

Advocacy in programmes

2019 toolkit



Sightsavers

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Introduction

This toolkit outlines an approach to the integration of advocacy plans and strategies in Sightsavers' country offices.

We aim for all our programmes to lead to sustainable change, and a critical element of that is to ensure that the government takes up its responsibility to equitably meet needs and respect human rights. Advocacy is one of the important strategies we use to influence public policy and systems to achieve this. The aim of all our advocacy is to reduce inequality, improve life chances and allow Sightsavers to achieve its mission.

We work at all levels to bring about this change: for example, our advocacy at international level aims to ensure that there are international agreements we can hold governments accountable for in their national policy.

This is the case in our work on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; with the World Health Organization on its approach to eye health; and on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Agenda 2030 includes the promise by 193 UN member state governments to leave no one behind – by tackling stigma and marginalisation or improving access to essential services.

Our advocacy ultimately aims to hold governments to account for this promise and influence them to put policies in place that will reach the furthest behind people first.

In order to do this, advocacy aims to achieve:

- 1. Policy change** – the adoption of policy recommendations; contribution to policy development; and influencing the development of policy positions and announcements. This includes changing legislation or a new government policy.
- 2. Influencing policy implementation** – improving the equity of an existing policy; increasing the funding allocated to policy implementation; or inclusion within indicator framework.
- 3. Increased accountability** – stronger systems for ensuring that decision-makers are held accountable for the implementation of policies. For example, reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities or the establishment of a new parliamentary oversight committee.

This toolkit is intended as a practical guide to the processes we have in place to support the integration of advocacy within the programme cycle. It is about the partnership needed between teams to deliver good advocacy at national level. It is a rough guide, and not a substitute for the strong working relationships between teams that really allow us to influence long-lasting changes in public policy.

The toolkit emphasises the integration of advocacy planning into the design of programmes – through the project design process (PDP) – to ensure that we have a consistent approach to influencing policy and system change, where appropriate and in line with the wider programme objectives. It also outlines a process for support (with roles and responsibilities) throughout the programme cycle, and outlines our approach to measuring progress in advocacy.

In order to develop an integrated approach to advocacy, we need to ensure development and implementation of advocacy plans is part of the existing project cycle processes. This includes the project design process and the project inception process. This toolkit is not designed to replace any aspect of these processes, but to make it clear what is needed for advocacy within them.

It is important to note that advocacy also takes place outside of the structure of programmes, especially when it relates to important organisational priorities such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or the Marrakesh Treaty. The policy context is often complex, and it is critical that advocacy plans are not too reliant on the programme planning process. Project design should provide an opportunity to build on existing priorities, successes and approaches, and to use potential funding to build ambition in our advocacy.

Asking the right questions: Where do we get support for integrating advocacy in programmes?

Ensuring that we have well designed, implemented and successful advocacy, aligned to our thematic strategies, policies and programmes, is a key priority of the Policy and Global Advocacy team. If there is a need for support in integrating advocacy in programmes, it is important to discuss

this with the Global Advocacy Advisers, as the first point of contact in the wider team.

As a rough guide, the following table outlines the approach at each stage in the project cycle, with the key question and the responsibility of the advocacy team outlined.

Stage	Question	Advocacy team responsibility
Project conception	<p>Is there a need for advocacy to be included in this project?</p> <p>If so, contact the Head of Advocacy and the Global Advocacy Adviser (GAA)</p>	Head of Advocacy agrees GAA lead
	<p>What existing information do we have to support the development of advocacy in this programme?</p> <p>Share documentation and resources</p>	GAA – compile existing policy analyses, existing plans and country specific analyses
Project design	<p>What does our advocacy plan look like, including within the wider policy context?</p> <p>Work with the GAAs to develop appropriate advocacy plan (see below)</p>	Work with the country office, Global Technical Leads and others to ensure any advocacy component is well designed and appropriate, in line with the planning template
	<p>How do we know if we are successful with the advocacy elements of the project?</p> <p>Agree impact and outcome indicators with the monitoring team</p>	Ensure that outcome and impact indicators are appropriate and in line with the ‘levels of influence’

