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CHRISTIAN RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

ADVOCACY TECHNIQUES TO EMPOWER WOMEN

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LECTURE NOTES PREPARED BY:
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Topic: Advocacy Techniques to Empower Women

General Objective: to help members get acquainted with various techniques of advocacy that could be used to programs that are geared towards empowering women.

Specific Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

- Grasp the various techniques that can be used in advocating women's issues.
- Familiarize themselves with some specific skills in lobbying.
- Appreciate the need for policy research and enhance their skills in identifying gaps and assessing needs as they do policy research.
- Enhance their skills in designing strategic planning.
- Appreciate the need for coalition building and NGO collaboration.
- Enhance their skills in working with the media to create public awareness
- Enhance their understanding of the various techniques to educate constituents.

Topic for Discussion

- Policy Research
- Strategic Planning
- Coalition Building
- NGO Collaboration
- Lobbying
- Media Relations
- Constituency Education
- Electronic Networking

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Rationale

It is assumed that training programs that enable members to understand the concept, range of activities, elements of advocacy would feel the gap that most members lack in advocating for the deprived section of the population - in this case women.

Advocacy skills would enable member organizations enhance their understanding of some policy issues that affect the functioning of NGOs in development projects, public laws and legislation that have negative impact on marginalized people, and hence training programme on such areas is of paramount importance.

To ensure continuity in NGO's work, establish partnership, and create linkage with government agencies working in the same sector, all NGOs should be considering appropriate forms of advocacy activities as a natural extension of programmatic work.

Understanding their advocacy roles will also give NGOs experience with issues around which they wish to advocate or mobilize public opinion, understand laws and policies, obtain accurate information that relates with such issues. Therefore, training programme in advocacy will enhance their understanding of so.

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Advocacy Techniques to Empower Women as they relate to the Ethiopian Context

It is to be noted that the following advocacy techniques are not limited to women issues, but rather are techniques applicable to other NGOs' Advocacy activities.

Policy Research

- Be well aware of introduction of new policies, bills that are to be enacted, existing legislation, changes in the existing policies, amendment of laws, as well as existing social problems that need new policy introduction.
- Have adequate documentation of these laws, policies and legislation for future references, and for further research.
- If the government involves NGOs in the policymaking process, NGOs should not miss these opportunities and they should have to have a great input before the policy comes into effect.
- Know that NGOs are innovative and are expected to provide accurate information on gaps in new policies and strategies designed.
- Know that your contribution to enrich the policy is determined by the adequate knowledge of why policies are made, what should be involved in the policymaking process, who will be the loser, how are both the beneficiaries and the losers affected, and etc.
- Speak out on behalf of your members to influence the way in which government treats your particular groups, and to educate the public on particular issues.
- Build a high profile
- Put together your own independent report on one or more of the problems facing women.

In doing policy research you may use the following steps

- Understand the Publics Environment
  - Social Environment
  - Economic Environment
  - Political Environment
  - Cultural, and family Environment
- Identify pressing problems that should be addressed or that need a policy formulation.
- Study public awareness about the issue
  - Conduct needs assessment on the issue
  - Identify gaps
- Identify who is the most affected by these gaps
  - Children, Women, Youth, Old age people, etc.
- Search if there is an already existing policy that address these problem
- If there exists a policy, study the policy and strategies and identify attempts made to implement the policy and gaps for future amendment.

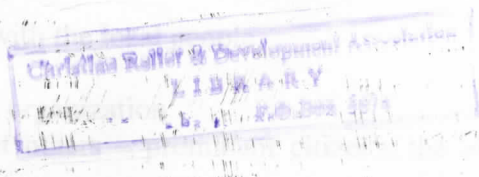
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- Reflect gaps in the policy and its implementation and bring it to the attention of the policy makers and legislators.
  - You may write a brief article about it (Show strong and weak parts of the policy and indicate that future amendment is needed.)
- Try to organize workshops, symposium, and panel discussions. Make sure you invite policymakers. Give them a chance to speak about or address related policy issue on the subject.
  - Reflect gaps clearly in the workshop.
  - Recommend policy amendments, if need be.
  - Follow-up on Workshop recommendations.

