

## Advocacy and Campaigning

# 6 Identifying and influencing advocacy targets

Keywords: Stakeholder mapping, target, influential, messengers, champion, blocker, gate-keepers

Duration: 1.5 hours



## Introduction

The previous session looked at the decision-making process and who has power at different stages of that process. Now you need to use this analysis to help you focus your advocacy efforts, and identify targets – people who can make the decisions to bring about the changes you want. This session first looks at how to identify your advocacy targets before moving on to look at developing an effective influencing strategy.

This session will also help you to understand the differences between advocacy targets and ‘influentials’ as well as how to go beyond surface appearances to understand where real power and influence lies.

## Learning Outcomes for this session

### **Knowledge and understanding**

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

1. Understand how to identify and influence advocacy targets.
2. Understand the difference between an advocacy target and an influential.
3. Understand the importance of engaging ‘non-traditional’ targets.

### **Practical and professional skills**

Develop and implement an advocacy strategy in a humanitarian situation.

4. Identify and understand your advocacy targets.
5. Develop an influencing strategy.

**Duration: 1.5 hours**



# 1 Identifying and influencing advocacy targets

## Identifying targets and influentials

This part of the advocacy work is sometimes referred to as ‘power analysis’. It is important that you first achieve clarity on the changes you would like to see happening as a result of your advocacy work. These changes are reflected in the advocacy objectives that we looked at developing in Session 3 on planning your advocacy and campaigns. The identification of your targets and of the influentials is driven by your advocacy objectives.

### Is there a difference between a power analysis and a stakeholder mapping?

A stakeholder mapping will map out *all* the actors involved in an issue (e.g. all the actors involved in the prevention of child labour). A power analysis is more focused and more specific. The power analysis is really focused on (a) the key people and institutions you need to target to bring about the changes you have identified in your advocacy objectives; (b) the people or institutions who can influence your key targets.

**Targets are the key individuals who are in a position/have the power to bring about changes.**

The key targets for advocacy are the so-called duty bearers, those bodies or individuals that represent institutionalised power which gives them the responsibility to ensure that children’s rights are protected and have the authority to make changes for children. The target is the person (or group of people) with the power to respond to your demand and move the political process in relation to your issue.

Advocacy concerning *policies and implementation* is normally focused on governmental institutions and national parliaments. It may also focus on multilateral institutions and UN agencies. However, changing policies may not be enough to bring about the changes we would like to see (a law banning corporal punishment in all settings will unfortunately not be enough to stop this harmful practice, for instance). Changing practices will also be necessary. In this case, advocacy may also focus on informal leaders, such as religious leaders, influential public figures, etc.

The identification of your targets should really be guided by the question **‘Who has the power to make change happen?’**

It is useful to break down this question into more specific questions:

- Who are the decision makers and institutions that define the policy and practice changes that need to happen?
- At what level are key decisions being made? (Advisers, chiefs of divisions/departments, Ministers, Prime Ministers, Head of State, Parliaments, etc....?)
- Through which decision-making process? Who is consulted in the process? Who has formal and informal power within the process?
- Among the various targets, which individuals have a decisive influence (power to propose or oppose; power of the ‘final say’), and which ones are secondary/intermediate targets (consulted in the decision-making process but not the ultimate decision makers)?
- Of the various targets, which ones are supportive of the changes we would like to see happening? Which ones are opposed to it? Which ones are ‘swingers’ (undecided, may be persuaded to support the changes we would like to see happening)?

