

Public policies: From ideas to Impact

An advocacy guidebook

Contents

I. Introduction and Executive Summary

1

Guide's Purpose and Target Audience	1
Guide Overview (Roadmap)	1
Methodology and Sources	3

II. Regional Context - Sustainable Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda, and Advocacy in the Region

4

Development as a Right, Not a Luxury	4
The Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda	4
Development Priorities and Gaps in the Arab Region	5
The Role of CSOs in Influencing Policies and Development	5
Challenges Facing Advocacy Efforts in the Arab Region	6
Opportunities for Change	6

III. Fundamental Concepts in Advocacy

7

Definition of Advocacy	7
The Concept's Historical Development	7
Policy Advocacy	8
Levels of Advocacy	10
Schools of Thought in Advocacy	11
Advocacy Cycle and the Theory of Change	13

IV. Advocacy Tools: Stages and Steps

15

Phase 1: Knowing What We Want to Change	15
Phase 2: Identifying the Most Effective Strategy	18
Understanding Public Policies and Decision-Makers	18
Setting Goals	19
Messages	21
Strategies and Tactics	23
Strategies for Influence	25
Phase 3: Breaking Down the Action Plan	30
Phase 4: Plan Implementation	30
Phase 5: Monitoring and Evaluation	31

V: Public Policy Advocacy in the Arab Context

33

Six Case Studies: From Civil Society to Structural Change	33
Tunisia: Advocacy for Sustainable Water Governance and Addressing the Risk of Water Poverty	34
Iraq: Adoption of a National Policy for the Protection of Civilians (PoC)	35
Lebanon: A Success Story: "Not Before 18" - How Advocacy Turned Child Marriage into a Public Issue	37
Egypt: Legal Recognition of Women Working in Agriculture	38

Tunisia: Advocacy for the Recognition of the Rights of Students with Learning Disabilities 40

Jordan: Advocacy to Prevent the Abolition of the Ministry of Labour and Protect Labour Rights 41

ANNEXES

42

Annex 2: Leading Transformational Change 42

Annex 3: On the Nature of Social Media Applications 44

Annex 4: Action Plan 45

References

44

English References 44

Arabic References 44

8 Introduction and Executive Summary

Guide's Purpose and Target Audience

Amidst the rapid transformations in the Arab region, development work is no longer merely a voluntary option, but rather an inevitable response to a reality imposed by declining economic and social indicators. This decline is a result of numerous factors, most notably war, corruption, the dominance of developed nations over the resources and options of most countries in the region, and the closure of public spaces. This guide serves as a knowledge and practical tool specifically designed for civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Arab region, organizations that operate in complex and overlapping crisis environments.

Why this guide now?



We are on the cusp of achieving the 2030 Agenda. While official reports highlight numerical achievements, civil society experiences profound gaps in social justice and equal opportunities. The primary purpose here is to bridge the gap between human rights theory and practical application by empowering human rights defenders with advocacy tools that go beyond simply providing services and actively seek to change the policies that have caused marginalization in the first place.

The report also presents six success stories from five Arab countries, showcasing organizations that have successfully addressed diverse issues and employed innovative tools to effect policy change that serves the agenda of equitable development. The achievements took place despite the numerous challenges faced by CSOs in the Arab world, which include stereotyping, the closure of public spaces, and resource constraints. These countries are Iraq, Jordan, Tunisia, Lebanon, and Egypt.

Target Audience



This guide is aimed at young activists, NGO leaders, and public policy researchers. It is intended for anyone who believes that development is not a "gift" but an inherent "right," and that achieving this right requires building a solid foundation of influence and legitimate advocacy.

This work claims to be participatory and is based on a needs assessment conducted by ANND among its members and key project partners. It is worth noting that the survey results revealed significant variations in experience, interest, and focus on development issues and advocacy for development rights. This participatory approach to developing this guide was a rewarding experience, allowing for a deeper understanding of diverse needs and addressing them before any materials were developed. It also facilitated leveraging the expertise and experiences of partners to provide a local model for others.

Guide Overview (Roadmap)

This guide is designed as a sequential journey, taking the organization from identifying a problem to implementing structural change. It comprises five key sections that form an integrated whole:

1

Chapter 1 - Introduction:

This chapter provides a brief overview of the guide and places it within the context of the struggle for development, where civil society is a crucial development actor. It also introduces the schools of thought discussed in the guide and balances the theoretical and practical frameworks, with a greater emphasis on the practical.

2 Chapter 2 - Regional Context: SDGs, the 2030 Agenda, and Advocacy in the Region:

Advocacy cannot be practiced in isolation from reality. Therefore, Chapter 2 analyzes the SDGs from a critical Arab perspective, examining how neoliberalism and wars impact our region's opportunities to achieve human dignity.

3 Chapter Three - Fundamental Concepts in Advocacy:

Chapter Three focuses on building a deep, yet concise, theoretical understanding. Advocacy is not merely a media campaign; it is a moral and ethical commitment. This section reviews the definitions and evolution of advocacy, distinguishing it from simple awareness campaigns, with a strong emphasis on "ethics of practice" to ensure that the causes we advocate for are not harmed.

4 Chapter Four - Advocacy Tools, Stages, and Steps:

Chapter Four is the heart of the guide. Here, we move to the "how-to" of action, where the guide explains the stages of advocacy planning step by step, using the central tools and questions that must be addressed during campaign design. This begins with analyzing the problem using tools such as problem trees and continues through crafting messages and building national and international alliances. It also covers mechanisms for translating plans into action on the ground, monitoring changes in decision-makers' behavior, and providing clear mechanisms for continuous evaluation to ensure campaigns are flexible and adaptable. Chapter Four also addresses the mechanisms for translating plans into action on the ground.

5 Chapter Five - Public Policy Advocacy in the Arab Context:

The guide concludes with an applied chapter presenting case studies from various Arab countries, where civil society has successfully amended laws or formulated new public policies. This provides the reader with tangible evidence that change is possible despite all the challenges. Perhaps the main message of this chapter is that, however complex the circumstances, there is always hope, there is always a path forward, and the choice is ours. We can curse the darkness or light a candle.

Methodology and Sources

This guide is built on a solid foundation combining theoretical knowledge and field experience. However, its primary objective was to focus more on practical aspects. Therefore, there is a significant emphasis on theoretical dimensions at the expense of practical issues and success stories. To ensure its validity and applicability in diverse contexts, three knowledge sources were utilized:

First: Knowledge Reference:

The guide relied on the most recent reports issued by international and regional organizations that monitor the Arab reality, such as ESCWA and UN agencies, in addition to ANND's analytical reports. International literature in political sociology and public administration was also consulted to understand the dynamics of power and society.

Second: Theoretical Frameworks Adopted:

The guide does not adopt a single model; rather, several frameworks were compared to produce a "hybrid" model suited to the Arab context:

- **The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF):** to understand how to build strong, influential fronts.
- **The Multiple Streams Framework (MSF):** to seize opportune political moments to propose solutions.
- **The Advocacy Planning Framework (APF):** This is the backbone of the guide, distinguished by its clarity and focus on interconnected, practical steps.

To illustrate the hope and applicability of the frameworks presented, Chapter Five offers success stories in activating policy advocacy to serve the development agenda. These stories come from countries with varying levels of enabling environments for civil society work; however, the results achieved warrant our attention and respect for the high level of professionalism and sound management demonstrated.

Third: The Participatory Approach:

The guide is not the product of individual work, but rather the fruit of discussions, workshops, and the cumulative experiences of experts and activists in the Arab region. Lessons were drawn from past failures as much as from successes, making the guide realistic and authentic in its approach, far removed from unrealistic theoretical aspirations.

Strategic Direction and Future Vision:



At its core, this guide aims to invest in the existing capacities of CSOs to contribute more effectively to policymaking. The vision underlying this guide is that true sustainability stems not only from external funding but also from the ability to build a new social contract that guarantees citizens' participation in decision-making.

Through this work, the ANND seeks to strengthen trust among Arab organizations and enable them to coordinate across borders, particularly on shared issues such as climate change, women's rights, economic justice, and water justice. This guide comes at a pivotal moment in international relations and global leadership, marked by attempts to dismantle the international system and, more dangerously, the system of values and rights that has been established over decades. Our guide aims to contribute to enhancing the capacity of CSOs to exert influence and become a unified and powerful Arab voice at the national, regional, and international levels, defending the system of rights that ensures equality for all, in the North and the South.

8 Regional Context – Sustainable Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda, and Advocacy in the Region

“The human person is the central subject of development and should be the active participant and beneficiary of the right to development.” Article 2 of the Declaration on the Right to Development

1. Development as a Right, Not a Luxury



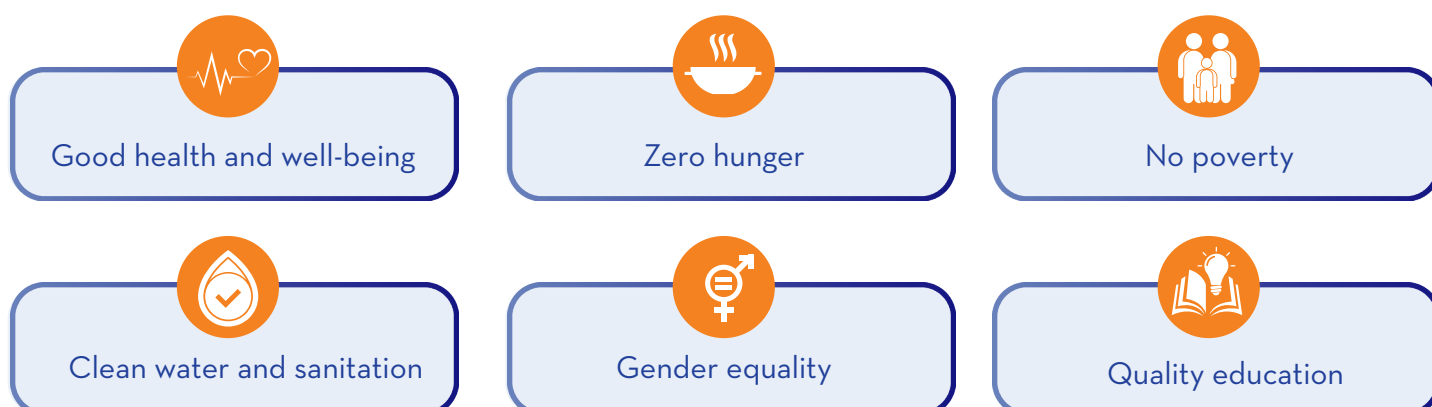
Development is viewed as a fundamental human right, not an economic luxury or a secondary political option. The 1986 United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development (UN General Assembly, 1986) affirmed that development is an inalienable right, which aligns with the approach of several Arab initiatives that focus on social justice and equality as prerequisites for development. UNDP reports in the Arab region indicate that the absence of inclusive development exacerbates poverty and vulnerability and undermines social and political stability (UNDP, 2022). Thus, development is an integral part of the human rights system and a foundation for building more just and cohesive societies.

2. The Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda



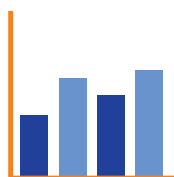
Like the rest of the world, Arab states have adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which comprises 17 interconnected goals addressing economic, social, and environmental issues. However, SDGs implementation in the Arab region is linked to specific circumstances such as armed conflicts, climate change, and uneven development levels among countries. The 2019 ESCWA report indicates that most Arab states are still lagging in achieving many of the goals, particularly those related to eradicating poverty, ensuring quality education, and achieving gender equality (ESCWA, 2019). The report also clarifies that achieving the Agenda requires integrated policies and broad partnerships involving governments, civil society, and the private sector (ESCWA, 2020).

Figure 1: The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)





3. Development Priorities and Gaps in the Arab Region



The Arab region is facing accumulated development gaps linked to high unemployment rates, particularly among youth and women, coupled with significant inequalities in income and access to services. A 2021 Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) report indicated that the lack of social justice is one of the most prominent challenges to sustainable development in the region, as affluent groups benefit disproportionately from resources, while marginalized groups remain deprived of basic services. Furthermore, the protracted wars and conflicts in some Arab countries, including Palestine, Sudan, Syria, Yemen, Libya, and Lebanon, have exacerbated refugee and displacement crises, hindered development, and placed additional pressure on relatively stable or host countries, impeding their ability to achieve the SDGs.

