

ADVOCACY

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this chapter, you will be able to–

- explain the concept of Advocacy, Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) and Social mobilisation
 - describe the types and purposes of Advocacy
 - distinguish between Advocacy and Behaviour Change Communication BCC (IEC)
 - understand knowledge and skills required for careers in Advocacy.
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INTRODUCTION

You must have seen different types of appeals for help by individuals or groups, for example financial help for a child's cancer treatment; rehabilitation of tsunami affected families or a cause such as ensuring that every child goes to school, or preventing child labour. You may have also seen the advertisements on television showing persons suffering from cancer caused by the use of tobacco. There are appeals being made by famous personalities about immunising children against polio. Also, most organisations need finances in order to carry out these activities. This is generally done by appealing and persuading individuals/corporate bodies/ the public in general to donate in cash or kind. Such activities could be termed 'advocacy'.

For advocacy to be effective, the key is to sensitise people or to influence people for desired change in behaviour. This is best done by professionals who apply their persuasion skills in writing and action. Advocacy skills can work wonders in persuading people. Key decision makers are generally busy and/or may not have complete information on a particular issue. Advocacy can influence how they think and act on behalf of their constituents. Let us briefly take a glimpse into the world of advocacy and communication for behavioural change.

BASIC CONCEPTS

What is advocacy? **Advocacy** is one of the methods of communication for social change. It consists of planned activity or activities undertaken by individuals or organisations with a common goal/vision and common frame of reference to influence policy related to specific cause(s) or issue(s). The purpose is to create a supportive environment and build consensus towards realising or actualising the vision. Advocacy can be undertaken at global, regional and local levels, depending on the issue and the laws which influence people's lives and actions. For example, you know that in many communities in India, a girl is less valued than a boy and some parents decide to get rid of the female foetus before it is even born. In some areas, the female newborn is killed by gruesome methods. This must be stopped. Advocacy is required to build consensus of people about not getting rid of female foetus and create an environment to discourage such a practice at local and national levels. Advocacy can be planned to sensitise people to the issue of not aborting female foetus.

The Purposes of Advocacy can be summed up as-

- To promote or reinforce a change in policy, legislation, programme, resource allocation or socio-cultural norms.
- To win support from influential people and pressure groups for one's agenda.

Advocacy is the act of 'explaining and persuading' on behalf of a particular issue, idea, person or animal. An advocate is someone who does this. Both the terms *advocate* and *advocacy* have specialist meanings but in this field they are different from advocates for legal court procedures. The advocacy in this context is to argue for social purposes to highlight

an issue or a problem and generate awareness among all the concerned people. The people to be persuaded or convinced may vary in each situation or context. These may be political leaders, administrators, policy makers and general public or fellow citizens.

What are the methods used for advocacy?

Method used will depend on the issue, the intensity desired, who is to be addressed or targetted and the financial resources available for advocacy. Common methods used are holding rallies, demonstrations, campaigns through interpersonal and mass media to exert pressure for positive social change. The need for such advocacy is growing as society becomes more and more complex and as people from socially and economically disadvantaged groups increasingly feel the need for someone to support them to interact with other individuals, organisations and agencies. This obviously creates a need for professionals who can develop the strategies for advocacy.

Polio immunisation campaign is conducted by using various methods such as putting up posters, famous persons making an appeal on TV, and conducting discussions by experts. A few days before the day of vaccination, the corporation or government may send people in a vehicle announcing the date and venue. Health workers may go door to door to advise mothers to take their young child for polio immunisation, if they have not already done so.

What are the different types of advocacy generally used? Let us deal with them briefly.

Types of advocacy are:

- *Issues advocacy* aims at creating awareness on selected issues, creating policy where they are needed and do not exist, reforming ineffective and harmful policies, as well as improving policy implementation.
- *Programme advocacy* aims at fostering a favourable environment for implementing programmes.
- *Organisational advocacy* aims to enhance the image of the organisation and publicise/promote its mandate and also to mobilise resources for the organisation for implementing programmes.

Given below is a success story of 'Advocacy initiative'.

'The Right to Information Act' (RTI) came into being in 2005 as a result of consistent advocacy efforts by social activists and NGO who worked closely at the grass root level. Why did they advocate for RTI? They felt the

dire need for the right of citizens of this country to access information that they require and pertains to them. They had witnessed the high handed attitude of the administrators while dealing with people in villages and slums. Daily wage labourers were asked to sign or give thumb impressions on the amount which was much higher than what they were actually paid for working on construction sites for some Government programmes. Similarly, ration shops were closed without informing people about the reason and they were supplied lesser quantities of ration than were due to them and that too of substandard quality.

What is RTI? The Right to Information Act, 2005 (RTI) is a law enacted by the Parliament of India “to provide for setting out the practical regime of right to information for citizens.” The Act applies to all States and Union Territories of India, except the State of Jammu and Kashmir - which is covered under a State-level law. Under the provisions of the Act, any citizen (excluding the citizens within J&K) may request information from a “public authority” (a body of Government or “instrumentality of State”) which is required to reply expeditiously or within thirty days. The Act also requires every public authority to computerise their records for wide dissemination and to proactively publish certain categories of information so that the citizens need minimum recourse to request for information formally.

ACTIVITY 1

Discuss with examples any one type of advocacy initiatives.

