

# Advocacy for sanitation: a brief guide



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## *Sanitation for All*

In December 2006, the UN General Assembly declared 2008 the International Year of Sanitation (IYS). The IYS had two chief aims: to draw the world's attention to the impact of sanitation on public health, economic and social development, and the environment; and to accelerate progress toward the achievement of the sanitation target of the Millennium Development Goals.

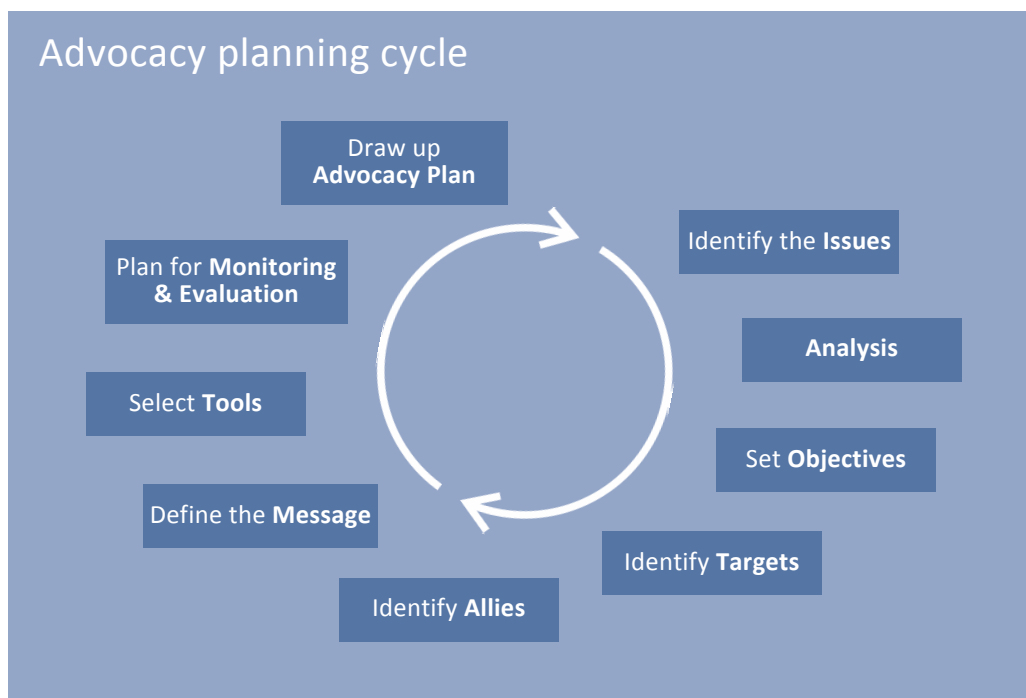
The very existence of the IYS was already a good example of successful advocacy. The UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB) and civil society groups lobbied government representatives on the importance of sanitation, eventually leading the General Assembly to declare 2008 the IYS. The IYS, in turn, was a major advocacy exercise, one that shone the spotlight on the

urgent problem of poor sanitation and drew politicians and decision-makers, the media, and the public into a dialogue about how to solve this crisis.

This advocacy guide has been developed to inform and support you in planning and conducting your own advocacy activities for sanitation in your country or region.

## Key steps and elements for planning advocacy activities

The word advocacy has its origins in law, but its modern meaning is “the process of managing information and knowledge strategically to change and/or influence policies and practices that affect the lives of people – particularly the disadvantaged”.



Effective advocacy work needs good planning. The advocacy planning cycle shows the most important steps in planning and implementing advocacy work. In practice, however, some of these elements are often neglected, making it difficult to measure or assess the effectiveness and impact of advocacy efforts. Thus it is important to plan your advocacy activities systematically. The key questions are:

1. *Identifying the issues: what do we want to change?*
2. *Analysis: what do we already know and what information can we use?*
3. *Setting objectives: what are our specific advocacy objectives?*
4. *Identifying the targets: whom do we want to influence?*
5. *Identifying allies: with whom can we work?*
6. *Selecting the tools and developing the messages: how can we best reach our targets?*
7. *Monitoring & Evaluation: how can we measure the impact of what we've done?*

# Answering the key questions and planning your activities



## 1. Identifying the issues: what do we want to change?

The International Year of Sanitation was focussing on the following issues: poor sanitation has negative impacts on human health, resulting in millions of infant and child deaths; poor sanitation stalls economic and social development; poor sanitation degrades the environment. However, changing these conditions is possible – we know what needs to be done. Start by **using this kit's information** to identify which of these issues are most pressing in your local and national context.