4. The Role of CSOs in Influencing Policies and Development



CSOs in the Arab region play a pivotal role in influencing public policy. They work to amplify the voices of marginalized groups, promote transparency and accountability, and provide channels of communication between citizens and decision-makers. ESCWA has emphasized that civil society's involvement in formulating national sustainable development plans is a prerequisite for their success. A report by ANND (ANND, 2020) also noted that CSOs have contributed to defending economic and social rights and advocating for more equitable resource allocation policies.

This role becomes more significant when viewed through the lens of the "development effectiveness pathway," which was clearly articulated in the 2008 Accra Declaration. The declaration stressed the need for civil society to be a full partner in the development process, not merely a secondary implementer. This recognition was further solidified at the 2011 Busan Forum on Partnership for Effective Development, which stated that CSOs are independent development actors with essential roles in promoting rights, equality, and accountability. These discussions have resonated across the Arab region through CSO participation in regional initiatives such as the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (AFSD), organized annually by ESCWA, which emphasizes the centrality of these organizations as strategic partners in shaping the development agenda (ESCWA, 2019).

5. Challenges Facing Advocacy Efforts in the Arab Region

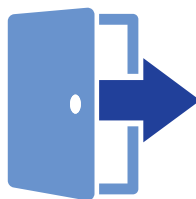


Despite civil society's growing importance, the regional and international environment in which it operates has become increasingly complex. Legal and political restrictions on freedom of association and assembly in many Arab countries limit the ability of organizations to influence policy. Limited funding, much of it from outside sources, raises questions about independence and sustainability. Moreover, armed conflicts and sharp political transitions further complicate long-term planning and the development of effective advocacy strategies.

However, the current challenges are not limited to the local or regional level; they extend to the international arena. The UN system itself is facing increasing attacks from some major powers, manifested in attempts to diminish its role as a unifying framework for managing global issues and in the continuous reduction of its budget, which directly impacts development programs and aid. This trend places the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development under direct threat by undermining its ability to fulfill its coordinating and funding role.

Furthermore, some researchers point to a shift in international political thought that believes civil society, particularly non-governmental organizations (NGOs), has reached the end of its historical role. According to an article published in *Foreign Affairs* entitled "The End of the Age of NGOs?" (Bush & Hadden, 2025), the global civic space that flourished since the 1990s is shrinking rapidly due to the rise of nationalism, the decline in commitment to multilateralism, and the increasing restrictions on NGOs worldwide. These transformations mean that civil society in the Arab region faces twofold challenges: local restrictions from governments, and an international decline in the environment that once provided it with legitimacy, support, and space to operate.

6. Opportunities for Change



Civil society in the Arab region is facing numerous challenges. However, some spaces and opportunities can be effectively utilized. On the one hand, digital technology and social media tools offer unprecedented possibilities for mobilization and reaching a broad audience, especially young people, who constitute the majority of the region's population. Despite attempts by some governments to impose restrictions on the digital space, it remains one of the primary spaces available for advocacy and information exchange.

On the other hand, regional action and coordination among Arab CSOs provide a significant opportunity to compensate for the decline in the UN's role and the reduction in international funding. Regional networks, such as ANND, have demonstrated that broad alliances can generate alternative knowledge and shape a shared discourse on issues of social justice and inequality, thus enhancing influence in international discussions even amidst shrinking official spaces.

The current crisis may also serve as an impetus for developing alternative partnerships with new actors, such as the socially responsible private sector and South-South alliances, to broaden the support base and strengthen the independence of civil society. These alternatives have become even more urgent with the fierce attack on the UN system and the reduction of its budget, which threatens the continuity of some traditional development programs.

Furthermore, the growing presence of youth and women in Arab social movements and civic spaces provides new energy and an opportunity to revitalize civic discourse and strengthen its connection to society. If civil society can absorb and integrate these energies, it can maintain its role as a pivotal development actor, even amidst unfavorable global transformations.

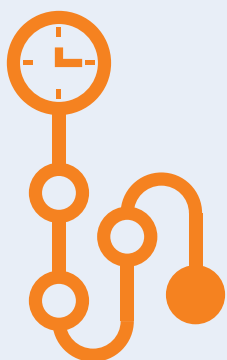
8 Fundamental Concepts in Advocacy

1. Definition of Advocacy

Advocacy has numerous definitions. However, they mostly address the same core idea. In this proposed definition, we attempt to offer one that respects the diversity of interventions and civil society expertise. Advocacy is a collective action that mobilizes forces to influence others to bring about specific and desired social, economic, or political change. It is not limited to an expression of opinion. It is also a strategic process that seeks to effect tangible change in matters of public concern, amending laws, improving services, redirecting resources, or promoting social justice.

Within the CSO context, advocacy is a central tool for amplifying peoples' voices, especially the marginalized, in decision-making centers. It is a means to activate democratic participation and achieve the SDGs by lobbying for more equitable, transparent, and responsive policies.

The Concept's Historical Development:



Advocacy is an ancient human practice that evolved with the emergence of authority and law to become a tool used by elites to defend their causes. It flourished significantly in the 18th and 19th centuries with major revolutions and abolitionist movements, for example, where political, economic, and moral dimensions intertwined in the pursuit of freedom and justice. Advocacy expanded in the 20th century with the rise of democracy and human rights, giving rise to civil rights, feminist, labor, and anti-colonial movements, which became more organized through human rights organizations.

Digital advocacy emerged in the 21st century. It relies on the internet and social media, as seen in campaigns like #MeToo and in the Arab Spring, which has alarmed regimes about the power of individual influence.

The definition emphasizes that the essence of advocacy is creating impact, not merely raising awareness or building capacity. The fundamental principle is: "No effort without impact."

1. Definition

For this guide, the focus will be on policy advocacy, as development and human rights issues are fundamentally political. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) defines policy advocacy as “the direct, evidence-based interaction with decision-makers to develop, reform, and monitor policies, legislation, and systems. It is a strategic effort to secure political commitment, improve reproductive health services, and advance gender equality by fostering, supporting, or accelerating policy changes.” (UNFPA, 2022).

2. Conceptual Foundations of Public Policy Advocacy

Given the significant challenges facing the Arab region in general, and civil society in particular, regarding development financing and the shrinking public space, it is imperative to improve the systematic and effective use of available resources. We must adopt more impactful methodologies for effective policy advocacy. Policy advocacy is based on a deep understanding of the political decision-making cycle, an analysis of social and institutional contexts, and the identification of influential actors. The additional and pivotal role that CSOs should play enables them to identify appropriate interventions in the policy cycle, effectively utilize resources to achieve desired change, and offer policy alternatives, alongside providing evidence-based support, building alliances, and activating community participation.

3. Policy Advocacy: Core Principles and Values

Effective advocacy generally relies on a set of principles that ensure respect for the values held by CSOs. These values are fundamentally linked to democracy and human rights. They distinguish between civil society's struggles from those of other sectors, especially in public policy advocacy. The principle that “the ends justify the means” cannot be used to justify any corrupt, opportunistic, or unjust behavior. The true principle governing the struggle of civil society in the field of policy advocacy is: “The means must resemble the ends.” Below is a list of policy advocacy guidelines. While not exhaustive, they represent a qualitative contribution to civil society's work. Organizations are welcome to add new principles:



Evidence-Based Advocacy: Providing scientific evidence through research supported by data and presenting alternatives that are also grounded in experience, evidence, and data constitutes a key strength.



Gaining Legitimacy: Our campaigns cannot succeed without legitimacy from those whose rights have been violated. It is essential to involve as many of these groups as possible and empower them to advocate for their causes.



Transparency and Accountability: Advocates must adhere to all principles of good governance, particularly regarding decision-making mechanisms, funding, and objectives.



Justice and Equity: The alternatives we advocate for mustn't, by their very nature, cause harm or damage to the rights of other social groups or development issues.



Independence: Working on public policy will inevitably lead to polarization within decision-making circles, potentially politicizing the issue. Therefore, the independence of advocacy campaigns and their deliberate distancing from other parties are crucial guarantees for a successful process.



Do No Harm: The alternatives offered by civil society must be ethical, well-considered, and responsible, ensuring that no issue comes at the expense of another, the rights of other groups, or any sector. Our appeals must not cause harm.

4. Professional Ethics in Policy Advocacy

Policy advocacy requires a clear ethical commitment from the outset, especially for CSOs, where ethics are a foundation. This becomes more crucial when addressing sensitive issues or marginalized groups. Below is a list of ethical principles that might be self-evident, but could serve as a reminder:



Respect for Human Dignity

This involves working towards several integrated aspects, including protecting fundamental rights, promoting equality and justice, combating discrimination, disseminating a culture of peace and non-violence, and activating the role of relevant institutions and bodies.



Responsible Representation

It is essential to ensure that the voices of rights holders are represented responsibly, honestly, and without distortion.



Safety and Protection

Ensuring the protection of rights defenders from any threat or reprisal, especially in repressive environments.



Listening and Flexibility

Advocacy is not merely conveying demands, but rather an ongoing dialogue with communities. There is no place for personal biases, and the "all or nothing" mentality is unacceptable.

Commitment to Social Justice



Systematic distortion has pushed a large segment of society to think exclusively about quick, immediate solutions and focus solely on fleeting, ineffective digital achievements. These solutions may be much easier than addressing real problems, but they may not lead to the desired change. Thus, it is imperative to work towards structural change that addresses the root causes of injustice, not just superficial solutions. Commitment is essential here; adopting a reform should not be merely a project to be undertaken until funding runs out, only to move on to other projects. Our choice to adopt a cause must be strategic and well-considered to achieve the desired impact.

B) Levels of Advocacy:

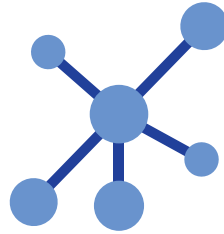
All advocacy processes are subject to practical considerations that determine the form and level appropriate for our cause. Advocacy levels are divided into three basic categories that may overlap within the same issue, or the focus may be limited to only one level: the local, national, and international levels, including the regional level. The table below defines the three levels, the areas of targeting, and the main tools, activities, and objectives:

Level	Target Area	Main Goals	Tools and activities
Local (Community)	Local community members and direct stakeholders	Address local service and development issues such as health, education, and public services, and mobilize citizens to participate in local decision-making.	- Awareness workshops - Forming community committees - Community meetings - Submitting petitions to local authorities
National (Policy)	Public policies, laws, and legislation	Influence decision-makers to adopt more equitable and inclusive policies	- Policy research and analysis - Formulating alternative proposals - Building alliances and networks - National media campaigns
Regional and International	Transboundary Issues (Water, Environment, Migration) + International Policies	Adopt common standards and policies at the regional level, ensure alignment of national policies with international standards, and mobilize global support.	- Cooperation with regional networks - Participation in conferences and forums - Providing recommendations to regional bodies - Shadow reports and monitoring international commitments

Several schools may differentiate between regional advocacy and international advocacy, and there is no problem with that. However, based on experience, we see that the nature, methodologies, and strategies that can be adopted will be very similar.

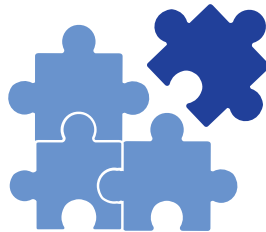
1. Schools of Thought in Advocacy:

The Three Streams Model (Multiple Streams Framework - MSF)



In 1984, John Kingdon introduced one of the most prominent theoretical models for understanding how issues reach the policymakers' agenda. This model is based on three fundamental streams: problem streams, which relate to how the problem is defined and perceived; policy streams, which include ideas and solutions proposed by experts and policy networks; and public policy streams, which reflect the general political climate, including partisan leanings, interest group pressures, and public opinion. Kingdon asserts that the opportunity to adopt a new issue arises when these three streams converge in what is known as the "policy window," where "policy pioneers" can propel the issue to the forefront of political attention and decision-making. This model provides a practical tool in advocacy for understanding the critical moments that can be leveraged to effectively influence the political agenda.

