to start advocating on your issue of concern. Great – let's go! But... how will you know if your strategy works? How can you be sure that you are on the right track and things are happening as you would like them to?

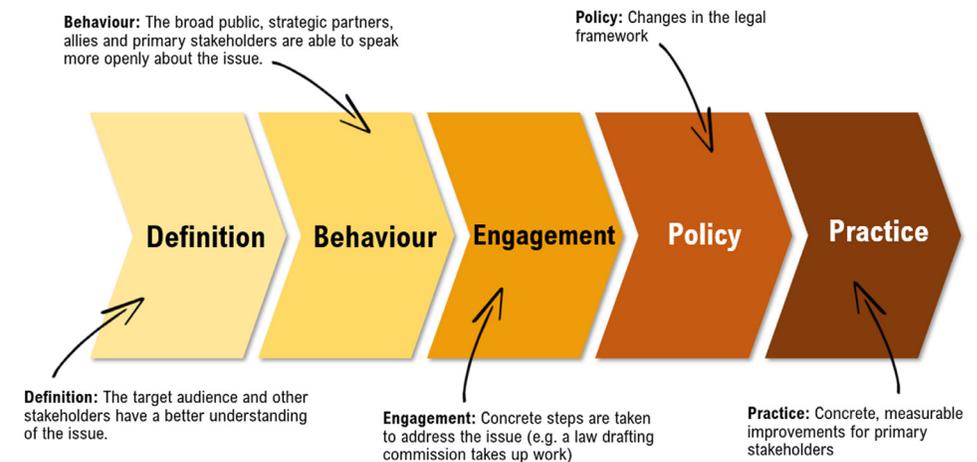
As mentioned in the previous sections of this toolbox, it is essential that you build in regular checks and moments for reflection. Discuss with your team, your partners and allies whether your advocacy work is on track, and what you want to adjust in order to stay focused and effective. The problem, however, is to figure out whether you are doing the right thing and whether your advocacy is really leading towards the change you want to see. Obviously, you don't want to wait until the new law you are advocating for gets passed and implemented, as this might take years. So, focusing on your final change objective alone will make you frustrated. Even more, you might miss many of the small but important changes that are happening on the way towards your desired change. To avoid this, and to keep your motivation as an advocate high, there is a simple model which helps you to better understand change processes – and to see where your advocacy currently stands, and whether it is successful or not.

The 5-step model of policy change

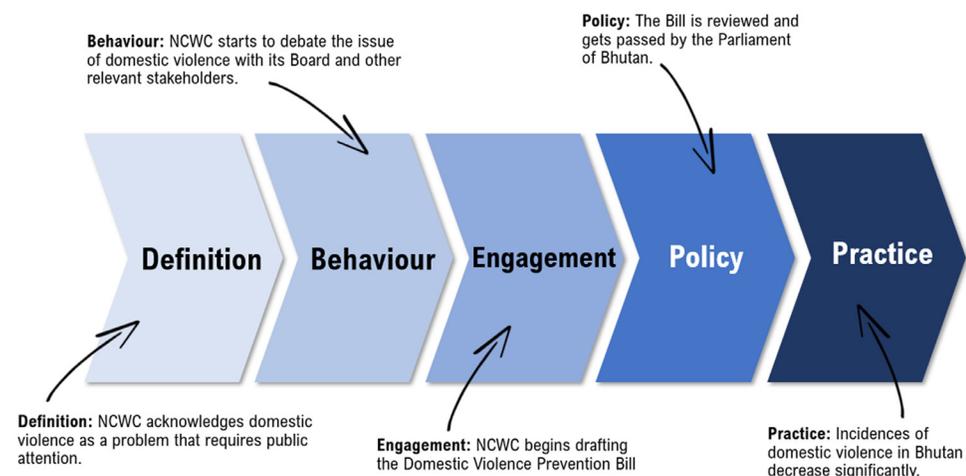
Whether you are advocating for a new law, for more funding to a particular community or social group, or for better quality in basic education – the change process you have to go through is nearly always the same. In principle, policy change (and change in general) is usually non-linear. It always starts long before a concrete policy gets endorsed and implemented, and it usually happens step by step. As an advocate, you want to understand these different steps to see where you are and what comes next.

A simple but helpful model divides the policy change process into **five distinct steps or shifts**:

- 1. Shift in definition** – People start to see things differently: your target audience and others have a better understanding of the issue addressed.
- 2. Shift in behaviour** – People start to behave differently; the broad public, partners, allies and primary stakeholders are able and ready to speak more openly about the issue.
- 3. Shift in engagement** – People start to engage: Concrete steps are taken to address the issue.
- 4. Shift in policy** – A policy, law, regulation or practice gets changed.
- 5. Shift in practice** – Things start to change in real: The new policy, law, regulation or practice results in concrete, measurable improvements for people's daily life.



It takes some practice to apply this model to your own cause so that you can differentiate the different steps in the change process you are advocating for. But once you manage to do so, having this model in mind will help you a lot to better understand where your advocacy stands and what you have already achieved – although the final objective might still seem far away.



