RESOURCE GUIDE

# ADVOCACY

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*The Capacity Development Resource Guides highlight the key technical areas of expertise needed to effectively influence health policy design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. Each guide identifies the specific skills, knowledge, and capacities that individuals and organizations should possess in the area. The standardized indicators listed for each competency and capability map to the accompanying Capacity Indicators Catalog, which helps to generate a tailored tool for assessing and scoring an organization's capacity level. Each guide also includes a list of useful resources for designing and delivering capacity development assistance.*

## Advocating for More Effective Policy Design and Implementation

**DEFINITION**

Advocacy is a set of targeted actions directed at decisionmakers in support of a specific policy issue (POLICY Project, 1999). Advocacy efforts may be directed at or undertaken by individuals, local and international organizations, networks and coalitions, governmental bodies, and the private sector. The efforts not only focus on influencing a policy change but also the effective implementation of that change.

**RELEVANCE TO POLICY**

Advocacy is often used to influence (1) the adoption of a new policy or program, (2) revision of an existing policy or program, (3) implementation of a policy or program, and (4) mobilization of required resources. Building the capacity of civil society (particularly program beneficiaries and under-represented or marginalized groups) to engage in advocacy results in more responsive and effective policy actions and can lead to more open, transparent, and participatory policymaking processes overall. Advocacy by both governmental and nongovernmental actors is also fundamental to hold leaders and institutions accountable and answerable to their constituencies (USAID | Health Policy Initiative, Task Order 1, 2010).

## KEY CAPABILITIES

To effect change in policy, advocates must understand the policymaking process, identify the key actors involved, cultivate evidence-based policy options, and use strategic messages that persuade and move the target audience to act. Furthermore, advocates must usually work collaboratively and network with a range of partners to generate support and build coalitions to achieve their policy goals (Harvard Family Research Project, 2007; Harvard Family Research Project, 2009). As such, advocacy requires the ability to effectively align the technical with the relational. Advocacy is strongest when grounded in reliable evidence and policy analysis and when the steps in the process are strategically planned, messages are tailored and pretested for different target audiences, and the activities are diligently monitored and retooled as necessary. At the same time, "advocates must call on their collective creativity to know and feel the right time to act, know when to listen, to seize policy windows that open, or find just the right messenger or twist of phrase to ignite government action without becoming adversarial" (USAID | Health Policy Initiative, Task Order 1, 2010, p. 11).

## PERFORMANCE IDEAL

**High capacity in advocacy includes being able to**

- Develop targeted, strategic actions and messages based on convincing evidence
- Consult with and represent various communities or constituents
- Constructively engage in multi-stakeholder dialogue with relevant actors, including policymakers and decisionmakers

At the highest level of performance, individuals and organizations take on a leadership role, based on their comprehensive knowledge of the issue and their ability to convene the right mix of people. They communicate policy implications regularly to constituents and mobilize them to become active in advocacy activities.

Advocacy at this performance level contributes to a culture and practice where policies are made and evaluated based on sound evidence. Advocacy becomes one of the primary means for social participation in the policy process—either directly or through accurate representation of citizens' collective voices by advocacy organizations.

**In the ideal, the following would exist:**

- Opportunities and mechanisms for large-scale policy dialogue and influence
- Effective communication and transition of policies from policymakers to policy implementers
- Systemic monitoring and evaluation to identify the positive and negative effects of policy formulation and implementation

# INDIVIDUAL COMPETENCIES

### KNOWLEDGE OF

| | |
|---|---|
| Local and national policy environment, laws, and health sector issues | ADV6 |
| Policy and advocacy processes, key entry points, and decisionmakers | ADV3, ADV7 |
| Benefits of evidence-based advocacy and policy communication | ADV4 |

### SKILLS TO BE ABLE TO

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|---|---|
| Effectively communicate issues through writing, interpersonal communication, or public events | ADV5 |
| Listen, communicate, negotiate, and influence others | ADV1 |
| Research, analyze, and utilize data from primary and secondary sources to support advocacy positions | ADV8 |

### ATTITUDES/VALUES/ATTRIBUTES

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|---|---|
| Values working in collaboration | ADV2 |
| Is able to inspire others through his/her vision | ADV16 |
| Is politically astute and diplomatic and can accurately analyze power dynamics | ADV3 |

# ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES

### TECHNICAL ABILITY TO

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|---|---|
| Systematically conduct or use qualitative and quantitative research on the needs, priorities, and interests of constituencies and how policies affect them (including from a gender, equity, and inclusion perspective) | ADV24, ADV27, ADV26 |
| Collect, analyze, and synthesize data to develop timely and compelling advocacy positions | ADV25, ADV26 |
| Develop a viable strategic advocacy plan based on a clear analysis of need, opportunities, and power dynamics | ADV22 |
| Analyze and document implications of existing policy and proposed policy alternatives, especially from perspectives of gender, equity, and inclusion | ADV27 |
| Identify target audiences and analyze their position for potential support or opposition | ADV28 |

## TECHNICAL ABILITY TO (CONTINUED)

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|---|---|
| Create evidence-based advocacy messages, materials, and activities to present clear and convincing policy alternatives and workable solutions | ADV13 |
| Communicate a consistent, compelling, and targeted position through various communication channels (e.g., media) *(see related area of expertise)* | ADV12 |
| Develop an M&E plan to track the implementation and outcomes of advocacy activities and to adapt the strategy accordingly | ADV18 |
| Systematically evaluate the effectiveness of advocacy efforts to determine advocacy contributions to policy outcomes | ADV19, ADV10 |
| Monitor the policy process and track progress/issues with implementation | ADV20 |
| Provide effective technical assistance on advocacy to other organizations | ADV33 |

## RELATIONAL ABILITY TO

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|---|---|
| Establish and maintain collaborative and mutually supportive relationships with external groups and organizations representing diverse constituencies (youth, women, service providers, marginalized, health professionals, media, etc.) and diverse sectors (health, labor, economic, youth and sport, human rights, gender, women, military, education, etc.) | ADV31 |
| Maintain constructive links with a variety of policy stakeholders, including communities, decisionmakers, and peer organizations | ADV30 |
| Foster and maintain strong networks based on shared interests to take joint action | ADV29 |
| Earn the trust and credibility with the public, constituents, media, and donors | ADV32 |

## ORGANIZATIONAL OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT TO SUPPORT

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|---|---|
| Allocation of adequate resources (time, staff, and money) for advocacy efforts | ADV15, ADV9 |
| Inclusion of advocacy in the job description/s of designated staff | ADV11 |
| Advocacy tools and techniques and innovative and tailored approaches in response to the changing environment, internally and externally | ADV23, ADV24 |
| Sound internal governance and an actively engaged board (e.g., advocacy is an explicit goal in the organization's written mission/mandate) | ADV17, ADV21 |

## ■■ ILLUSTRATIVE CAPACITY-STRENGTHENING ACTIVITIES

- Conduct advocacy training for civil society (e.g., marginalized groups, religious leaders, etc.)
- Facilitate an advocacy strategy development workshop for networks, coalitions, multisectoral groups
- Conduct policy communication and strategic advocacy communication training
- Award small grants to support implementation of advocacy plans
- Facilitate dialogue among the ministries of health, finance, and planning, women leaders, parliamentarians, private sector
- Foster south-south collaboration and regional forums
- Create opportunities for participation in international fora
- Partner on proposal development and implement awards jointly

## ■■ RESOURCES

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