



Introduction

The present module focuses on advocacy and lobbying for deaf communities and deaf associations. Advocacy and lobbying form an important function and is the core of the survival of the associations of the deaf. For example, advocacy forms the basis for deaf people to get access and realises rights such as access to quality education, quality health care, sign language services, employment and to some extent political participation. All deaf associations were established to advocate for their rights as deaf citizens. Advocacy must be carried out systematically and effectively to achieve better outcomes and improve access to services.

Definition of advocacy

There is no universally accepted definition.

- Advocacy means a political process by which an individual or organization aims to influence decisions within political institutions (here the target is political institutions).
- Advocacy is a series of actions designed to influence those who hold governmental, political, economic or private power in order to effect change (here the target are governmental and non-governmental actors).
- Advocacy is a process aimed at reversing, improving, changing or containing an existing situation. Advocacy is an effort made towards decision makers on changing a specific policy or law at different levels.

Summary of all definitions: Advocacy is thus a strategically designed process used by individuals, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and activists to influence the choices and actions of those who make policies, laws, and regulations, distribute resources, and make decisions that affect the wellbeing of people.

Key points in advocacy

- Advocacy is a process.
- It is designed, planned, and should have a clear-cut strategy.
- It is targeted at policy change; Thus, it is about law.
- There is an intention behind advocacy.
- It must influence and bring about a change.
- It should target political policy makers because all the decisions and issues around what we deal with, are political decisions.
- Starting something positive for the benefit of those being advocated for.
- Stopping something which is considered negative for those being advocated for.
- Increasing something from smaller to bigger, for example scaling up some services.
- Maintaining something in the face of change, trying to keep or maintain government services for persons with disabilities.



Lobbying

Lobbying is a direct approach to meet policy change makers to create a system that will result changes on important issues. Lobbying involves network – finding the right people to support your cause, so you can make advocacy work. Lobbying can involve educating and raising awareness about the effect of specific policy or legislation on some people, for example persons with disabilities.

Unlike advocacy, which is a general issue, lobbying is narrow and involves series of planned activities that directly support or oppose an issue. It could involve communicating with decision makers and opinion leaders by asking their elected representatives to vote for or against certain legislation such as a bill or to amend specific provision of a legislation.

Lobbying for the deaf associations includes actions such as building relationships with decision makers allowing free flow of information with the aim of influencing people or winning decision makers to an agreed idea. For example, lobbying for a change in a system to benefit the deaf community, an introduction to something new to benefit the deaf community or stopping something which hinders access for deaf people.

Lobbying occurs at two stages: Direct and grassroots. The direct lobbying is targeted at decision makers, especially whose roles and responsibilities are to make a policy or a specific legislation. Grassroot lobbying, on the other hand, targets the public. Although it refers to a specific legislation and or a policy, the aim is to encourage the public to act. In other words, grassroots lobbying is a call for action where the public is encouraged to react and act against for something that will have influence on them all.

Whatever the case, lobbying aims to support advocacy work and ensure effective achievement of advocacy goals.

Example of lobbying 1: Togo

There is only one school for the Deaf in Lomé, Togo. This school welcomes all deaf children of school age living in Lomé and nearby regions. The school serves as a place where deaf children can learn sign language and socialise with other deaf classmates. It also gives an employment opportunity for deaf adults to get a job as a deaf teacher. The government of Togo has recently developed a new nationwide Inclusion Education Bill and presented the bill to the parliament for a debate. The policy seeks to close all special schools and instead place deaf children and other children with disabilities into regular/mainstreaming schools to study with other hearing children. The deaf community does not support the bill because it will negatively affect sign language learning of deaf children, and many deaf adults will lose their job and cannot get new jobs because hearing sign language interpreters will be preferred over deaf teachers. The deaf association of Togo meets members of parliaments, parents of deaf children, and try to win more people to vote against the bill.



Example of lobbying 2: Mali

Every year, the government of Republic of Mali gives the Association Malienne des Sourds (AMASOURDS) 10,189,000 CFA to support their advocacy work. Also, every year, 1% of all government job positions are reserved for persons with disabilities who have some level of education. Mali had general elections in December 2019 and a new government took power on January 2020. The new government is planning to cancel the annual payment of 10,189,000 CFA to AMASOURDS and instead increase the number / percentage of jobs reserved to PWDs from 1% to 1.1%. AMASOURDS is not happy with the new arrangement because many of its deaf members have low education which means that they will not benefit from the increased employment quota for PWDs. Also, AMASOURDS depends only on the money from the government to run their association. The leaders of the association reached out to other organisations of persons with disabilities, media, and some parliamentarians to vote against the new arrangement.