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF)



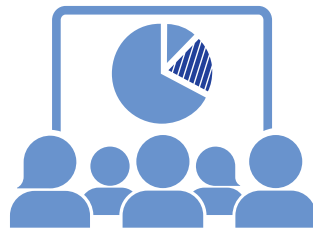
This framework posits that individuals engage in politics to translate their beliefs into policy by forming alliances with those who share their values and competing with other alliances holding different beliefs. Beliefs—whether deep-seated values, core political positions, or minor details—form the bond that unites coalition members and guides their interpretation of information and their response to events. Political change occurs in two ways:

 **Minor transformation:** through policy-oriented learning that modifies minor aspects.

 **Major transformation:** often resulting from internal or external shocks that weaken one coalition and create an opening for another to consolidate its power.

Coalitions utilize resources such as power, public support, expertise, and networks to maintain or shift their influence. These processes are typically viewed over a decade-long timeframe. Over time, this framework has been adapted for use in various political fields, but it has retained its core concept. Politics is a competitive arena where coalitions strive to translate their beliefs into policies through continuous interaction, learning, and adaptation.

The Advocacy Planning Framework (APF)



APF emerged from the Bridging Research and Policy project and the RAPID methodology, which focused on understanding how to integrate research evidence into policymaking in transitional and developing countries. The Advocacy Planning Framework was developed as a practical tool to help activists plan advocacy campaigns by mapping the targeted policymaking process and answering the fundamental questions associated with it.

The ultimate goal is to build a sense of collective ownership of ideas and proposals among the target audience, especially decision-makers, so that this sense of ownership leads them to adopt the desired decisions. Thus, the advocacy planning framework gives activists the best possible chance to effectively achieve their advocacy goals.

Figure 2: : Advocacy Planning Framework

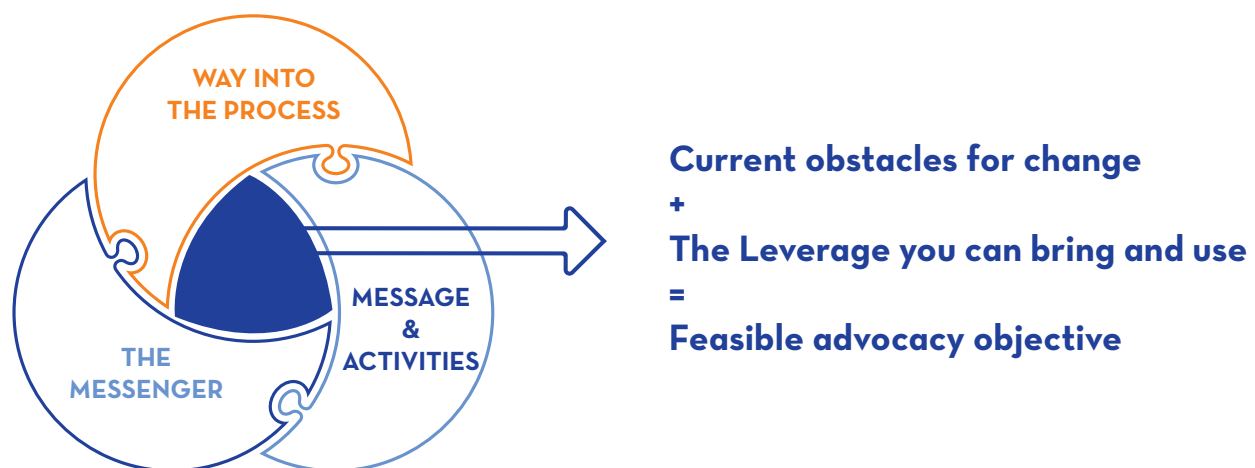


Table 2: Comparison between the MSF, ACF, and APF frameworks

Comparative dimension	MSF	ACF	APF
Main Goal	Interpret the timing of policy changes through the "window of opportunity".	Understand the dynamics of change through intellectual alliances.	Practical planning for impactful advocacy campaigns
Key Players	Bureaucrats, politicians, experts	Alliances of like-minded actors	Policy advocates, CSOs

Comparative dimension	MSF	ACF	APF
Methodology	Analyze the convergence of three elements: the problem, politics, and public policy.	Analyze actors' networks and their core beliefs.	Define the message, its messenger, and the entry point.
Timeline	A short window of opportunity for change	Long-term change through knowledge accumulation and conflict	Planning within a defined timeframe for the campaign

Since development work is fundamentally based on investing in people—all people, their capabilities, and their convictions—this guide will focus on the advocacy planning framework. True impact stems from each individual's conviction, their own position, and the necessity of the desired change. This embodies the concept of ownership.

2. Advocacy Cycle and the Theory of Change

It is self-evident that changing public policies does not occur automatically. Rather, it is the product of a long, cumulative effort and is achieved when we acquire the knowledge that enables us to reach our desired outcomes: influencing decision-makers. This is where advocacy comes in as a theory of change in its own right. The desired change—that is, influence—cannot be achieved unless we develop realistic hypotheses that strive to accomplish the task step by step.

Advocacy is not merely a tool for exerting pressure. It is a theory of change in its own right, based on clear causal pathways. The advocacy course we will present below will demonstrate this connection and confirm that effective advocacy requires a different understanding from the prevailing one; it should be considered a systematic process of change. In the next chapter, we will practically address the methodological steps in the advocacy process. To implement these steps, we must first understand the advocacy cycle.



Step 1: Identify what we want to change

Many people mistakenly believe that knowing the problem equals knowing the solution. This is incorrect. "Knowing what we want to change" is a serious inquiry that requires knowledge of various internal and external factors. It also demands a bright, creative mind open to available options and what can be achieved.



Step 2: Identify the most effective strategy

The accumulated knowledge gained in the advocacy process, along with determining the primary impact of the advocacy campaign, necessitates effective action strategies. This involves identifying available options: are they confrontational? Local and international pressure strategies? Or collaborative strategies? When discussing strategies, it is essential to focus on well-considered, innovative, and effective approaches. The third step in the advocacy cycle is: Breaking down the action plan.



Step 3: Plan and develop an action plan

This step is more intuitive. Serious planning bridges the gap between vision, strategy, and implementation. The action plan must translate the strategy into impactful, cumulative actions and parallel or sequential phases. It must also demonstrate cohesion among the initiating groups, leveraging all available resources to accomplish the task.

Step 4: Implement the action plan



The effective implementation of the developed plan, with professionalism, seriousness, and determination, and, more importantly, with a critical review of everything implemented, is essential for achieving the desired change. No detail should be underestimated at any level, whether it be media activities, public outreach, or lobbying with decision-makers. All activities must be approached with the necessary seriousness and professionalism, as each activity serves a specific objective within the pathways of influence.

Step 5: Monitoring and evaluation



It is essential to measure impact and progress toward objectives, review assumptions, and adjust strategies as needed. Evaluation is not the end of advocacy, but the beginning of a more mature and effective approach.

Step 6: Management and Coordination



Some consider this step secondary, but experience demonstrates its importance. The better we manage the campaign and the deeper the coordination among allies and partners, the greater the collective ownership of the cause and the more achievable and immediate the impact will be. Conversely, the less effective the campaign, the greater the coordination.

Figure 3: The Advocacy Cycle



8 IV. Advocacy Tools: Stages and Steps

Phase 1: Knowing What We Want to Change

This is where the story begins, when we discover that an issue or violation has become a reality. At this point, the issue becomes personal, not just a matter of public opinion. It becomes a matter of destiny for us—as individuals, as citizens, as groups—who desire a decent and dignified life. This is the real moment we feel compelled to act. It is the experience of the most important advocacy issues, born from the very heart of rights holders when their rights are violated.

Advocacy has evolved from emotional reactions to strategic actions based on reason and methodology to avoid failure. To achieve real change, these issues must be approached seriously and responsibly, avoiding the haste that leads to frustration. Success requires logical advocacy at the right time and place, with the right demands. This necessitates in-depth research and analysis of the problem, understanding the context, and assessing capabilities to accurately define the required change. To accomplish this task, several tools and stages will be adopted, as follows:

1. Understanding the Problem
2. Understanding the General Context
3. Understanding the Stakeholders and Power Balance
4. Understanding Yourself

Understanding the Problem

This tool relies on three basic steps:

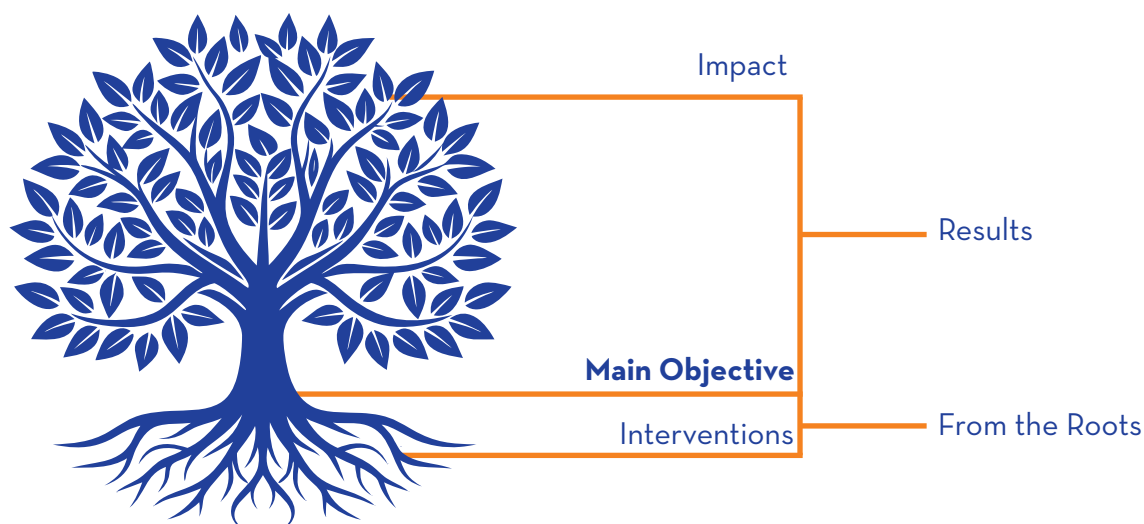
a. Identifying the core problem (the trunk of the tree): This is the direct and obvious violation (such as child labor).

b. Identifying the root causes (the roots of the tree): Using the "Five Causes" technique to delve into the true reasons behind the problem (such as weak legislation or poverty). You will find in the footnote how to use this model step by step.

c. Identifying the consequences (the branches of the tree): These are the short-, medium-, and long-term effects of the problem (such as declining education and increased poverty).

After analyzing the problem, the "solution tree" is used, transforming each negative element in the "problem tree" into a positive objective. The problem becomes the main objective, the roots become solutions, and the negative consequences become desired positive effects.

Figure 4: Solution Tree



This process helps to build a clear hypothesis for change and identify the decision-makers responsible for achieving the desired impact.

Understanding the Context

PESTEL analysis is a strategic tool used to understand and analyze the external factors (political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal) that influence advocacy campaigns. This tool helps activists to:

1. **Understand the context:** Recognize the environment in which they will operate.
2. **Anticipate challenges:** Estimate the scale of difficulties, such as the need for research or legal reforms.
3. **Measure community readiness:** Determine how receptive people are to the issue and engage with it.

The name PESTEL stands for six key areas:



Political: Public policies, political stability, the balance of power, the positions of actors, pressing issues, and public and press perceptions of the government's performance.



Economic: Economic conditions, available funding, inflation, unemployment, debt, and international financial pressures...



Social/Sociocultural: Societal trends, cultural values, demographic shifts, and public attitudes...



Technological: Digital developments, communications infrastructure, technological innovation, electricity, and transportation...



Environmental: Climate change, environmental policies, and sustainability



Legal: Laws and regulations governing our cause, judicial decisions (if any), frameworks of rights and freedoms, relevant international agreements, etc.