Besides advocacy, there are other ways of changing human behaviour. One such way is: **Behaviour Change Communication (BCC)**. This is a comparatively new concept, which has evolved from an earlier term ‘Information, Education and Communication’ or ‘IEC’. Behaviour Change Communication or BCC is used to bring about change in human practices and behaviour, generally through communication interventions.

What does it involve? It involves the process of understanding people’s situations and responding to the concerns by developing appropriate strategies. Communication processes and media channels are used to persuade people through increasing their knowledge, changing their attitudes, perceptions and thereby changing their practices and behaviour. An example is use of BCC by health experts nationally for changing practices and using preventive measures to safeguard against tuberculosis and HIV infection. Messages about safeguarding against these two deadly diseases are widely propagated through mass media and reinforced through personal interactions such as counselling, training or workshops etc. to influence the masses and facilitate change in their behaviour/practices which increase risk of contracting HIV infection, or spreading tuberculosis.

You may think that advocacy and IEC/BCC are essentially the same. If you look closely at Table 22.1 you will find the important points which can help you distinguish between the two.

Table 22.1: Differences between IEC/BCC and Advocacy

Criteria	IEC/BCC	Advocacy
Objectives	Seeks to change individual knowledge, attitudes and behaviour leading to change in beliefs, values and socio-cultural norms of a community	Seeks to change laws and policies to improve the enabling environment
Output	Change in behaviour of individual community members	Change in a specific law, policy or programme
Target groups	Individual, community and family members	Policy makers/officials, opinion leaders/ influential members of society, legislators
Orientation	Individual change, leading to community action	Public policy-oriented
Risk taking	Individuals can opt out at any stage, hence risk is not high	Greater degree of risk taking when controversial issues are undertaken
Focus	Focus on individual(s) internalising the concepts for better understanding and change	Emphasis on networking and coalition building to broaden the base of support

Social Mobilisation

Social Mobilisation is a process to engage people's participation in achieving a specific development goal through self-reliant efforts by mobilising necessary resources and disseminating information to targeted audiences. To put in simple words, organising resources and people for betterment of society is social mobilisation. Social mobilisation and effective communication are essential for achieving the objectives for which advocacy is undertaken. Advocacy helps the process of Social Mobilisation.

Let us briefly take a look at what is social mobilisation.

- Social mobilisation is an approach and tool that enables people to organise for collective action by pooling resources and building solidarity required to resolve common problems and work towards community advancement.

- It is an empowering process enabling people to organise their own democratically self-governing groups or community organisations that help them initiate and control their personal and community development, as opposed to mere participation in an initiative designed by the government or external organisation.
- Effective social mobilisation goes beyond community organisations, harnessing the potential and efforts of government, non-governmental sector and citizens to work towards sustainable social, economic and political development.

CASE STUDY

A diagrammatic presentation of an Advocacy attempt in the field of sanitation in Bangladesh is presented here. The links between advocacy, social mobilisation and communication are shown with the example from an eight-year sanitation programme in Bangladesh. Communication planning for advocacy was used for the sanitation programme that the Government of Bangladesh implemented from 1993 to 1998 with UNICEF and Danish and Swiss support.



(Source: Dick de Jong. 2003. *Advocacy for Water, Environmental Sanitation and Hygiene. Thematic Overview Paper*. IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre) <http://www.irc.nl/themes/communication/cases/bangladesh.html>

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS REQUIRED

Professional qualifications for advocacy require education, an understanding of advocacy and experience of writing reports. The professionals should be able to research, assimilate information and should be sensitive to people's needs. Besides this an ability to form public opinion in favour of the issue about which they are taking a stand, would be an important asset. The advocates for RTI created a large group of informed citizens, brought this issue to limelight through mass media and exerted pressure on political leadership and policy makers. Other examples are campaigns to save animals from cruelty, save tigers, donating eyes and organs, that are strongly and effectively advocated ideas. Persons intending to work in this field should develop the following skills:

Persuasive techniques are the arguments and attempts to influence the target audience to support the issue. Most often the following two methods are employed.

Lobbying is the process of achieving public policy goals through the selected application of political pressure. It is most effective when there is need for something specific from the legislative system, such as a law to legalise abortion.

Media relations include use of mass media like radio, television, newspaper, magazines, journals, community newsletters. Suggested formats for media include, press releases, press conferences, fact sheets, press kits, guest editorials, letter to the editor, appearing on radio and television, pictures or graphic illustrations, buying space or time on radio, newspaper.

ACTIVITY 2

- Select any two issues for which you would like to design an Advocacy campaign.
- What methods and media will you use for your campaign? Describe briefly.

SCOPE

The scope of advocacy has grown tremendously with time. Today, people with these skills are required in all sectors. Government departments need them for promoting various programmes and projects. International and National Agencies working in the development sector need people with

such expertise to implement their projects and generate mass awareness. Corporate social responsibility initiatives has become successful only because the right set of networks and persuasive groups are mobilised by people with expertise in advocacy. Non-government organisations generally require them for fund raising and project writing to seek support network. These days advertising agencies and marketing management for companies also hire their services to create goodwill and to build more of the grassroots perspective(s) into campaigns.

KEY TERMS

Advocacy, behaviour change communication, social mobilisation, lobbying, information, education and communication or IEC.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is Advocacy? What are the types of advocacies?
2. Describe the skills required for advocacy.
3. How does Advocacy differ from IEC/BCC?