Difference between advocacy and lobbying

In advocacy, actors try to argue or make a change in favour of an idea on behalf of a group. This may include arguing for the rights of minority groups. In lobbying, actors attempt to influence office holders on an issue. This may include influencing office holders to vote for or against a piece of legislation or asking grassroots people to influence their leaders. Thus, lobbying is also about network – finding the right people to support your cause, so you can make advocacy work.

Why advocacy?

There is inequality in every society: While others are well cared for, others are not. Also, while some people have access to all the services provided by the state, others do not for many reasons. The government and local authorities' policies do not equally benefit everyone and usually groups of people are left out. Changes affect deaf organisations or deaf individuals at local, national, and state levels. In most countries, where resources are scarce, persons with disabilities are never included or considered. Even those countries where they have more resources, PWDs, deaf people, ethnic minority groups and vulnerable people are left out.

Government policies may affect deaf people negatively such as cut welfare policies and create laws that discriminate against deaf people. For example, cut in a welfare support, cut in government allocations to persons with disabilities, cut in employment opportunities in the public sector where many deaf get jobs and increase in accessibility service rates. While hearing people are permitted to have a driving license and drive a car, in some countries deaf people are not allowed. Also, whereas hearing people can drive all types of cars and operate all machines, like aircrafts, trains, and long-distance vehicles, this is not the case for deaf people. Addressing those inequalities is important to enable the excluded group to have access to resources and services that they are being denied. Advocacy is therefore important for the following reasons:



1. Enhancing public services

Advocacy targeting the state is the most common type of advocacy work where advocates work to enhance access to public services such as information, employment, social services, education, and health care. For example, in Ghana the only time sign language service is provided on TV is daily at 7:00 pm during news time and when there is a national issue. Beyond that, no sign language service/interpreting is provided. Thus, advocacy aims to enhance access to sign language services.

2. Holding decision makers accountable

For example, many deaf people do not have access to information necessary to understand all the aspects of an issue, including government legislation and policies that might affect them. In some communities, leaders and decision makers are not accountable to people unless they are pressed. Through advocacy, decision makers can understand their responsibility to ensure access to information. For example, decision makers can inform the public through media, which helps the public to make informed decisions.

3. Improve community mobilization on an issue

Deaf associations can mobilize their members and other interested groups to an advocacy issue: make them to support the struggle for a change and take actions towards a common goal. This is important because one person's opinion may not count that much, but many people's opinion counts more. The rise in public awareness of a particular issue that may be promoted through advocacy is what can eventually lead to a change in public opinion that results in a social change.

4. To give a voice to the voiceless

Advocacy targeting state agencies is important because it gives a voice to marginalized groups. For example, through advocacy deaf children can have better access to quality education through an improved provision of teaching and learning materials in sign language, resources, and better and more qualified teachers fluent in sign language.

Different types of advocacy and lobbying

Normative-based advocacy: It involves use of norms, legislations, and standards to conduct advocacy.

Evidence-based advocacy involves the use of quantitative and quantitative evidence of data and information in advocacy work. Evidence-based advocacy includes the use of result or output of a research process to justify the course of action. Evidence-based advocacy is often geared at transforming and ensuring improvement in the rights of impoverished and marginalized people.

Policy advocacy is conscious effort by individuals or institutions (such as associations of the deaf) to influence already existing policies or policies being formulated, by using systematic and well considered policy influence strategies. It may involve the use of research



findings to keep attention of the policy makers to an issue. The advocacy may call for change in a policy, a standard or practices to benefit the deaf community.

Example of Policy Advocacy and Steps

In Ghana, Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) Policies are not beneficial to deaf people. There are no special provisions that can improve access to SRH information for deaf people. Information disseminated about SRH on TV and hospitals are not interpreted to Ghanaian Sign Language which means that deaf people do not get access to correct information, and they cannot make good decisions on their reproductive health. For example, deaf women do not have information on contraceptive use, so they are often unable to make informed decision on correct use of contraceptives. The Adolescent Health Service Policy and Strategy 2016-2020 was developed in 2016, however there are no provisions for deaf women and girls. Ghana National Association of the Deaf (GNAD) decided to conduct policy advocacy to make a change in national SRH policies.

GNAD took the following steps:

- GNAD conducted research into SRH needs of the deaf community.
- GNAD met with regional and district directors of Ghana Health Services where GNAD presented the research findings to them.
- GNAD developed a position paper on SRH needs of deaf people which GNAD printed on pull ups, fliers, policy briefs etc.
- GNAD organised a national dissemination and advocacy forum on inclusive SRH for deaf people. GNAD invited the Ministry of Health, GHS, Media, Regional and District Directors of Health Services etc.
- GNAD followed up with the meetings.

Outcome of advocacy work:

The Persons with Disabilities Act (Act 715), section 31 of reviewed act makes it mandatory for all health facilities to employ at least two sign language interpreters. The implications are that section 31 provides for the minimum number as 2 with no limited maximum number.