It is important to note that not all aspects of the PESTEL framework are necessarily applicable in every case.

Therefore, a certain degree of flexibility should be considered in its use, depending on the subject of the analysis.

This methodology serves as a structured checklist for analyzing the campaign's environment, aiming to monitor influential trends (such as shifts in public sentiment or the emergence of new digital tools). In practice, campaign organizers analyze each axis and identify its most significant positive and negative factors with expert input. This approach helps anticipate challenges, seize opportunities, and align the advocacy strategy with the surrounding reality.

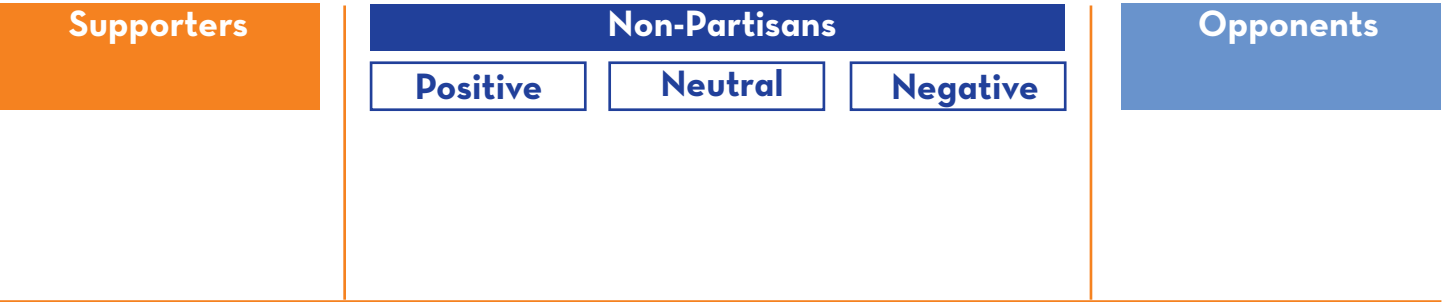
Understanding the Parties and the Balance of Power

Public opinion is inevitably divided on any issue, so it is essential to analyze the parties involved to determine the balance of power and the scale of effort required for the campaign. This is done using a simple tool that divides the parties into three main categories: supporters, opponents, and neutrals.

Step 1: Identify and label all parties (parties, unions, institutions, etc.) and place them accurately and without guesswork into one of the three categories.

Step 2: Divide the "neutral" category into three subcategories: positively neutral, neutral, and negatively neutral.

Figure 5: Parties Analysis



Step 3: Identifying “Opponents” – Institutions, Actors, and Influencers. This detailed analysis will help the campaign later develop effective strategies for mobilizing the public and influencing decision-makers.

Self-Awareness

Advocacy requires ambition and a degree of risk-taking, but it also requires realism and responsibility. Therefore, it begins with self-analysis, i.e., the initiating group (individuals, organizations, parties). One of the most important tools is SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), which helps distinguish internal factors from external ones and understand the strengths and weaknesses facing the campaign.

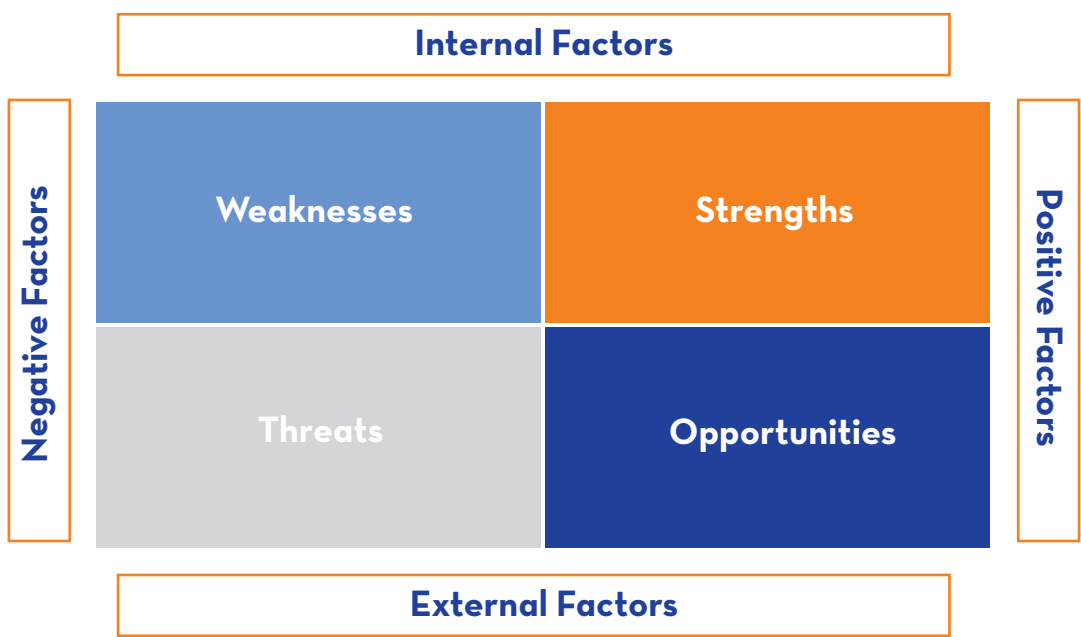
Strengths: Resources, relationships, and supportive individuals that increase the chances of success.

Weaknesses: Factors that weaken performance, such as weak research, limited numbers, or insufficient media coverage.

Opportunities: Positive external factors, such as public opinion support, media support, or UN support.

Threats: External obstacles, such as restrictions on freedoms or competition from other issues.

Figure 6: SWOT Analysis



Practical steps:

- Understand the tool and distinguish between internal and external factors.
- Prepare an initial map of all factors.
- Review the map to avoid ambiguity.
- Develop a strategy to capitalize on strengths and opportunities, and address weaknesses and threats.
- The analysis must be continuously updated because circumstances change, and neglecting it poses a risk to the course of change.

Phase 2: Identifying the Most Effective Strategy

1.Understanding Public Policies and Decision-Makers:

The American political scientist Thomas Dye defined public policy as "what a government chooses to do, or not do" (Dye, 2017). Here, "government" is used in its broadest sense, encompassing all authorities with the legitimacy to issue public policies, such as parliament, the cabinet, ministers, directors-general, departments, agencies, and even municipalities. Understanding the initiators of public policies and the entities responsible for formulating and approving them clarifies the methods of reform and the restoration of rights. It also reveals the scale of effort required to develop realistic alternatives that respect decision-making mechanisms. Public policies are embodied in a similar way globally, as follows: (Example from Public Policy Classifications in Lebanon)

Table 3: Public Policy Classifications in Lebanon

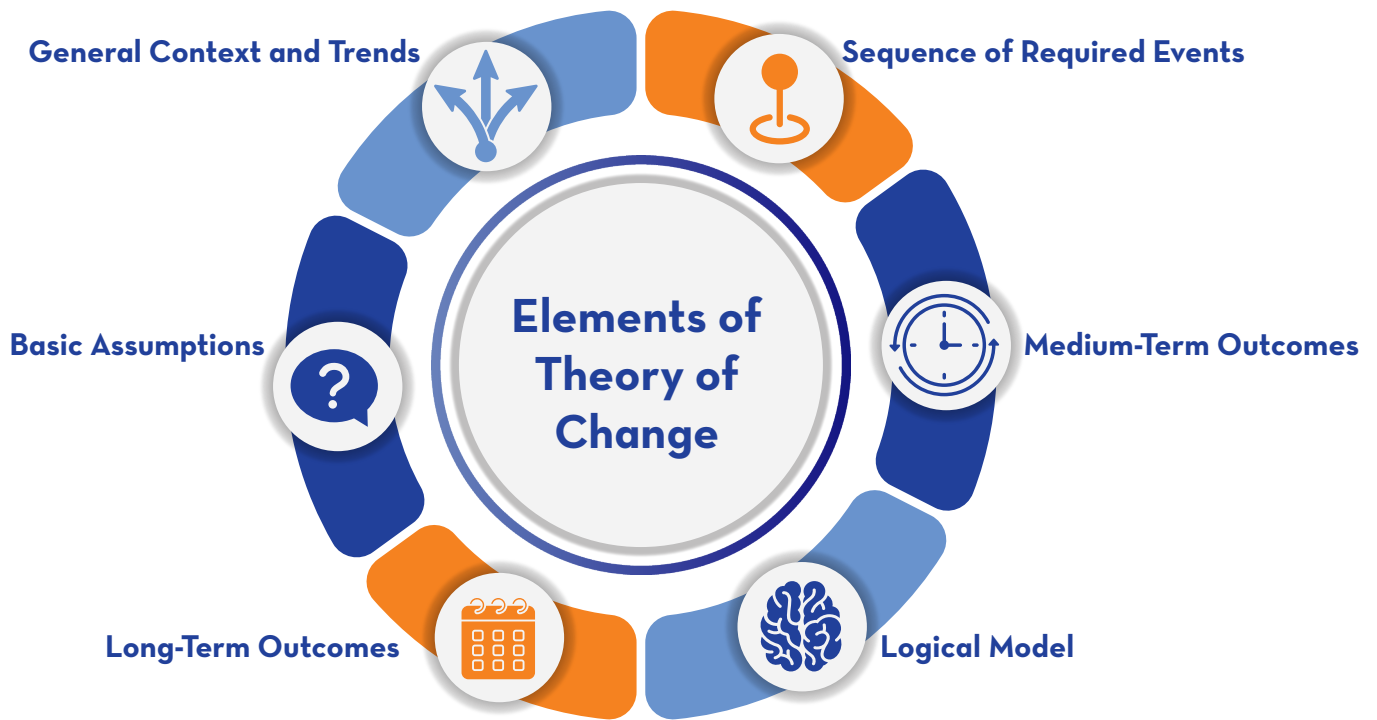
Policy	Embodied Through	Actors (presidency, legislative, executive, judicial, and official departments)
Constitution	A text defined as "the supreme law of every state." Legal rules	Passed by a two-thirds majority in the House of Representatives
International Treaties and Agreements	Text of legal articles and implementing procedures	-Negotiated and signed by the Government (often through the Minister of Foreign Affairs) -Ratified by the House of Representatives by a simple majority -Issued by the President of the Republic
Laws	A written text, consisting of general and abstract legal rules	-Approved by the House of Representatives -Issued by the President of the Republic -The government is responsible for ensuring its implementation
Legislative Decrees	Executive Texts	Issued by the Government with authorization from the House of Representatives
Decrees and Implementing Regulations	There are various types: Government Decrees, Implementing Decrees, and Decisions	-Government Decrees: Decisions issued by the Government -Implementing Decrees: Issued by the Minister -Decisions: Issued by the Minister
Administrative Decisions	Specific Provisions	Minister, Governor, Directors General, Public Departments

The above classification provides a clear understanding of the problem addressed by our campaign, its underlying framework, and the key decision-maker—whether an individual or a group—who needs to make the decision. It could help identify the most effective tools and mechanisms for influence. This process enables us to determine the decision-makers the campaign will target directly and the groups it will target indirectly.

2.Setting Goals

A deep understanding of the issue enables initiators to clearly define their campaign goals. Here, the "theory of change" emerges as a tool that helps translate aspirations into actionable paths. It provides a flexible framework that links desired outcomes to activities, taking into account context, assumptions, and opportunities. Unlike rigid tools, the theory of change allows for adaptation to changing environments and improves coordination, evaluation, and accountability.

Figure 7: Elements of the Theory of Change



To develop an actionable theory of change, the following must be identified:

- The overall context and stakeholders.
- The long-term goal and medium-term outcomes.
- The expected sequence of events leading to change.
- The underlying assumptions of the strategy.
- The logical model that illustrates the relationship between resources, activities, outputs, and impact.

Practical steps include:

- 1 Defining the overall goal and specific objectives.
- 2 Selecting change tools (research, advocacy, legal advice, etc.).
- 3 Examining implementation methods by reviewing assumptions, identifying resources, and fostering collaboration with partners and stakeholders.