### Examples:

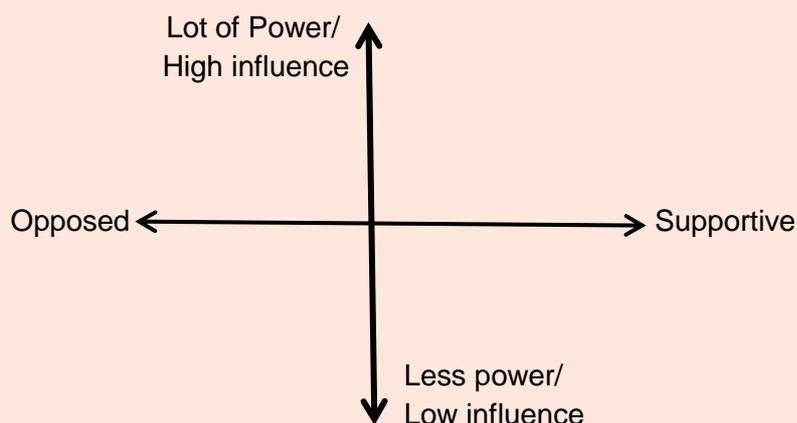
- In some countries, donors may contribute a significant part of the social sector’s budgets (health, education, etc.). Although donors are not the ultimate decision makers when it comes to a new health or education policy in a developing country, they may exert some significant influence by stating (either publicly or in meetings with key officials) that they would dedicate their resources to a policy having this or that kind of component and approach.
- The media can have a lot of influence on the public debate. Although they are not decision makers, politicians often listen to them and the way an issue is portrayed in the media can eventually influence and shape some decisions. If an issue is reportedly highlighted in the media and if relevant government bodies are portrayed as not addressing it, it will be difficult for the ministers to ignore it and not take action.

When you identify influentials, it is important to remember that targets can also be influenced by people close to them in their private life. For example, in one Asian country where Save the Children works, the First Lady is a medical doctor. She is very interested in health issues and has become a champion of child and maternal health. Although she is not part of any formal decision-making process on health, she is extremely influential in shaping policies and influencing her husband – the Prime Minister – regarding decisions related to health. (Overleaf)

## Activity 1: Mapping targets and influentials

This activity will help you to map your targets and influentials, their power and where they stand regarding the changes you would like to see happening. It could be useful to carry out this exercise in a group.

- On a flip chart, draw two axes (see below) showing support of and opposition to the change you seek, and the degree of power of the targets and influentials.
- Brainstorm possible key advocacy targets and place each name on one post-it.
- Then place your targets on the diagram (see below), according to your perception of their support or opposition to your advocacy objectives, and their power to make changes.
- Those with the most power are your main targets and should be prioritised.
- The hardest targets to influence will be those with the most power and who oppose the change.
- Then do the same again, but using a different colour post-it, to map out the influentials (powerful or not, supportive of or opposed to the change you would like to see happening).



*Power mapping grid*

## *Comment*

I hope you found the exercise useful. Based on my experience of doing this kind of exercise, I would like to share with you a few tips to make it as valuable as possible:

- Be as specific as possible. Think about individuals rather than ministries. For example, if you work on a policy change related to health and you wrote ‘Ministry of Health’ as a key target, please think again. Are all the officials in the Ministry of Health exactly on the same line? Or are some individuals more supportive than others? What is the position of the Minister himself/herself? But also what is the position of the First Secretary in the MoH? Likewise, if you have identified ‘Parliament’ as your key target, are all the parliamentarians united on this issue? Or are some supportive of the changes while others are opposed? The same applies for the media, which can be very influential. Again, some maybe supportive and some opposed. In the media, try to identify the key editors, as they are the ones with the power.
- Think about where the power really lies. In some instances, a minister will systematically follow the recommendations of the First Secretary in the Ministry. So maybe the secretary should really be the key target. Think also about where the resources are (follow the money to find the power!). For example, if we want to increase the budget of the Ministry of Education, the Education Minister him/herself will certainly not be our key target. He/she would certainly be very supportive of having a larger budget. But, in most countries, the budget decisions are taken by the Ministry of Finance, and arbitration done by the Head of Government/Head of State. Parliaments may vote on the budget and can have some influence in shaping it. Therefore, to increase the education budget, it is very likely that our key targets are not in the Ministry of Education!