Activities for Advocacy

Advocacy involves many activities. The common advocacy activities include the following:

- Policy research and dissemination of findings
- Demonstrations
- Watchdog activities: A person or an organisation that monitors and publicises the behaviour of others (individuals, corporations, governments) to discover undesirable activity
- Production of fliers and/or policy briefs
- Use of websites to disseminate advocacy information
- Newsletters to disseminate advocacy messages
- Writing petitions to decision makers (president, ministries, mayors)



- Negotiations with duty bearers and services providers to improve services
- Press conferences to draw public attention
- Production of pamphlets on an issue and sharing it with public
- Court cases, for example The National Association of the Deaf vs. Union of India and Another on 14 February, 2011
- Poster campaign
- Talk show workshops
- Training
- Press releases
- Press briefings

Key players in advocacy

Advocacy involves several players. These players may be grouped into:

Civil Society: Civil society is made up of private citizens and organisations working together to advance public interests. Examples: non-governmental organisations (NGOs), labour unions, community-based groups, religious groups, or political parties.

State: The state is made up of public entities working to advance public interests. Examples: Government officials, bureaucrats, the military, schools, the police, and courts. They can also be called duty bearers.

Private Sector: The private sector consists of private people and organisations working to advance private interests. Examples: Corporations, small businesses, the media, factories.

Rights Holders: The people for whom the advocacy is being carried out. It is about their rights. They can also be called the beneficiaries.

Allies: They are people and organisations that support our advocacy campaign. Typically, they are individuals and institutions sympathetic to our cause such as opinion leaders, present and former politicians, media personalities, NGOs, community groups, professors, and of course, the members of the affected group. They will contribute time, technical expertise, financial and material resources, and influence on our advocacy campaign.

To conduct effective lobbying, an association needs to:

- Understand the needs of the target people who can make the decision, their concerns and sensitivities and assemble their arguments accordingly.
- Understand the complicated systems, how the system works and how and where actual decisions are made. Understanding this is important as it reduces needless waste of time lobbying wrong people.
- The association must work early while policy is at its formulation stage. Once policy is in force, lobbying will not work.
- Present appropriate a well-articulated argument to on the issue seeking to be addressed.



- Target more people who can influence the decision in favour of the association. For example, if it is about new law, it is better target these who make the law. Do not target DPOs or social workers who have no power to make a change.

Advocacy Process/Steps in Advocacy

Step 1: Identify: Identification of the problem that needs to be addressed. Also identify your constituency, your allies, and your opponents.

Step 2: Research: Research means gathering necessary information and ensuring that the causes and effects of the problem are understood. When the causes/effects of the problems are understood, identify potential solutions. In advocacy, you must know and/or develop strategies to address the problem.

Step 3: Plan: When advocacy problem is identified, and research done to gather necessary information, a strategy needs to be formulated. An advocacy campaign action plan includes the goal, objectives, indicators, methods, activities, and timeline.

Step 4: Act: Following the five good practices of advocacy, act in agreement and coordination with everyone involved in the campaign.

Step 5: Evaluate: Monitor actions and evaluate the results throughout the cycle. Decide what further action is appropriate or consider how advocacy could be done differently in the future to be more effective.

Basic rules in achieving successful advocacy work

- Set specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound (SMART) objectives. SMART objectives provide an opportunity for deaf associations to set advocacy goals. Example of SMART objectives are: By the 30th September 2020, GNAD will mobilise and support 100 deaf children in the school going age to enrol in a school. By the end of December 2021, GNAD will build the capacity of 600 deaf women in Accra on family planning and contraceptive use.
- Work as a team not as individuals. The more persons involved in advocacy, the better results or the better the advocacy outcome. For example, advocacy to improve access to SL services is more effective when carried out by 100 deaf persons marching to demand for their right to access to SL services than one person.
- Make sure all participants know the issues clearly. Before you embark on advocacy with your association members, make sure all members of the association understand the issue they are advocating for. They must be able to say what the aim and objectives are and how the issue is being affecting them. If your members can not make good arguments, your opponents in advocacy can use your members against you.