Figure 8: Results



Based on the above:
It is now possible to identify the expected outcomes.
This will be based on the "if...then..." questioning methodology.
The relationships will be structured as follows:

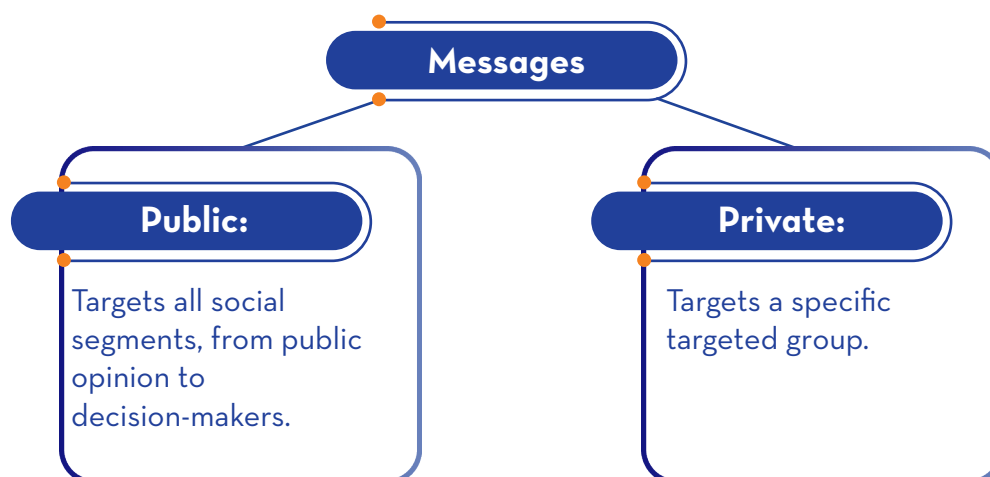
3. Messages:

Advocacy campaign messages are the cornerstone of the advocacy process. UN Women defines messages as "a concise statement that articulates the issue being addressed and its overall objective, including what we seek to achieve and why" (UN Women, 2014). The purpose of this message is to encourage the recipient to actively support the cause.

In the context of public policy advocacy campaigns, a message can be defined as "a statement or set of focused and coherent statements that clearly articulate the campaign's issue and objectives, present compelling arguments for the need for change, and issue a clear call to action."

The message aims to simplify complex issues, making them understandable and relevant to the target audience, whether they are decision-makers, public opinion leaders, or "influencers."

Figure 9: Messages



Thus, from this perspective, we must distinguish between two key types of advocacy campaign messages:

Public Messages:

- Express the campaign's main demand
- Address all segments of society
- Present the rationale for the required reform
- Clearly define the required action and who should implement it

Specific Messages:

- Adapt private messages to respond to the understandings and interests of specific social segments.
- Provide evidence and arguments explaining why these segments should be of interest.
- Include a Call for Action to the recipients

Main Objectives of Advocacy Messages:

Messages in public policy campaigns serve several strategic objectives, the most important of which are:

Raising awareness:	Highlighting a specific issue or problem and making it part of the public debate.
Building support:	Mobilizing and uniting supporters of the cause, both individuals and organizations.
Persuading decision-makers	Influencing the opinions and positions of officials who have the power to change policies.
Motivating action	Encouraging the target audience to take concrete, practical steps, such as signing a a petition, participating in a demonstration, or contacting their representatives.
Changing perceptions & behaviors	Influencing public opinion and changing social and cultural attitudes related to the issue.

Spotlight

Campaign to Repeal Article 522 in Lebanon and 308 in Jordan

The Campaign: A community-based campaign led by human rights organizations to repeal the legal provision that allowed rapists to escape punishment if they married their victims.

The Main Message: "A crime cannot be covered up by marriage." In Jordan: "#Article_308 is a crime."

Why was it effective?

Challenges

Misconceptions: The message directly attacks the misconception that marriage can "cover up" rape, re-establishing the act as an unforgivable crime.

Shocking and Direct: Using the word "crime" had a powerful impact, reframing the discussion from a matter of "honor" and social customs to a criminal and human rights issue.

Specific Target: Focusing on the article number (Article 308 in Jordan and Article 522 in Lebanon) made the target clear and specific to legislators and the public.

Source: Legal Agenda, <https://shorturl.at/ZOBV3>

Types of Messages:

For advocacy messages to be successful, the style must be integrated with the content, the messenger, and the medium. Experience has shown that simple and direct language is the most effective way to deliver the message and achieve the desired impact, provided it is understandable, honest, and persuasive. From here, this content is linked to style, and while style is linked to other factors, the general criteria for this style can be categorized as follows:

- Simple
- Brief
- Clear
- Relevant
- Consistent
- Focused
- Summarizes the issue
- Provides solutions
- Indicates the desired outcome and provides evidence
- Appeals to both the mind and heart

4. Strategies and Tactics

"Strategy without tactics is the slowest path to victory. Tactics without strategy are the noise before defeat." - Sun Tzu, The Art of War

Before delving into the strategies and tactics of influence, field experience indicates that the initiating group must decide on several fundamental issues that facilitate progress toward the goal:

Close government ties: Is this good or bad?

Initiators must decide whether or not they are open to building relationships with authority in its various forms. This is an analysis model that can be used:

Negative	Positive
Contact may be limited to a small number of organizations.	Direct personal contact strengthens trust between the parties.
Consultations are not conducted with complete transparency with all beneficiaries.	Gives the opportunity before consultations are issued.

Negative	Positive
There is a risk of parliamentary debate being controlled by certain pressure groups that may receive funding from the private sector (this is understood as a retreat from independence).	- State institutions can be contacted through MPs.
It leads to a loss of public trust.	It opens doors to direct influence and partnership building.

Joint campaigns or not?

1+1=3

Joint campaigns offer greater strength and impact by combining resources and expertise, providing broader social legitimacy, protection from pressures, and enhanced sustainability. Conversely, some prefer unilateral leadership for faster decision-making and access to specialized expertise, arguing that collaborative work is time-consuming and labor-intensive. The challenge lies in defining the nature of the partners, the decision-making mechanisms, and ensuring that the campaign is not compromised in ways that weaken its objectives.

To summarize the advantages and disadvantages, we examined partnerships through six criteria:

Side	Positive	Negative
Strength and influence	By aligning efforts, we can double our ability to influence decision-makers and the public.	The message may lose its impact if disagreements arise between partners.
Legitimacy and Protection	It lends greater legitimacy to the cause by representing broader demands from multiple sides. A coalition structure provides stronger protection against pressure or distortion.	The coalition may be accused of being more political or self-serving than truly upholding human rights and civil liberties.
Resources	Resource sharing (knowledge, funding, networks) reduces costs for all parties involved.	The likelihood of unfair distribution or control of resources.
Sustainability	It sustains the campaign's momentum even when one party withdraws or underperforms.	The challenge of sustaining group engagement and cohesion over the long term.
Campaign Management	Clear role assignments boost efficiency.	The lengthy decision-making process is due to multiple stakeholders.

Lessons learned in establishing partnerships reduce the obstacles that the campaign may face; they can also be summarized as follows:

Expected Obstacle	Alternatives
Different visions	Joint planning and collaborative establishment of foundational principles
Organization and Decision-Making Processes	Establish an internal system that defines all stakeholders, democratic mechanisms and decision-making processes, organizational structure, and phase evaluations. Ensure full participation of all partners, facilitate new partnerships, and optimize resource allocation.
Partners deviating from the discourse or diverting the campaign away from its intended course.	Establishing a joint action agreement.

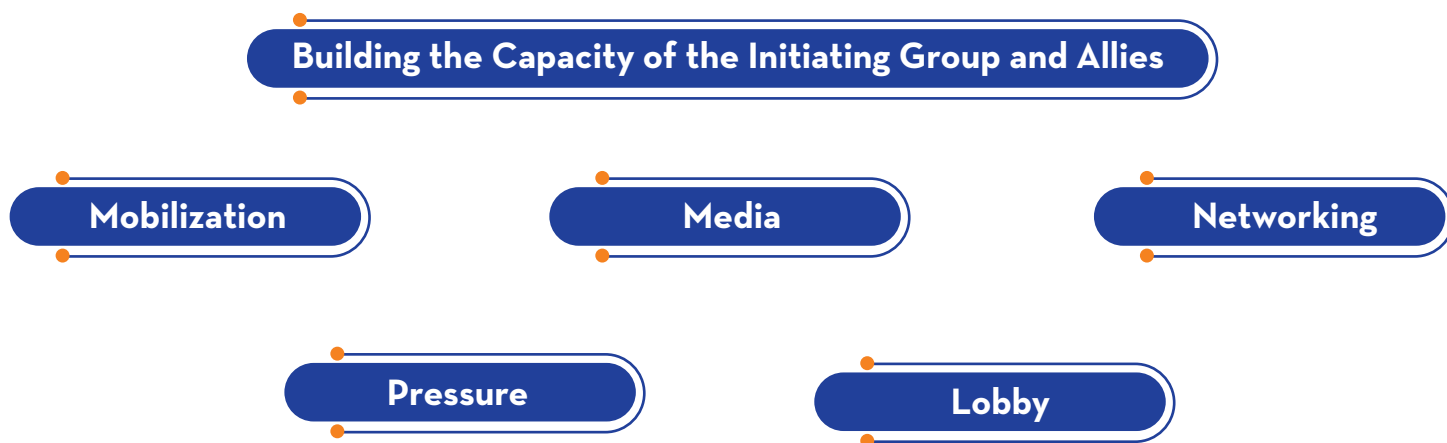
Not involving rights holders

Two major challenges confront the effectiveness of addressing this debate. The first is legitimacy. The claimants themselves are the ones who grant legitimacy—whether to an entity, authority, or community. Their absence could steer the campaign in any direction, potentially allowing opponents to exploit rights holders and strip the campaign of legitimacy. The second challenge is sustainability. The more rights holders engage, and their capacities are strengthened, the longer the cause will endure. Conversely, if their participation wanes and they fail to transition from targets to partners, this will jeopardize the sustainability of our campaigns.

5. Strategies for Influence

Defining strategies in advocacy campaigns transforms the team into a "marketing-impact" unit, akin to business marketing that focuses on innovation and delivering value to customers. However, in advocacy, the value is directed toward society as a whole. Success requires effort, vision, and determination, as time doesn't run out like in the business world.
(For reference, please review the attached document: "Leading Transformational Change")
Perhaps redefining the approach to advocacy could help achieve the accomplishments that advocacy campaigns aspire to. Accordingly, current campaigns are built upon six core pillars:

Figure 10: Building the Capacity of the Initiating Group and Allies



Building the Capacity of the Initiating Group and Allies

This process develops skills, knowledge, and tools for the Initiative Group and its allies in the Mansoura Campaign, aiming to enhance their effectiveness in planning, execution, and impact. This is achieved through: (Examples)

- Training in drafting advocacy messages and policy formulation.
- Workshops on negotiating with decision-makers.
- A deeper understanding of the issue
- Simulating meetings with journalists or parliamentarians.

Mobilization

The process of inspiring and engaging specific groups and communities that support the cause and participate in campaign activities, while also targeting key decision-makers. Examples include:

- Launch public or online tenders.
- Organizing peaceful gatherings or symbolic protests.
- Social media campaigns to encourage participation.
- Recruiting volunteers to support field activities.