## 2. Analysis: what do we already know and what information can we use?

To ensure credibility among your target groups, you ought to be well informed and familiar with more than just the key facts. Electronic versions of the materials in this kit and further information can be found on the official IYS website at [www.sanitation2008.org](http://www.sanitation2008.org) and on the website of the UN-Water Task Force on Sanitation at [www.unwater.org/TF-san.html](http://www.unwater.org/TF-san.html). For regional activities, you will however need specific information on your region including the special circumstantial problems people are facing. Local data will be most persuasive to local media and politicians – **check out this kit's recommended websites** and approach civil society groups and scientists working on environmental and health issues!

## 3. Setting objectives: what are our specific advocacy objectives – and how can we make them SMART?

As for any project or programme objectives, advocacy objectives should be **SMART**:

- *Specific (what exactly do you want to happen?)*
- *Measurable (will you know when you've achieved them?)*

- *Achievable (is it possible to achieve them given your resources and time?)*
- *Relevant (are they relevant to all stakeholders and the real problem?)*
- *Time-bound (by when do you want them to happen?)*

## 4. Identifying the targets: whom do we want to influence?

Whom are we addressing: Community residents? Municipal authorities? NGOs? Local or national politicians? The corporate sector? Your research and analysis on your advocacy issue will have identified its specific local characteristics, including the major stakeholders you intend to target and how changes take place in the arena in which they operate. The better you know and define your targets, the better you will be able to select the most appropriate advocacy tools and approaches to reach and influence them. **Use the matrix from this kit!**

## 5. Identifying allies: with whom can we work?

Start by gathering information on potential partners. Remember to reach out to less conventional groups. Approach a wide range of partners with an outline of activities and events to discuss, and agree upon their involvement and support. Discuss their participation by focusing on their self-interest and by stressing that supporting a good cause can increase their visibility in the community or with the general public. For example, when approaching actors in the private sector, check out their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy.

## 6. Selecting the tools and developing the messages: how can we best reach our targets?

There are numerous communication tools that can be used for good advocacy work, such as lobbying, project visits, petitions, posters, leaflets, newsletters, theatre, engaging artists and celebrities, working with the media – TV, radio and the press – and more. You will usually combine several tools, but you need to look at a large variety of options first to find the tools with the biggest potential impact on your target groups.

To develop clear messages, transform your data and information into points that your targets can relate to. Here, sound bites, slogans, or short claims are best: “A toilet for everyone” is a good example. Turn dry facts and statistics into easy-to-remember, clear messages and lively stories. For the IYS, five short key messages have been developed – it is up to you to frame them according to the audience you target:

1. *Sanitation is vital for human health*
2. *Sanitation generates economic benefits*
3. *Sanitation contributes to dignity and social development*
4. *Sanitation protects the environment*
5. *Improving sanitation is achievable*

Pay special attention to message 5, which is both action and solution-oriented: besides pointing out the various sanitation-related problems, stress as well how exactly improving sanitation is achievable in your local or national context. For example, explain to local politicians that investments in sanitation will yield considerable economic benefits, which could help them at election time.

## 7. Monitoring & Evaluation: how can we measure the impact of our activities?

To monitor and evaluate advocacy work, you need to have set clear objectives at the outset, which will serve as yardsticks against which to measure success.

During the planning phase, you define your indicators for success for all your objectives. If your objective is to decrease the number of diarrhoeal diseases in a certain area, your indicators could be “more money from local or national governments” and an “increase in the number of clean toilets”.

Indicators should be drawn up for all aspects of the work: **inputs** (time, resources); **outputs** (meetings, visits, reports); **outcomes**, which are the result of your outputs (press coverage, debates in parliament, changes in policy); and **impact** (e.g. the effect of policy change on the lives of poor communities). Obviously, outcomes and impacts are more difficult to measure, but ultimately the most important to evaluate your advocacy work.

It is important to regularly build in a self-assessment exercise to shift focus if necessary. Ask yourself: Did our message(s) reach the key audiences? Did we use the data in a compelling way? What else can we do to reach our objective? How can we use our financial resources more effectively?

If no “hard” quantitative data is available for measuring the outcomes and impact, record whatever evidence – such as clippings – is available as systematically as possible. Presenting a rational argument for the plausible impact, based on what has been achieved to date, is often all that can be done.



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