- Involve other people immediately outside the affected groups (i.e., relatives, neighbours, colleagues etc.). This is stakeholders' analysis. Involve people who share similar goals and aims with you. For example, if it is about access to sign language services, include deaf teachers, heads of schools for the deaf, and churches that have sign language services etc. The influence of outsiders is very strong, and their support can be crucial for a better outcome. They may not be direct beneficiaries of the advocacy outcomes, but they have an interest. For example, the head pastor of your church may never understand SL, but he is interested in having SL services for his members in the church.
- Create clear possible solutions and promote them. When advocacy issue is identified, you must have identified solution to the issue identified. This way, you are in better position to assist policy makers to solve the problem. For example, if you are advocating for access to information and services for the deaf in your country, you must have the approaches or solutions in advance that can be used to achieve the goal. If it is about access to education, involve parents of deaf children, guardians of deaf children and teachers of the deaf who have interest in education. Knowing possible solutions enables you to have stronger arguments to the policy makers and people who have the power to make a change.
- Prepare a concise and persuasive advocacy statement capturing what your association wants to achieve, why you want to achieve it, how you will achieve it and by what timeline you think you want to achieve it.
- Define and agree on the most appropriate means of communication to deliver the advocacy message to the target. Decide who is the trusted and credible messenger to convey the message on behalf of your association, what is the appropriate medium, use of TV, radio etc, and how to convey information.

The UN CRPD in relation to advocacy and lobbying

The UN CRPD is very relevant to deaf community when doing advocacy work. The CRPD is the first international convention that is dedicated to the rights of PWDs. The purpose of the CRPD is to promote, protect and ensure enjoyment of all human rights by persons with disabilities and respect their dignity. All other rights of persons with disabilities are stated in the various international conventions, policies, constitutions, and national frameworks. The key principles of the CRPD are respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy, independence, non-discrimination, equality of opportunity and accessibility. Overall, the development of the CRPD can make an enormous difference in the lives of deaf people around the world.

80% of PWDs live in poor and developing nations. Significant number of children with disabilities, mostly deaf children, do not attend formal education. PWDs have the highest rate of unemployment and when they are employed, they often receive lesser pay or occupy very low positions. Also, women and girls with disabilities more vulnerable and are subject to more vulnerability compared to non-disabled women and girls. Most countries have no discrimination or anti-discrimination legislation. The CRPD is thus important in reaffirming the rights of PWDs as human rights.



Why is the CRPD an important tool for advocacy?

The CRPD is a vital tool in advocacy work for the rights of deaf people. The CRPD is the first international human rights treaty to include sign languages as languages. It recognises sign language as a language with its own rights and mentions sign language eight times in five different articles. The CRPD also makes references to deaf culture and sign language, thereby giving more protection to deaf people with regards to their right to language and accessible services in sign language.

How can the CRPD be used in advocacy?

- The CRPD can be used as a reference point to challenge discriminatory legislations or call for a reform of discriminatory legislations in favour of deaf people.
- The CRPD provides a framework and guiding principles for the government and public institutions to act and improve the rights of PWDs.
- The CRPD committee also services as an international court for persons with disabilities where they can make complaints to the CRPD Committee.
- The CRPD highlights on the human rights of deaf people at global level, notes the importance of human rights and explains how they must be taken into consideration at national level. For example, the CRPD mentions sign language eight times.

How to use the CRPD in advocacy and lobbying

Identify: Identification of the problem that needs to be addressed. Identify the relevant national laws that protects the rights of deaf people. Then identify the relevant CRPD articles related to the issue. The CRPD articles are guidelines and a framework for national governments to respect the rights of deaf people. For example, if deaf children are denied access to education, you can refer to the Article 24 then non-discrimination in Article 5 of the CRPD. But before that, you should refer to national laws on the right to education and explain how deaf children are denied access to education. Then align your arguments with the CRPD.

Research: Research widely into the problem within the national and global context. For example, if deaf children are denied access to formal education, research into the effect of nonformal education for deaf children. Research what is happening in country A, B, C, how are they doing it differently compared to your country, what are the implications of giving education to deaf people? Usually, national government have no knowledge about this issue. You should provide and present the appropriate solution or strategies to address the problem.

Plan: When you want to use or refer to the CRPD in advocacy and lobbying, plan carefully and make sure that your presentations, messages, and plans are consistent with the CRPD. Do not refer only to the CRPD. Your country may have signed but not ratified it or may not have signed it at all which means it is more difficult for you to apply the CRPD in your advocacy work. Before engaging duty bearers, plan your advocacy campaign action plan, which should include goal, objectives, indicators, methods, activities, and timeline. If it is about lobbying, make sure that you plan your activity and lobby the appropriate people at



the right time. For example, if a bill is in parliament and you want to oppose the bill or get people to oppose it or support it, you must plan your target audience. The target audience must be people who can really oppose or support it.

Act: Act in agreement and coordination with everyone involved in the advocacy campaign or lobbying. Act at the right time. For example, if a bill to close schools for the deaf is laid in the parliament, you must act when the bill is in the parliament and not after has passed into the legislation. When acting, coordinate with your team and ensure you have a common voice.

Evaluate: Monitor actions and evaluate the results throughout the cycle. Decide what further action is appropriate or how advocacy or lobbying could be done differently in the future to be more effective.