Stage	Question	Advocacy team responsibility
Project inception	<p>How do we measure our progress with advocacy activities?</p> <p>Agree reporting process and output indicators with the monitoring team and country offices</p>	<p>Work with and support the Programme Systems and Monitoring team and country offices in developing appropriate output indicators and processes to measure them</p>
	<p>How do we capture all the relevant information on advocacy within the project?</p> <p>Upload advocacy documents to the programme portal</p>	<p>GAAs will support with sharing all the relevant and finalised documentation</p>
Project monitoring and support	<p>What about project monitoring and support?</p> <p>Report on outcome and impact indicators in the annual SIM report</p>	<p>GAAs will identify and support country offices to report on all relevant projects every year</p>
	<p>Have we captured everything we are doing?</p> <p>Output monitoring – record meetings, events and advocacy opportunities</p>	<p>Ensure that outcome and impact indicators are appropriate and in line with the ‘levels of influence’</p>
Project end	<p>GAAs will support strategy development throughout the process?</p> <p>Link national advocacy to international policy</p>	<p>Link national advocacy to international policy</p>

Stage	Question	Advocacy team responsibility
Project end	<p>Are we on track?</p> <p>Mid-term review of advocacy plans</p>	Mid-term review of advocacy plans
	<p>Are advocacy successes and impact reflected in the final project report and have we carried out a policy analysis to feed into the next stage of policy development?</p> <p>Agree reporting process and output indicators with the monitoring team and country offices</p>	GAAs to support final report and policy analysis – link to international policy

What does an advocacy plan look like?

When starting an advocacy plan, it is important to know what you want to influence and why.

Every plan will be different and tailored to the specific context, but there are key elements that are central to any plan: understanding of the context; understanding of the key stakeholders and influencing targets; a clear, broken-down plan; and most importantly, a statement of the change sought.

The following planning template is designed to be used during project development in the project design process, with the support of the Global Advocacy Advisers.

Summary

Project name and number: if it is a country-level advocacy plan, please list the project(s) that contribute to achieving it.

Change objective: (to be filled in at the end) – this should be a top-line objective, such as “improve government inclusive education policies” or “ensure eye health is integrated into the national health plan”. There could be more than one, if this plan will contribute towards more than one theme.

Background

Using the questions below, develop a narrative outlining the problem your advocacy will change and how you expect change to happen.

What is the role of advocacy within the wider project?

- How would the advocacy aspect of the project complement other aspects of the project?

What previous projects have we run on this theme (eye health, NTDs, education or social inclusion)?

- Have you conducted any advocacy on this theme before?
- Were there any advocacy successes in previous projects?
- Who were the main influencing targets (government or otherwise)?

What previous projects have we run on this theme (eye health, NTDs, education or social inclusion)?

Have you conducted any advocacy on this theme before?

Were there any advocacy successes in previous projects?

Who were the main influencing targets (government or otherwise)?

Problems	Opportunities
<p>What are the main concerns you have or barriers you see to the achievement of your outcomes? (This could be lack of interest by senior figures, lack of evidence for policy-change, restricted finances in the government, etc.)</p>	<p>What are the factors that make you optimistic? (For example, is the government hosting an important meeting that you can use, is a newspaper interested in the issue, are there any high-level visits that you can use, are there parliamentarians with an interest in the issue, is there a donor working on this area, etc.)</p>

Change objective

Based on the information above, what will this advocacy work try to achieve? Identify the main objective and then the outcomes that will contribute towards the overall change objective.

Outcome 1

These are the outcomes you want to see from your advocacy work – they should be specific, eg: “Health management information system includes indicator on cataract surgical rate” or “Policy guidance on implementation of the Disability Act issued by the government.” The Programme Implementation Manual (PIM) describes an ‘outcome’ as the short and medium-term effects of a project. These tend to mirror a project’s specific objectives and express the changes that will be brought about if those objectives are achieved.”

List the outputs and activities. The PIM defines these as the “specific, direct deliverables (goods and services) of a project” and the logframe as “deliverables of the project or the changes that are observed as a direct consequence of implementing activities for each objective.”

(Outline specific activities, such as meetings with key people, events, policy papers, high-level visits, coalitions you will engage with or build, etc.)

Be clear what partners will deliver – see Below.

Have as many outcomes as you need (per objective, if you have more than one), although you may only need one or two.

How do we measure progress?

It is important at the outset to outline how success and progress will be demonstrated. There are two aspects of this: the impact and outcome measurement and the output measurement – both are important. The plan to measure the project should be worked on in partnership with the monitoring team.

Measuring impact and outcome

Measuring impact and outcomes is a qualitative measurement of progress towards the stated change objective – it is about saying how close the project is to influencing the desired change. In order to measure influence, we first need to answer the question of what we would expect to see if we were able to influence a particular decision-making process. Once we have identified this, we can then track how our influence grows in actual terms over and against our expectations. In this way, every programme will need to have its own levels defined, relative to the actual identified change objective.