To apply this in practice, take your Theory of Change (Section 6) and discuss where and when your advocacy work might make (or contribute to) one of these shifts along the way. Referring to the domestic violence example, the following could be relevant questions to ask:

1. **What needs to happen so that politicians start acknowledging that domestic violence is a huge problem in Bhutan?** And if this happens – how do we know? Possible indicators could be personal observations, exchanges with decision makers, meeting minutes, or media reports.
2. **What needs to happen so that relevant actors speak openly about domestic violence against women and demand legal changes?** And if this happens – how do we know? Possible indicators could be media reports, meeting minutes, or public debates.
3. **What needs to happen so that the NCWC starts to draft the required Bill? And if this happens – how do we know?** Possible indicators could be official statements from the NCWC, or an official invitation to a consultation or roundtable with concerned stakeholders.
4. **What needs to happen so that a new Bill gets endorsed by parliament? And if this happens – how do we know?** Possible indicators could be ... well, that's rather easy to find out!

5. **What needs to happen so that the new legal framework helps to prosecute perpetrators and to protect women from domestic violence?** And if this happens – how do we know? Possible indicators could be first legal cases in which women successfully claim their rights and sue their perpetrators.

Try to **formulate at least one example for each of these five shifts for your own advocacy** and define specific indicators so you can prove that the shift has actually happened. You can even try to define these shifts for each advocacy route in your Influence Tree – this will help you to check whether the chosen path makes sense and how it leads to the change you want to see.

Being able to define these five shifts for your specific change process will make your life as an advocate much easier, and the whole advocacy process more rewarding. You will be able to identify even small steps and celebrate them as an interim success – because you know that you are on track and heading towards the big change you want to see.

With this, you are getting close to a full-fledged advocacy strategy with defined action points, roles and responsibilities, resources, a timeline, and indicators of success. However, as things may not always happen the way you want them to, there is one thing left to do.

9. RISKS: How to expect the unexpected

Sometimes, advocacy can be very easy and straightforward – you get the space and the opportunities to raise your voice and talk, decision makers listen to you, and everything goes well. Very often, however, advocacy is arduous, and you are repeatedly confronted with problems, obstacles and setbacks. Whether it's going well or not depends largely on the issue you are advocating for, your target group, your partners and allies, as well as on the wider political, social and cultural context you are in (compare section 2). If you are raising a very sensitive issue politicians don't want to talk about, you are very likely to run into problems. If you are addressing corruption and nepotism among state authorities, trouble's ahead for sure. At the same time, open or hidden social, ethnic or religious conflicts can undermine your efforts to build coalitions and may even put you and your partners at risk. And finally, some governments see civil society generally as a threat rather than a development partner, so that openly addressing human rights issues may cause serious repercussions. As an advocate you therefore want to know the risks you might be facing, so that you can avoid or mitigate them to the extent possible.



Identify advocacy-specific risks

Avoiding uncomfortable discussions and hoping for the best never pays off. Instead, try to address potential advocacy risks as early and as open and transparent as possible. Ideally, schedule a separate meeting with your partners and allies for a joint brainstorming on the types of risks you may encounter on the way. Write them down to make things as explicit as possible, and make sure everyone has a say. The following structure may help you to start a discussion:

Risks for...	Examples
...your organization	Exclusion from certain spaces or events; non-renewal of your operational permit as CSO; loss of members or supporters

...your team	Reputation as troublemakers; negative consequences on career prospects for members in the team
...partners and allies	Reputational risks by association; indirect pressure against organizations and groups as well as against track records of individuals
...communities and citizens	Animosity created with local authorities, certain loss of bargaining power
...the project	Bureaucratic harassment by public authorities; long delays in approval processes or rejections

This list is certainly not conclusive, so you may identify more and other risks in your discussion. The important thing is that you do this together with your partners and allies, because they might see things differently than you do. Once you have established such a list and have a rough idea how likely and severe these risks might be, go on to discuss how these risks can be avoided or mitigated.

Avoid or mitigate advocacy-specific risks

There are many ways to avoid and/or mitigate some of the risks related to advocacy. The first question you must ask yourself is whether you can avoid a certain risk or not. For instance, you might realise that openly addressing a specific case of domestic violence bears unpredictable risks for a concerned individual or family, so you postpone your campaign plans or seek other ways to raise public attention. However, if you and your partners agree that the risks are justifiable in principle, you need to discuss how to manage them. There are many ways for mitigating such risks – here are some first ideas:

Mitigation strategy	Description
Act through networks, build coalitions	Don't act on your own. Instead, seek partners and allies so that you can build a network or platform to advocate together and thus spread responsibility, public exposure and risks.

<p>Always be open and transparent</p>	<p>Openness can help to dispel doubts and misconceptions. Openly inform your partners and allies, and maintain a regular exchange with public authorities, e.g. through letters, meetings, or organized field visits.</p>
<p>Involve project partners</p>	<p>Inform and involve your steering committee members/board members and funding partners when your project comes under pressure.</p>
<p>Identify actors of change</p>	<p>Identify and connect with committed individuals within government and administration. Even when a certain Ministry might dislike your ideas, some public servants might support you (see section 2).</p>
<p>Call for public responsibility</p>	<p>Approach different departments of the government as well as parliamentarians to assume their responsibility towards their constituency.</p>

Again, you will certainly find more ways to mitigate ‘your’ risks. Ideally, you consolidate them in a separate contingency plan which you can integrate in your advocacy strategy. This way, you together with your team and your partners are always able to adjust your advocacy strategy if certain risks become too high. The important thing is that you don’t do this only once (e.g. when you start a new project), but instead regularly review and reassess the identified risks, their likelihood and potential impact and the measures taken.

However, as depressing as a list like this might appear at first sight – don’t let yourself be disenchanted! Knowing these risks and how to manage them is a first big step towards your successful advocacy campaign.

Good luck – and don’t forget: Advocacy Works!