Media & Communications

The use of both traditional and digital media to convey messages and shape public opinion on the issue. For example:

Figure 11: Media



Networking & Coalition Building

Establishing alliances and partnerships among CSOs, unions, youth movements, and other groups to enhance collective impact. This involves investing in individuals who have been mobilized and expressed support for the cause by connecting them with fellow campaigners. Examples include:

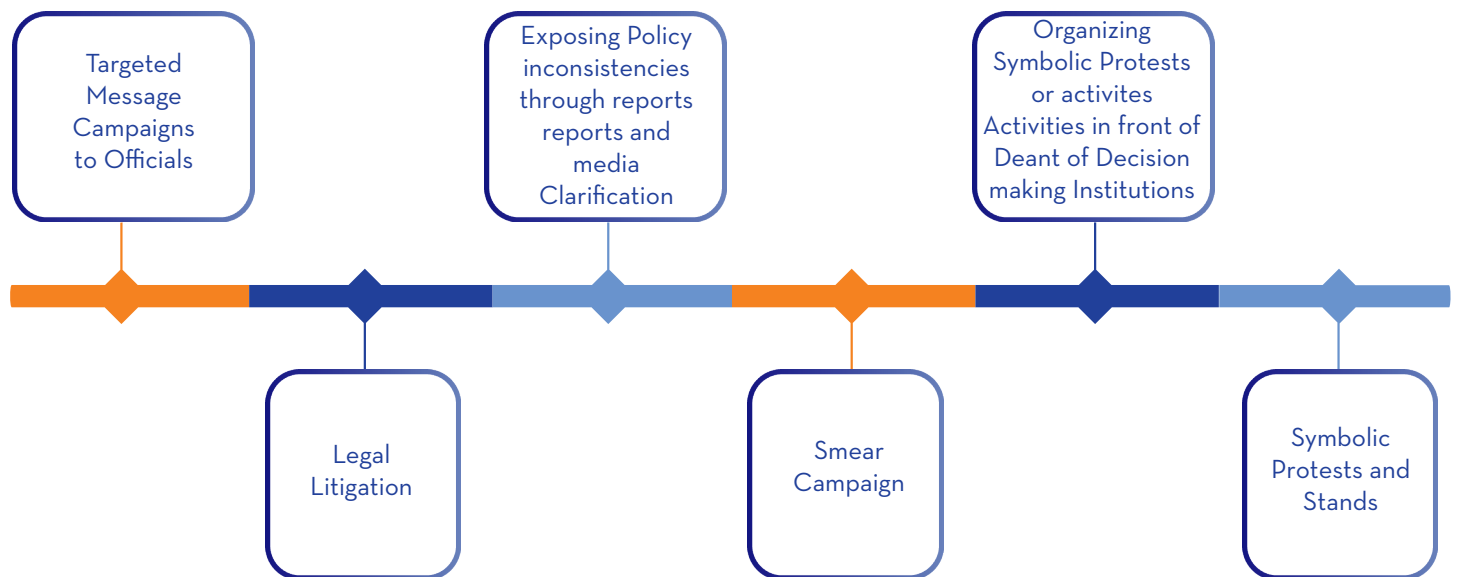
Figure 12: Networking



Pressure Tactics

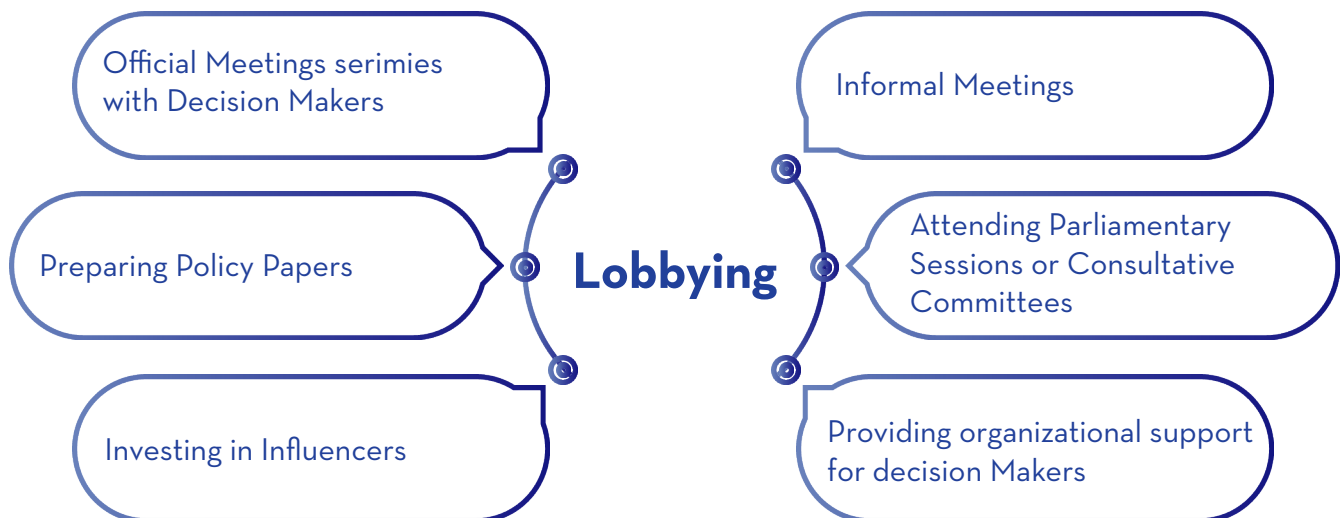
The use of peaceful methods to exert public pressure on decision-makers to adopt desired changes, which may be positive or negative in nature, such as:

Figure 13: Pressure Tactics



Lobbying

The direct influence on decision-makers through deliberate dialogues and negotiations aimed at persuading them to change or adopt a specific policy. For example:



On the other hand, tactics are closely tied to the campaign's evolving dynamics. However, it's crucial to establish key foundational elements first, enabling the adoption of tailored strategies as needed. The core tactics include:

Logical arguments

Tailor messaging to align with the mindset and emotional needs of target audiences, rather than focusing solely on numbers or statistics.

Legal support

Understanding legal options strengthens a campaign's resilience and helps it achieve tangible results.

Investing in Influencers

Using Trusted References to Facilitate Campaign Messages' Reach to Decision-Makers and Open Dialogue Channels.

Internal and external strategies

Combining direct engagement with decision-makers with external initiatives, tailored to the responsiveness of relevant stakeholders.

Modern technology and media

Leveraging virtual spaces to engage audiences, while considering the unique features of each platform and the roles of influencers within them.

However, it is essential to emphasize that these objectives must be achieved through the following means:

1

Establishing credibility and trust

2

Independence

3

A strong and attractive visual identity

4

Focusing on the campaign's core message while not avoiding confrontation with opponents

5

Personal stories

6

To bring joy from time to time

7

Numbers, statistics, and complex information are presented engagingly.

8

Legitimacy is achieved by involving the affected parties.

Phase 3: Breaking Down the Action Plan

In advocacy campaigns, breaking down the action plan into clear phases with measurable responsibilities and objectives is fundamental to achieving tangible impact. This approach fosters clarity, belonging, and individual accountability, reduces fragmentation and duplication, and increases the campaign's ability to influence decision-makers, build broad alliances, and gain public trust. Experience with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has shown that breaking down goals into sub-goals and adapting them to national contexts transforms objectives into local policies and initiatives, emphasizing that collective participation and partnerships are essential for achieving desired results.

To implement an effective breakdown, the following criteria should be ensured:

Timeframe and Phases: Linking each phase to actual achievement, not just a timeframe.

Available and Required Resources: Assessing available and required resources, including funding, human resources, and information.

Activity Sequencing: Scheduling activities while building upon past achievements.

Roles and Tasks: Selecting individuals based on their skills to ensure the desired impact.

Measurement Indicators: Establishing pre-defined indicators to track cumulative campaign impact.

Risks and Management Mechanisms: Anticipating risks and developing plans to address them. Funding

Activities: Integrate resource mobilization into the action plan.

This framework ensures the campaign is organized, measurable, and effective in achieving its objectives.

Phase 4: Plan Implementation

The implementation phase is the heart of the campaign, where plans are translated into tangible reality. Its success depends on clear central leadership, small, responsible teams, breaking down work into short tactical phases, and continuous feedback. Launching with available resources, along with documentation, follow-up, and calculated flexibility, ensures the accumulation of experience and the achievement of the desired impact, while boosting team morale and motivation. To ensure effective implementation:

Central leadership and local committees: Monitor implementation and challenges, capitalize on results, and distribute local tasks to deepen the impact.

Breakdown of implementation into short periods ("tactical phases"): Define clear objectives for each phase and work intensively on them, with a quick evaluation before moving to the next stage.

Small, independent teams: Each team is responsible for a specific focus (mobilization, communication, logistics) to enhance speed and accountability.

Immediate feedback: Evaluate each activity to determine impact and facilitate continuous improvement.

Starting with available resources: Begin implementation even with limited resources, scaling up gradually.

Continuous documentation: Preserving experience and acquired knowledge.

Calculated flexibility: Adjusting the timeline as needed without disrupting the work, while investing in morale to boost collective motivation.

With this approach, the implementation phase becomes more than just applying plans; it's a structured, step-by-step process that allows for monitoring achievements, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and quickly adjusting the course when necessary. Clear organization, with defined roles and short tactical timeframes, ensures a tangible and sustainable impact, transforming team efforts into measurable and impactful results.

Phase 5: Monitoring and Evaluation

The field of advocacy monitoring and evaluation is rapidly growing, encompassing numerous methods and methodologies that help understand interventions and collect and analyze data, both to document what happened and to understand the causes of outcomes and impacts. The monitoring and evaluation process requires:

Continuous monitoring and analysis: Observing shifts in context, relationships, and behaviors, remaining open to unexpected influences, and utilizing multiple data sources.

Strategy and Direction: A clear strategy and explicit program theory define how activities are targeted to achieve multiple objectives.

Management and Outcomes: Monitoring the implementation of activities according to planned standards to ensure quality and correct any shortcomings.

Results and Impact: Measuring the extent of change and analyzing the impact of interventions on beneficiaries and decision-makers.

Understanding the Reasons: Explaining why interventions succeed or fail to promote learning and improve future performance.

Practical Definitions:

Monitoring

Ongoing analysis of project progress toward planned outcomes, including the collection of quantitative and qualitative data on activities, impacts, goal interaction, and beneficiary influence, with the aim of course correction and rapid decision-making.

Evaluation

Systematic and impartial measurement of an activity, project, or strategy, which can be conducted at any stage of the campaign, not just at its conclusion, with the goal of learning and performance improvement.

In short, combining monitoring and evaluation enables advocacy campaigns to adapt to changes, enhance effectiveness, and ensure that daily activities achieve the desired impact deliberately and systematically.

How do monitoring and evaluation in advocacy campaigns differ from program monitoring and evaluation



The design of advocacy campaign interventions directly determines the possible monitoring and evaluation methods. The main difference between monitoring and evaluation lies in the type of indicators, methods for measuring progress, and evaluation methodologies.

Advocacy initiatives are often:

Complex and multi-stakeholder: They involve alliances of diverse actors and are influenced by policymaking through multiple external factors.

Flexible and dynamic: Campaign strategies and objectives evolve rapidly in response to political shifts and emerging opportunities.

Long-term: Policy change is a gradual process whose impact may only become apparent after the initiative has concluded.

More qualitative than quantitative: Advocacy indicators often focus on the quality of impact, such as changing attitudes, expanding alliances, enhancing participation, or improving dialogue with decision-makers, rather than solely relying on quantitative figures and outputs.

Additional challenges include the difficulty of collecting data from decision-makers, who may be adversaries, thus reducing the chances of obtaining honest feedback. In short, monitoring and evaluating advocacy campaigns requires high flexibility, the use of sophisticated indicators, and an understanding of the political and social context to ensure the campaign's adaptability and the effective measurement of its true impact.

Table 4: Follow-up and Evaluation Activities

Key Follow-up Activities	Key Evaluation Activities
-Coordinate with the project team to ensure activities are included in the plan. -Prepare activity implementation standards, report templates, and supporting documents. -Inform staff of the standards and provide necessary copies. -Compile and review weekly and monthly reports and statistics, disaggregating data by gender, age, and region. -Monitor activity progress and performance indicators monthly, including field visits and event attendance, to ensure quality and target effectiveness. -Provide feedback to the team and suggest improvement solutions. -Archive all reports and documents electronically and in hard copy, ensuring verification methods are available according to the project's logical framework.	-Prepare and conduct assessments by an external party, including developing terms of reference and advertising for a qualified consultant or company. -Form a committee to analyze proposals, select a consultant through a competitive process, and contract with them. -Review and approve data collection tools to ensure coverage of all project indicators. -Coordinate with the consultant during data collection and review the draft report. -Approve the final version of the assessment. The most relevant types of assessments conducted by development agencies before, during, and after project implementation are: -Needs Assessment -Baseline Survey -Mid-Term Review -Final Review/Final Evaluation -End-Line Survey -Impact Assessment.