Strategic Planning

- Brainstorm about issues, possible strategies, and various better approaches that can empower women for every forthcoming year.
- Accommodate changes in the working environment and make use of new opportunities and prepare for any threat.
- Examines favorable and encouraging policy changes that have been introduced in the past to expose possible ways and means of making use of these policies for better change.
- Make sure that you understand the political, social, economic, political environment of the country as you plan to design your strategic plan.
- Issues should be identified according to the priorities, demands, and needs of the target groups.
- Based on the facts being collected, set a plan that determines the timeframe, the possible ways of obtaining support from various sources and key people, and the target group that can benefit from the project.
- Expect opposing arguments, and entertain them with positive outlook.
- Such effort will allow you to determine your focus and message to explore other options.
- Lay down a strong foundation for tactical strategic planning.
- Assess your organization's internal competencies and potentials to play the role.

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❦ *Coalition Building*

The purpose of building a coalition is to bring support for others on issues that you are advocating for. It is to show that you are not the only person, or your organization is not the only organization that is much more concerned on the issue you are advocating for. It is a means through which you show that many others are also concerned on the issue.

- Make a list of those people or organizations that can possibly form a coalition with you.
- Do not underestimate the contribution of the local people in this respect.
- Go and contact them, talk to them and speak about the issues that they have concern about and that you are intended to advocate for.
- Do not forget that government officials may not see such movement by NGOs in a positive manner.
- Make sure that you win the support of these officials by being transparent to them and inform them that what you will be doing is not going to bring any political threat to them.
- You must always remain politically neutral.
- Make sure that you are a social service advocate concerned with the health, social, economic well-being of the people.
- Make sure that you have control over the situation.
- Do not promise what you can not accomplish.
- Do not forget that forming coalition with community members require a lot of efforts to mobilize them.
- Persuade and convince them that what you are going to do together with them is to their good. But do not forget that you can only build their confidence if only what you told them will come true.
- Do not make them over-ambitious.
- Look for influential people in the community, prominent citizens whom others respect, who would agree to represent you. Brief them all.
- To involve other organizations in the coalition, you may need to go around and speak at meetings of their organization to persuade them to get involved.
- Organize a meeting of those who will support your issue, to see if you can form a coalition of support.
- You do not have to agree on everything. Agree on basic two or three main points, to be acted on if appropriate.

You can build a coalition with the local people

- Through their local organization
- Through significant others – prominent citizens, the elderly, church leaders, etc.

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NGOs' Collaboration

NGOs working in the same sector and also others that have related function in the community should be able to collaborate.

Collaboration of NGOs should be made with the communities where they operate.

In most instances, NGOs have a good knowledge about local communities. The nature of most communities is that they do not like any one to dominate over them. NGOs should also be smart enough to collaborate with government organizations.

Collaborative efforts help

- to strengthen the network.
- to avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts among the NGO sector
- to focus on the priority needs of the community.
- to minimize wastage of resources.
- to allows community members to use the existing resources in an efficient manner.
- to allow NGOs to have an enabling environment, which in most cases comes from the local people but is facilitated by the Government-NGO relation.

Lobbying

The word lobby means a waiting room - place where people wait to meet others. When you lobby you try to ***influence*** a decision-maker. Lobbying which often called legislative advocacy is more specific than other forms of advocacy.

Non-profit organizations can assist decision-making bodies

- by compiling relevant information and examples of how proposed legislation affect constituents.

What should an advocate do?

- Express interest in ensuring that legislators understand the effects that such legislation would have on their organizations and communities.
- Realize that there is no better way to make your position heard than to lobby. We all have a right to lobby our representatives on issues that concern our organizations.
- Discuss the organizations' needs or interests in a general way.
- Urging changes in law or legislation constitute lobbying.
- Understand the very purpose of lobbying and make your purpose to be understood.
- Have a positive attitude and positive outlook.
- Employ good techniques of lobbying.

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Common Characteristics of NGOs

- A social Purpose - to help a particular section of society such as women, children, elderly people.
- Democratic management - many NGOs attempt to involve their members or users in the running of the organization.
- Advocacy/Campaigning - most NGOs attempt to advocate or speak out on behalf of their members to influence the way in which government treats their particular group or to educate the public on a particular issue.
- Independent constitution - Usually NGOs have their own rules and regulations about who can be a member and what the organization is for.
- Use of volunteers - Many NGOs use some volunteer (unpaid) labor either in setting up, in managing the organization, or in carrying out day to day activities. Many also employ people to carry out tasks.