Advocacy is the process of using influence to effect policy change, improve implementation or increase accountability of decision-makers.

Advocacy is not a linear process and advocacy inputs do not guarantee policy change outcomes. In order to measure our advocacy work, we have identified a simple process to measure our influence on the policy change process.

The Levels of Influence framework allows programmes to build a suitable and appropriate set of measures for advocacy, and allows for a mixture of qualitative and quantitative indicators. It is also intended to be flexible enough to allow for the iterative nature of advocacy, and will allow for a level of narrative reporting alongside more quantitative indicators.

It balances the need for standardisation and the recognition that all advocacy is context and issue specific. It also recognises the cumulative nature of influencing, which helps us to monitor our growth in influence towards a policy change, not just whether that policy change occurs at the end.

Levels of influence

Step 1



1. Planning

What are we going to achieve and how?

The first level is to ensure we have clarity over the change we are advocating. This will ensure our work is strategic and effective. The first step is the development of a clear advocacy plan, outlining the goals that we seek to achieve.



2. Understanding

What do we want the government (or other target) to understand?

The government or relevant institution needs to understand issues and proposed changes on which Sightsavers and/or other organisations are advocating.

Sightsavers needs to be prepared to engage with the government, develop resources, collect evidence and present it in a form that ensures relevant stakeholders clearly understand the issues that are being raised, and the recommendations or demands for reform.

This could include:

- production of advocacy materials (infographics, briefings, research documents etc) for use in meetings with government officials.
- Awareness-raising meetings and working sessions with relevant stakeholders.
- coordination between Sightsavers and other partners to develop joint advocacy approach.
- conducting audits and research, collating data and disseminating findings.



3. Engagement and acceptance

How do we want the government to respond and what do we want the government to accept?

The third level involves the government or relevant institution taking up the message or at least components of the recommendations Sightsavers is promoting. Here we are looking for evidence of some interest, engagement and political will among decision-makers to make some change to their policy in line with our objectives.

This could include:

- communication from government officials or relevant stakeholders indicating interest in further dialogue or bringing more senior officials into the conversation.
- representatives from relevant government departments inviting Sightsavers and/or other NGOs to present their case, or requesting further engagement or additional data to substantiate the claims and recommendations.
- ministries or other government bodies demonstrating political will to review a policy, action plan or budget in which Sightsavers is looking for amendments.



4. Commitment

What do we want the government to commit to?

At the fourth level, Sightsavers secures a pledge from the government or relevant institution that desired change (or at least aspects of it) will be put into practice. However, it is important to note that a commitment does not guarantee delivery: the plans may be shelved or postponed, an election may bring a different government to power, etc.

Evidence of commitment could include:

- the government developing a plan for implementing the SDGs.
- the Electoral Commission developing a clear action plan to address implementation gaps in the inclusive electoral code.
- a ministerial directive being issued to set up an inclusive education coordination mechanism.



5. Delivery

What do we want the government to deliver?

At the fifth level, the government or relevant institution implements the change (or at least aspects of it) that we have been promoting.

This could include:

- increased budgetary allocation for eye health.
- changes being made in the national curriculum for teacher training to include a section on inclusive education.
- the Ministry of Education rolling out a new and comprehensive inclusive education policy.
- ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty.



6. Reflection

What's next?

At the sixth and final level, we reflect on the change process and identify new policy change objectives.

Advocacy is a cyclical process: any success in policy change will throw up questions about implementation; success in getting policies implemented will throw up questions about accountability; and effective accountability mechanisms will identify policies that need to change. It is important that any advocacy work is not seen as complete without a critical review of the next challenges in that area, with key lessons to be taken forward into the next phase of our work. To achieve this level, there will need to be a strong review, clear articulation of the lessons learnt and what the next phase of advocacy should be.

Step 2

Fill out the table below, outlining what you expect to see, how you would verify this and when:

Level	What are your objectives at this level?	How would you verify your achievement of this level?	When would you expect to have achieved this level?
1. Planning			
2. Understanding			
3. Engagement and acceptance			
4. Commitment			
5. Delivery			
6. Reflection			

Step 3

Work with the monitoring team on integrating impact and outcome measurement in the project logframe.

Step 4

Ensure this is reported every year through the SIM card. In this, you should identify which levels of influence you have currently achieved, outline progress against advocacy indicators with a justification of this assessment, and be clear about any changes to your plan that you think are necessary.