Nevertheless, in addition to all the elements we discussed previously, a campaign's success depends on recognizing the importance of monitoring and evaluation. Therefore, professional programs begin working on monitoring and evaluation plans from the very start of campaign planning. They select precise quantitative and qualitative indicators and identify key milestones to review what has been achieved. Thus, they gain the ability to ascertain whether the assumptions they developed were as effective as they hoped, and, most importantly, to identify the reasons for any shortcomings and methodologies for improving performance.

8 V: Public Policy Advocacy in the Arab Context

Six Case Studies: From Civil Society to Structural Change

Advocacy experiences in the fragile and diverse contexts of the Arab region demonstrate that public policy change is not achieved through abstract rights-based discourse, but rather through well-considered approaches that combine problem analysis, contextual understanding, coalition building, selection of appropriate tools, and linking human rights values to the public interest. This chapter presents six case studies from Iraq, Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, and Lebanon showing how civil society can influence policies despite political, legal, and social complexities.

Perhaps the added value revealed by these experiences lies in their confirmation that change is achievable when sound planning, continuous evaluation, and ongoing coordination among various actors are in place, regardless of the circumstances and challenges. The significance of these experiences is also highlighted by their clear connection to the SDGs, which fosters a sense of shared ownership of achievements among all stakeholders and contributes to achieving inclusivity and ensuring long-term sustainability. The following are some lessons that could be drawn from these experiences, and which we can carry with us to all future issues:

- No matter what external pressure we exert, we must respond to direct dialogue to achieve the desired goal.
- Flexibility, resource availability, and long-term perseverance are three crucial elements in achieving advocacy goals.
- Dealing with public issues requires setting aside ego and focusing on the core issue.
- The more campaigns involve rights holders and stakeholders, the greater the impact and the higher the capacity to achieve results.
- No advocacy campaign can succeed without an internal organization that allows for coordinated efforts and improved final products.



The Tunisian Association for the Protection of Nature and the Environment in Korba

The association works in the following areas:

- Raising awareness and promoting environmental concepts.
- Developing a sense of environmental citizenship among youth and residents.
- Contributing to the protection of ecosystems, natural heritage, and biodiversity in the region.
- Fostering a spirit of initiative and encouraging and supporting green projects.

SDGs 16, 13, 6

The experience of the Tunisian Association for the Protection of Nature and the Environment in Korba offers a practical model for evidence-based environmental advocacy in response to a growing national threat: the potential for Tunisia to enter a phase of water scarcity. This experience stemmed from an objective analysis of alarming climatic and environmental indicators, coupled with poor governance in the water sector and the absence of effective awareness-raising strategies, at a time when the effects of climate change on water resources and the rights of present and future generations are increasing.

The advocacy process began by precisely defining the problem, viewing water scarcity not merely as a natural crisis but as a public policy issue directly linked to the state's choices, management models, consumption patterns, and the level of public awareness. This diagnosis enabled the campaign to shift from a general environmental discourse to a specific advocacy message demanding a change in national policies, particularly through the integration of awareness-raising as a central element in the national water strategy.

Contextually, the campaign coincided with the worsening rainfall crisis and the spread of shocking images of dwindling dam reservoirs on social media, creating a favorable political and media moment. A key lesson in advocacy evidence emerges here: success hinges on the ability to recognize the opportune moment and respond swiftly, rather than waiting for ideal circumstances that may never materialize.

The association chose a central advocacy tool: the preparation of a public policy paper entitled:

"The Need to Develop an Awareness Strategy for Tunisian Citizens Regarding Water Scarcity."

This paper formed the knowledge base of the campaign, relying on official data and objective analysis, particularly from the Tunisian Water Observatory, which strengthened the credibility of the message before decision-makers and the media.

The campaign adopted a multi-level strategy, primarily targeting the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources, and Fisheries, as the body responsible for policy formulation. It combined various tools, including a broad media campaign across national and local radio stations, television channels, and youth-oriented digital platforms, in addition to organizing a press conference in the capital and building bridges with CSOs to garner support for the demands presented. Direct communication with the Ministry was also established, culminating in a formal meeting with the government official responsible for water affairs, during which the paper's proposals were presented for discussion. In terms of results, the Ministry announced that it was preparing a national plan for water conservation and adaptation to water scarcity. The association was invited to participate in several subsequent meetings to discuss the plan's outlines. Although this process was later halted for political reasons, the campaign achieved a significant impact by integrating awareness-raising into official discourse and increasing the prominence of water scarcity issues in national media.

The campaign also yielded highly important indirect results, most notably building the capacity of a group of young men and women in advocacy, persuasion techniques, and evidence-based work. This outcome demonstrates that advocacy is not limited to policy changes but also includes empowering new actors capable of continuing to defend environmental issues in the future.

This experience offers several practical lessons, the most important of which are the importance of timing, data-driven approaches, and accelerating action during crises, in addition to the need to build broader alliances and diversify communication tools to reach a wider audience. These lessons apply to other environmental and development advocacy campaigns in the Arab region.



Iraqi Al-Amal Association

The association focuses on the following areas:

- Peacebuilding
- Protection of Civilians (PoC)
- Security Sector Reform
- Public Policy
- Advocacy

SDGs 17,16

The Iraqi Al-Amal Association's experience in advocating for a national PoC policy is a practical example of **how human rights work can move from awareness-raising and training to structural change in public policy**. This experience stems from a clear diagnosis of a central problem that has plagued the Iraqi state for decades: the absence of a written and binding national framework regulating the conduct of military and security forces in their dealings with civilians, despite repeated armed conflicts and large-scale military operations.

An analysis of the problem revealed that PoC was often managed through individual and inconsistent approaches, based on the experience or personal convictions of field commanders, without a clear official accountability mechanism. This led to significant inconsistencies in practices, violations, and an erosion of trust between citizens and security institutions. Therefore, the advocacy effort was based on the fundamental conviction that training and capacity building, while important, do not guarantee the sustainability of change unless translated into a state-approved public policy.

At the strategic level, **a conscious decision was made to work from within official institutions**, rather than relying solely on external advocacy. The selection of the National Security Council as a key partner resulted from a thorough analysis of decision-making mechanisms. The Council, as a high-level coordinating body directly linked to the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, is capable of bringing together various military and security institutions. This choice serves as a crucial practical lesson, underscoring the need to define the advocacy campaign's approach from the outset: whether to adopt an institutional partnership or an external pressure strategy.

The advocacy process began with building trust before addressing policy demands. This was achieved through collaboration on training programs related to peace studies, capacity building in security, countering extremism, and civilian protection. These programs drew upon local and international expertise and partnerships with specialized organizations such as the Dutch organization PAX for Peace. This approach provided genuine added value to the targeted institutions and demonstrated that civil society can be a supportive and professional partner, not an adversary.

As the collaboration progressed, the discussion gradually moved from the training level to the broader policy level. It was highlighted that many positive practices for civilian protection already existed within military institutions, but were neither documented nor standardized. Accordingly, the idea of codifying these practices within a written and binding national policy was proposed, transforming them from individual initiatives into accountable institutional commitments.

The campaign's core message focused on **linking civilian protection to the state's institutional interests**, emphasizing that respecting civilians enhances the effectiveness of security operations, rebuilds public trust, and improves the military's image both domestically and internationally. The policy's pioneering nature, being among a very limited number of similar policies globally, served as an additional incentive for decision-makers.

The advocacy efforts resulted in the formal adoption and dissemination of the civilian protection policy to relevant institutions, along with the initiation of implementation steps. These included **the development of training manuals, the integration of the concepts into the curricula of military and police colleges, and the development of practical mechanisms such as a hotline for protecting citizens in both military and civilian contexts.** This experience underscores that the success of advocacy is not measured solely by policy adoption but also by the existence of a clear path for its implementation and institutionalization. This case offers a key lesson for other advocacy campaigns: sustainable change requires a deep understanding of the context, a clear strategy, long-term trust-building, linking human rights values to institutional interests, and proactive planning for the period after policy implementation.



Lebanese Democratic Women's Gathering

The association focuses on the following areas:

- Protection
- Awareness
- Advocacy
- Lobbying
- Networking
- Research Preparation

SDGs 10 ,5 ,4 ,3

In a Lebanese context where economic and social crises intertwine with a fragmented legal system, child marriage remains one of the most serious human rights violations. In the absence of a unified civil code, personal status matters fall under the authority of religious sects, allowing girls as young as nine to be married. This reality not only deprives girls of their childhood and education but also exposes them to serious health risks and domestic violence, exacerbating the cycle of poverty.

Faced with this profound challenge, the Lebanese Democratic Women's Gathering (RDFL) has not remained idle. Since 2016, the RDFL has been campaigning under the hashtag #NotBefore18, with a clear objective: to enact a unified national law setting the legal age of marriage at 18 and criminalizing child marriage.

The advocacy journey began with a strategic step: the formation of a legal committee to draft a bill that aligns with Lebanon's international obligations, particularly the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). By March 2017, RDFL had successfully persuaded MP Elie Keyrouz to adopt the proposal and submit it to Parliament, thus beginning the formal legislative battle. Recognizing that legislative change requires societal pressure, the coalition worked to build a broad national alliance comprising more than 63 civil and human rights organizations. This advocacy was not based solely on slogans, but on evidence. The coalition had prepared a national study involving 1,300 participants, revealing alarming figures on the prevalence of the phenomenon. The study was launched in the presence of members of parliament and the media to increase pressure.

The main obstacle, however, was fierce resistance from religious and political authorities who consider any amendment to the legal age of marriage an intrusion into their "privacy." The coalition countered this challenge intelligently by reframing the discourse. Instead of focusing on the political conflict, the campaign concentrated on the humanitarian aspect and the protection of children. It utilized firsthand accounts from survivors, dismantling the traditional narrative that justifies child marriage as "protection" and replacing it with a clear message: child marriage is a violation of childhood and a form of human trafficking.

The activities were not limited to political elites; they extended to schools and universities through an arts and culture competition in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, in which more than 8,000 students participated. These intensive efforts bore fruit. After years of lobbying, direct advocacy, and national dialogues in partnership with parliamentary committees, the campaign achieved a pivotal victory in 2023 when the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee approved the draft law. Although the law has not yet been formally adopted by the plenary session, this approval represents a significant and fundamental step forward in the legislative process.

Perhaps the most important impact, alongside the legal progress, is the success in shifting the public discourse, transforming "early marriage" in the media and society from a "custom and tradition" to a "violation and human rights violation."

RDFL's success story offers a powerful lesson in advocacy: it is not enough for the message to be legally "correct"; it must also be "humanly acceptable." Transforming a complex human rights issue into a matter of public opinion, through a realistic, evidence-based, and humane discourse, is what creates real change.



The Egyptian Association for Collective Rights (EACR)

The association focuses on the following areas:

- Sustainable Development
- Awareness-Raising
- Advocacy
- Lobbying
- Networking
- Research Preparation

SDGs 8 ,5

EACR's experience represents a practical model of long-term advocacy aimed at addressing one of the most deeply entrenched forms of structural exclusion in the Egyptian labor market: the lack of legal recognition for women working in agriculture, despite their being the backbone of the agricultural sector. This experience stemmed from a precise diagnosis of the reality that millions of women work in agriculture without any official recognition of their professional status, thus depriving them of social protection, labor rights, and access to formal resources and services.

An analysis of the context revealed that Egyptian labor laws have, for decades, treated women working in agriculture as outside the scope of labor laws or categorized them as economically unproductive, such as domestic workers. This legal exclusion has been accompanied by a cultural and social legacy that marginalizes the economic roles of rural women and limits their public participation in the public sphere and union activity. At the same time, approximately %45 of women in the Egyptian workforce are employed in the agricultural sector, within an informal sector where employment reaches %94, making women working in agriculture one of the most vulnerable groups.