- Go beyond the ‘usual suspects’. Because of the nature of our work as Save the Children, we tend in our mapping of targets and influentials to focus on the people we know and interact with in our work (line ministries for health, education, social welfare, women and children, etc.). It is important to think ‘out of the box’. As illustrated above, the Ministry of Finance would be a key target for any advocacy work related to resources. Think also about traditional and religious leaders, who can be very influential (for example, in Indonesia, as part of its advocacy work on alternative care, Save the Children engages with one of the largest faith-based organisations in the country). Think about Chambers of Commerce and large corporations. If the changes we are proposing go strongly against their financial and business interests, they would certainly be opposed to them and we know that they are very powerful. Think also about provincial and district levels: some of the changes we would like to see happening will not actually happen if provincial and districts authorities are not convinced.
- Update the analysis as necessary. No power analysis is static: key actors change and so does the power balance between them. Some changes are obvious, like a new government being elected or a new minister being nominated. Some may be less obvious, such as a minister being more open to the change we would like to see happening, or some opponents becoming more neutral.
- Do a thorough brainstorm but keep the output (the power analysis) light. What I mean here is that it is important at the end of the day to really identify the key targets and the key influentials and to focus on them. If you have too many targets, it is unlikely that you will be very effective in your advocacy work.

When you identify your targets and influentials and define your influencing strategy, it is important to keep in mind that power takes different forms, as set out in Session 5:

- Visible: observable/official decision-making mechanisms
- Hidden: shaping or influencing the decision-making process behind the scene
- Invisible: norms and beliefs, they are the preconceptions and assumptions that underlie policies and practices.

Sometimes we just focus on visible power. However, by doing this and by ignoring the other dimensions of power, our capacity to influence and to bring about changes could be reduced.

Once you have identified your targets and influentials, it is time to think about how you are going to influence them. That's our next step!

## 2 Influencing your targets

Having identified your targets and influentials, you need to decide how to influence them. Their beliefs, attitudes and interests may be similar to yours, in which case influencing them will be easier. However, their attitudes may be very different from or even opposed to yours, and then it will be much harder to influence them. It is therefore very important to get as much information on your targets' interests and attitudes as possible. This will help you identify whether they are supportive of the change you are trying to achieve and could be potential 'champions', or whether they oppose it and could potentially act as 'blockers'. They may not have a set opinion at all, in which case they are 'swingers' and could potentially become a champion or a blocker.

### Knowing your targets

#### Activity 2 Knowing your targets and where they stand

Fill the table below to get a better knowledge of your key targets, taking the levels of influence and support for or opposition to the issue from the power analysis grid you completed in Activity 1. Finding out what your targets think can be difficult and it may take time to do this. Again, remember that your analysis needs to be ongoing. You need to identify ways to find out what your targets think; for example, do they have a Twitter account? Do they often write articles or op-eds? Do you have any personal connections or networks that you could use to find out what they think?

	Target 1	Target 2	Target 3
<b>Target audience</b> (target name)			
<b>Target's power over issue:</b> unknown, limited power, moderate power, significant power, a lot of power			
<b>Target's level of opposition to or support for the issue:</b> strong ally, medium ally, neutral, medium opponent, strong opponent			
<b>Target's interest in the issue:</b> none, low, medium, high, very high			
<b>Level of knowledge of the issue:</b> none, low, medium, high, very high			
<b>What does the target care about? (a)</b>			
<b>Existing level of access to the target:</b> none, low, medium, high, very high			
<b>Who is the target accountable to?</b> (say who the target is accountable to and, if possible, how)			
<b>What does the target care about</b> (even if it is not related to your issue)? (b)			

Adapted from UNICEF (2010)

### Notes

(a) For example, if your objective is to have a new nutrition policy being enacted and fully resourced and if one of your targets is the Minister of Finance, he/she would first want to know how much the implementation of the new policy will cost and the potential return on investment (e.g. a reduction of stunting by X% can lead to an increase of GDP by Y%).