Measuring outputs

When starting an advocacy plan, it is important to know what you want to influence and why.

Outputs for advocacy tend to be simple to articulate, but hard to evaluate. While it might be possible to identify the number of advocacy meetings we participate in, it is equally important to understand more about the activity, who it was with and what it achieved. This is because there is no standardised advocacy activity – meetings will range from a brief discussion with a close partner, to a comprehensive meeting with a government minister that leads to policy change. It is important to capture the context alongside each advocacy output/activity.

The range of advocacy outputs includes:

- ‘Advocacy meeting’ – a meeting where everyone is able to openly participate in the discussion between Sightsavers and a partner/government influencing the position or policy of the partner/government (eg a meeting with a government official about the inclusion of eye health indicators in the HMIS, held at the Ministry of Health).
- ‘Advocacy event’ – a stage-managed occasion for the perspective of either key influencer or influencing target to be shared, often with prepared speeches or presentations, or to launch an initiative or advocacy product (eg an event held with numerous partners to launch an advocacy report, with a speech from a government minister).
- ‘Advocacy capacity building workshop’ – an event that is prepared, organised and focused on training partners to improve their skills and/or knowledge in

a certain area we are aiming to influence (eg training DPOs on advocacy around inclusive health).

- ‘Advocacy paper/briefing’ – a policy paper that outlines the problem, Sightsavers’ perspective (or new insight from research) and policy recommendations.
- ‘Ad-hoc advocacy discussion’ – an unprepared discussion with an identified advocacy target (eg a conversation with a government minister at a DFID reception).

In 2017, we trialled a web and app-based programme to measure advocacy. The second version, launched in April 2019, is now available. It captures:

- The type of activity, and who was involved
- Simple information including dates and who attended
- What project (if any) the activity contributed towards
- A brief description of what happened
- A record of any follow up activity that was identified

This information will be stored on an accessible database so it can be used for any necessary reporting, alongside tracking the advocacy process. Separate guidance on SARA is available.

What are our partners' responsibilities?

A lot of our influencing work is done in partnership with others at country level. This is an important tactic, and part of our strategic approach to advocacy. It is also a component of the advocacy element of projects. This section outlines how the work of partners can be integrated into Sightsavers' advocacy planning. We need to begin by understanding the respective responsibilities.

Partners

- Comment on and agree plan
- Undertake agreed actions
- Work closely with Sightsavers on actions
- Report back to Sightsavers on activities and their impact

Sightsavers

- Develop advocacy plan
- Review implementation plan timeline with partners, taking advantage of quarterly meetings
- Support with agreed budget
- Support with expertise and advice on partner activities
- Manage reporting on the project – including the levels of influence

It is important that we are clear what we expect from partners and that we include this in our planning. When developing advocacy plans, outline:

Problems and opportunities

Who are the main partners in the advocacy work?	Example: National DPO
What are the main activities that the partner/s will undertake?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coordination of DPO input to policy paper• Organisation of advocacy event
What are the expected outcomes from the partner/s activities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DPOs agree on a common position• People with disabilities are able to present their view to the government
How will Sightsavers support the partner/s to deliver the outlined activities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Budget• Attend event and present
When would be the ideal timing to start and roll out the relevant activities to ensure greater impact?	

For reporting, partners should not be expected to develop levels of influence – this is Sightsavers’ advocacy monitoring tool. However, when developing levels of influence it is important to outline when outcomes are going to be delivered by a partner and then communicate this responsibility clearly to the partner. It might be helpful to record this:

Partner	Sightsavers’ responsibility
Level of influence and what they are contributing to?	Level 4 – development of National Health Plan. They will lead on pushing for the inclusion of eye health as a priority
How the partner will report and when?	Annual progress, with expected achievement in 2021
Sightsavers’ responsibility	Request annual reporting



It is important to record these activities in the Sightsavers Advocacy Reporting App, as well as in the annual SIM reporting

Find out more

This toolkit is a work in progress and it will be developed further over the coming years. It is important that there is feedback from everyone involved about what works and what does not. Please do feed this back.

If you have questions that are not covered in this toolkit, please speak to the relevant Global Advocacy Adviser in the first instance, and then the Head of Advocacy. As stated previously, this toolkit is a rough guide, and not a substitute for the strong working relationships between teams that really allow us to influence long-lasting changes in public policy.

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We will be very pleased to hear from you!

We work with partners
in developing countries to
eliminate avoidable blindness
and promote equal opportunities
for people with disabilities.

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