Based on this assessment, EACR adopted a long-term advocacy strategy, stemming from the conviction that legal change cannot be achieved without organizing the social base affected by the issue. Therefore, the campaign did not begin by directly demanding legal amendments, but rather focused first on building the capacities of women working in agriculture, and workers in the sector in general, and organizing them within institutional frameworks that express their free will. A fundamental practical lesson in advocacy emerges here: self-organization of the target group is a prerequisite and a necessary condition for any sustainable legislative change.

In this context, EACR supported the process of building independent trade union institutions for agricultural workers, which contributed to the issuance of the Declaration on Trade Union Freedoms in March 2011, and subsequently, Law No. 213 of 2017, which recognized for the first time the right of agricultural workers to establish their own trade union institutions. This transformation constituted a pivotal turning point in the advocacy process, as it provided women working in agriculture with a legal and organizational tool to defend their rights.

The campaign's core message focused on a practical, specific, and verifiable demand: "I am an agricultural worker." This slogan was linked to the demand for proof of occupation on national identity cards. This approach demonstrates the importance of simplifying advocacy demands and connecting them to a concrete administrative procedure that opens the door to a range of rights, such as joining unions, accessing social protection, and accessing formal credit markets.

The advocacy targeted a wide range of decision-makers, including the House of Representatives, the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Social Solidarity, the National Council for Women, and CSOs. The campaign relied on a combination of grassroots activism, coalition-building, and legislative influence, which strengthened its ability to persist despite social and cultural challenges, particularly in rural areas.

The advocacy efforts resulted in significant changes, most notably the recognition of the right of women working in agriculture to have their occupation reflected on their national identity cards and their right to join farmers' unions. Additionally, Labor Law No. 14 of 2025 was enacted, which did not exclude women working in agriculture from its scope. The campaign also contributed to raising women's awareness of their economic role and boosting their confidence in their ability to express themselves.

This experience offers a key lesson for advocacy campaigns: collective action based on cooperation and solidarity, and grassroots institutional building, is the most effective approach to achieving genuine legislative change, particularly in rural and conservative contexts.



Catalyst

The association focuses on the following areas:

- Advocacy
- Civil society participation

SDGs: 17, 4

Catalyst Association was founded in December 2019 in Monastir, Tunisia. Its central objective was to motivate youth to participate in community life. For the past three years, the association has focused its efforts on addressing issues faced by students with specific learning disabilities and the resulting educational and legal challenges that lead to educational gaps threatening equal opportunities. The association's analysis revealed that these problems cause academic, psychological, and social difficulties for students, exacerbated by ongoing legislative challenges that hinder the provision of adequate support within schools.

The advocacy strategy was launched with the primary goal of effecting change in national policies by securing official recognition of these challenges and ensuring the provision of educational support through precise legislation that guarantees equitable education. The campaign targeted decision-makers in the Ministry of Education, members of parliament, and educational experts, as they are the entities capable of translating recommendations into concrete action. The association's core message emphasized the need for a clear national policy that strengthens students' rights and provides them with effective support pathways.

To achieve these goals, the association implemented a variety of tactics, including awareness campaigns on social media platforms, consultative meetings with specialists and parents, and building a network of alliances with educational stakeholders to amplify its advocacy efforts. The most significant achievement in this endeavor was the preparation of a comprehensive policy paper that provided a detailed analysis of the situation of this group within the educational system, proposing practical solutions to enhance their inclusion and empowerment.

In terms of results, the campaign succeeded in making an impact, although the desired legal change has not yet materialized. Several members of parliament made a preliminary commitment to include students with learning disabilities in upcoming legislative reforms. Indirect results included a noticeable increase in public awareness and a clarification of the scientific concept of learning disabilities, distinguishing it from misleading terminology. The association faced challenges during this process, including a lack of data, slow responses from some administrations, and limited awareness of the importance of policy-based advocacy.

The lessons of this experience can be summarized as follows. The crucial success factors lie in relying on factual data and field evidence, and in choosing the right timing to coincide with the national debate on education reform. The association emphasizes that effective advocacy requires a clear message and sustained effort, and that gathering accurate information and direct communication with various stakeholders guarantees the success of any campaign, even in the face of institutional challenges.



Phenix Center for Economic & Informatics Studies

Mobilization Against the Jordanian Government's Proposal to Abolish the Ministry of Labour

SDGs: 8,5

In the summer of 2022, Jordan's labor rights system faced a critical challenge with the government's sudden announcement of its intention to abolish the Ministry of Labor and distribute its responsibilities among other ministries as part of a public sector modernization plan. This proposal posed a direct threat to the legislative and protective environment that guarantees the rights of workers, at a time when the labor market was already suffering from economic fragility and challenges affecting job security for both genders.

The Phenix Center for Economic & Informatics Studies recognized the gravity of this proposal, not merely as an administrative measure, but as a shift in the state's philosophy regarding its social obligations. Based on its role in advocating for independent development and human rights, the Center spearheaded a swift and well-considered campaign to prevent this proposal from becoming a reality. Phenix's response was based on a comprehensive, evidence-based advocacy strategy aimed at mobilizing public opinion and influencing decision-makers.

The Center's response included a comprehensive and evidence-based advocacy strategy aimed at mobilizing public opinion and influencing decision-makers. The first step was building a broad societal coalition. The center successfully united the efforts of more than fifty CSOs, along with unions and economic and social experts, to sign a joint memorandum rejecting the decision. The campaign's discourse was careful to use inclusive language and dismantle the narrative that portrays protecting workers' rights as a burden on investment, replacing it with a narrative that emphasizes decent work as a fundamental pillar of sustainable economic growth.

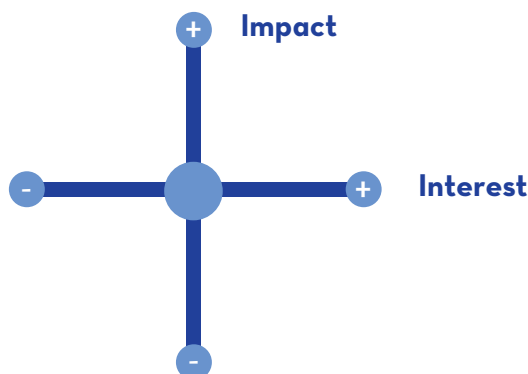
The campaign diversified its tools to encompass multiple avenues. It addressed members of the House of Representatives and the Senate directly to initiate a legislative debate on the serious repercussions of the decision. Simultaneously, the center intensified its presence in the media and on social media platforms, which contributed to raising citizens' awareness of the importance of having a specialized ministry to protect their rights and transforming the issue from a closed bureaucratic matter into a pressing public concern.

These efforts bore fruit when the government officially withdrew the proposed abolition, replacing it with a plan to restructure the ministry and develop its capabilities. This constituted a tangible victory for the social protection system in Jordan. The impact extended beyond this immediate outcome, leading to a shift in media and public discourse, which became more aware of the concepts of decent work and the central role of the Ministry of Labor in maintaining a balance between the parties involved in production.

This experience offers crucial lessons for advocates, most notably that timing and early action are decisive factors in halting ill-conceived policies. It also demonstrated that building broad and inclusive alliances and relying on data and sound scientific arguments are the most effective tools for persuading stakeholders and changing the course of public policies to serve the interests of society as a whole.

Annex 1: Power Analysis

This analysis helps identify influential actors who, if they feel they have an interest in intervening and making a difference, either positively in favor of our cause or negatively against it. It will greatly assist in identifying the actors the campaign will focus on.



Step 1: Develop a Power Analysis Model

Step 2: Assess the level of interest and influence of actors classified as allies and neutrals.

Step 3: Assess the level of interest and influence of opposing actors.

Step 4: Identify the actors with the highest level of interest and positive influence and position them as key focal points in the influence map.

Annex 2: Leading Transformational Change

Stages	Necessary Procedures	Challenges
 Establish a sense of urgency and necessity	-Study the current situation to identify potential crises and untapped opportunities. -Convince at least %75 of stakeholders that the current situation is more dangerous than the unknown.	-Underestimating the difficulty of getting people out of their comfort zones. -Paralysis due to risks.
 Build a strong coalition.	-Form a group with a shared commitment and sufficient authority to lead change efforts. -Encourage teamwork outside the usual hierarchy.	-No prior experience in teamwork at the senior management level. -Limiting team leadership to those formally recognized as "leaders."

Stages	Necessary Procedures	Challenges
 Develop a vision (with specific strategies)	-Establish a vision to guide change efforts. -Develop strategies to achieve this vision.	-Presenting a vision that is too complex or vague to be communicated in five minutes.
 Spread the vision	-Use every possible means to communicate the new vision and achievement strategies. -Convey new behaviors through the alliance example.	-Failure to adequately communicate the vision. -Acting in ways that contradict the vision
 Empower others to work toward achieving the vision	-Remove or modify systems or structures that impair vision. -Encourage risk-taking, unconventional ideas, activities, and actions.	-Failing to remove strong personalities who resist change efforts.
 Plan and create short-term wins.	-Identify and engineer visible performance improvements. -Encourage risk-taking, unconventional ideas, activities, and actions.	-Leaving short-term successes to chance -Not achieving successes early enough (24-12 months after starting change efforts)
 Uphold Improvements and Generate Further Change	-Utilize the increased credibility generated by early victories to transform systems, structures, and policies that undermine the vision. -Develop stakeholders capable of executing the vision. -Energize the change process with new projects and change agents.	-Declaring victory too soon, with the first performance improvement. -Allowing the resistance to convince the "forces" that the war has been won.
 Institutionalize the new approach.	-Clarify the relationship between new behaviors and success. -Develop leadership development and succession plans that align with the new approach.	-Failing to create new social norms and shared values that match the changes. -Placing individuals in leadership positions who do not embody the new approach.

Source: Adapted from Kotter (2010).

Annex 3: On the Nature of Social Media Applications

Platform	Privacy and Digital Security	Acceptable Content Type	Word Count/ Duration	Strategic Considerations	Monthly Reach	Audience Type
Facebook	Detailed privacy policies, but its history of data leaks is concerning. Audience and content controls are available.	Text + Video + Images	Long-form text (posts, articles). Video can be long or short.	Suitable for interaction, groups, and targeted ads. Good for building communities and invitations to activities.	3.07-3.05 billion users.	Very diverse across all age groups, including the 34-25 age group.
X (formerly Twitter)	Less transparency in data management. Security depends on user settings. Often public content.	Text + Images + Short Video	Tweets (limited words). Short video.	Good for quick highlights, breaking news, public discourse, and media coverage.	541 million	An audience focused on quick news and opinions, generally adults interested in politics and media.
Instagram	Owned by Facebook, with virtually the same policies. Data sharing with third parties is possible. Moderate content control.	Photos + Videos (Reels, Stories, Posts)	Short texts. Video: Short "Reels" and IGTV (longer)	A powerful visual platform for creative content, short stories, and promotion.	2 billion	Young people and teenagers, lovers of fashion, style, and attractive visual content
TikTok	There is widespread controversy surrounding data collection, especially from young users. Security is limited, but privacy settings are available.	Short video only	Short videos (usually 60-15 seconds)	Ideal for viral trends, challenges, music, and youthful momentum	1.92 - 1.58 billion	The majority are Generation Z (24-16), an audience looking for instant entertainment and interaction.
YouTube	Relatively clear policies, especially for educational content. Good control over comments and content.	Long video + short video (Shorts)	Video: Ideally 10 minutes. Shorts: 60-15 seconds	Excellent for educational content, documentaries, interviews, and in-depth awareness campaigns.	2.56 - 2.49 billion	Almost everyone, with a focus on the 34-25 and 44-35 age groups, covering both young and old.
WhatsApp	End-to-end encryption for messages, with very strong security. But sharing data with Meta raises questions.	Text messages + voice + video + photos	No word limits (private messages), video, and audio as per the allowed limit	Very powerful for private communication, limited group campaigns, and direct support.	2.15 - 2 billion	Users around the world, from individuals to community support groups and organizations

Annex 4: Action Plan

Activity	Implementation steps	Activity Manager	Target group	The goal	Key messages	Required resources	Activity start date	Date of completion	Indicators of success
						Mall			
						Humanity			
						Information			

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