(b) The ideological or religious beliefs of a target can very strongly shape his/her attitude towards the changes we would like to see happening. For example, a politician may ask: Who is likely to gain from the proposed changes? Who might be adversely affected? How will it affect the public opinion and their perception? Is this change sought by a majority of people or a minority?

### Influencing your targets

To influence your target, you need to answer the key question **‘What is most likely to change their mind and to make them act?’**. Different targets may respond differently to different tactics and to different messages. There is no ‘one size fits all’ and your messages and tactics will have to be tailored to the different targets, based on knowledge of your targets (generated by the grid you completed in Activity 2). Regarding messages, you can refer to Session 7 on developing and communicating your message.

It is also important to keep in mind that the same message may have a very different impact depending on who communicates it. We need therefore to carefully consider who the most credible messengers for different audiences are. It may be Save the Children, it may be some of the influential allies or it may be children themselves.

In my experience as an advocate, I think that we too often think of ourselves as the best messengers. I would like to encourage you to challenge this assumption and to strategically choose the messenger. A local community leader would certainly be a better messenger to influence the district or provincial authority than ourselves. A business leader may have more weight than we have to influence the Ministry of Finance. A group of children can be very powerful advocates with high level decision-makers (see Session 9 on children’s participation). An alliance of several civil society organisations may have more weight than just Save the Children (see Session 11 on working in partnership).

Making sure that your audience hears the message could involve identifying key opportunities for advocacy, choosing the best and most strategic moment to influence the decision-making process, and making sure that your message is being heard (see Session 5, ‘Understanding policy and power’).

The choice of tactics to influence a target can be informed by a review of the tactics which have worked well in the past (and equally the tactics which have produced a negative/counterproductive reaction). Based on this review and on your understanding and knowledge of the targets, you can decide which of the following approaches may work best (note that it can also be a combination of these different approaches):

- **Cooperative (as an insider):** for example, working with the government to find solutions. This approach will enable you to develop relationships with your targets and gain their trust, and allow your direct access. However, you may have to compromise: you may lose credibility if the outcome is different from what you were expecting.
- **Confrontational (as a complete outsider):** forcing an issue on to the agenda through mass mobilisation, the media, etc. This approach can give you a higher profile and greater freedom of action. On the other hand, in many contexts, it can be very counterproductive and can damage future relationships. In the cultures of many countries where Save the Children works, being openly confrontational is considered completely inappropriate.
- **Persuasive (as a critical insider):** presenting evidence in the hope of getting your targets to recognise the merits of your arguments. By avoiding some of the pitfalls of the two previous styles, this approach can provide more opportunities for working with others.

Once you have decided on the message, the messenger and the approach (each tailored to the key targets), the last step is to decide on which tactics to use to influence your targets. The different advocacy tactics are presented in the following sessions. Here again, targets will respond differently to different tactics. Some targets will act according to compelling research. Some targets will act on the advice of key and trusted advisers. Some will react to media pressure, and so on.

The sequencing and combination of tactics would also be critically important to maximise the influence on your targets. Using the right kind of tactics at the right time is a golden rule of successful advocacy! (Overleaf).

## Summary

This session looked at how to identify advocacy targets and influentials and develop a successful influencing strategy. You learnt about how to go deeper than appearances and really understand who are the people making the decisions and look ‘outside the box’ to identify non-traditional advocacy targets.

After completing this session you should:

- Understand how to identify and influence advocacy targets
- understand the difference between an advocacy target and an influential
- understand the importance of engaging ‘non-traditional’ targets
- be able to identify advocacy targets including champions, blockers and swingers
- be in a position to develop an influencing strategy.

## Reference

UNICEF (2010) Advocacy Toolkit: A guide to influencing decisions that improve children’s lives, [http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/Advocacy\\_Toolkit.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/Advocacy_Toolkit.pdf)

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