Why NGOs need to build a high profile

- To meet their aims- to advocate on behalf of their members or client group
- To raise issues and educate people
- To lobby effectively for change to legislation and to improve services
- To fund-raise - people give to organizations that they know about.
- To recruit other like minded people to join the organization

What are the Strengths of NGOs?

- They often provide services in areas where there are none or where services are diminishing.
- People acting together for the common good involves users and people who know about the needs of a local community or specific group of people.
- Members have a personal commitment or belief in the purpose and activities of the organization.
- NGOs can be innovative. They can test out new ways of tackling problems and doing things, and they can demonstrate alternative strategies.
- They are more flexible than statutory services - they can react to changing needs of circumstances.
- NGOS can be innovative. They can test out new ways of tackling problems and doing things, and they can demonstrate alternative strategies.
- NGOs can be agents of development and change.
- NGOs can advocate on behalf of group. The NGO is knowledgeable, has expertise and can therefore speak with confidence.
- NGOs can act as a check on government, making sure that proposals are in line with what users need - therefore they make government more accountable.
- NGOs are also often much cheaper and less bureaucratic than government run organizations and services.

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There are two ways of lobbying - Direct Lobbying, and Grassroots lobbying.

Direct lobbying occurs when an organization contacts legislators or government officials who participate in the formation of legislation.

Grassroots lobbying refers to attempts to influence legislators by shaping the opinions of the general public.

When you lobby, think of what you have to do:

Before the meeting

- Set out the main points of your case so that you can speak clearly and confidently.
- Your case must be well argued- collect all the facts and figures, evidence details about what the law says, expert opinion etc.
- Show that you are not alone - other organizations, people that will lend the support to your case.
- Think about what the other side wants/needs
- Think about how the other side will respond -prepare some arguments.
- Agree a compromise position among your group before the meeting

In the meeting

- Be friendly, polite but persistent - and try to stick to your agenda
- Assume that they are open to persuasion even when they are not and behave as if your demands are very reasonable.
- Be prepared to compromise/ trade a few points if you can not get all your demands
- Do not be satisfied with vague promises - check it out.
- Follow up with a letter of thanks - summarize any commitments made.

Techniques of winning the support of legislators

- Build good relationship with newly elected officials especially to those ones who have great influential powers.
- Write congratulatory letters on their election or reelection and express interest in communicating in the years ahead.
- Give them background information. Ensure that new legislators receive appropriate press releases and ask to receive press releases and other information from them.
- Discuss the organization's work, current situation, future plans, and issues of concern; or invite the legislator to visit the office or meet with the entire board.
- Treat legislators professionally and allowing for some "wiggle room" may facilitate an improved dialogue in the future. It is a lobbying rule that today's adversary may be tomorrow's ally.

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- Thank politicians profusely when they speak and vote the way you want, even if they have been doing it for years. In so doing your organization becomes a public policy player in the eyes of others, including less supportive politicians.
- When contacting legislators through mail, remember that they have a lot others to read too. Do not write your letter as if it is for a mass mailing, make it appear that it is a product of an individual so that the legislator can make note of it.

Media Relations

An important aspect of any successful advocacy efforts is targeting the appropriate audience, and making the message convincing to them. One of the techniques to spread the message to a grassroots constituency is using the media. Advocates also take advantage of current events to get media attention.

Basic approaches for using the news media and paid advertising to urge action include:

- Encouraging editorial boards to make editorial policy that supports your position.
- Submitting guest columns or op-eds.
- Distributing news releases or media advisories, or holding press conferences.
- Releasing reports or special documents accompanied by a cover memo to the editor or reporter. The organization's annual report is probably not a newsworthy event, but it might be useful to forward a copy for background to the reporter who normally covers your issues.
- Participating in a radio or television talk show; calling in when your issue is discussed.
- Advertising in local or national publications.

Constituency Education

Constituency education is part of NGOs public relations. It is one way through which we create awareness among the general public on matters that we or our organization is standing for, what we do, how we do it, and what we intend to advocate.

People learn through various methods of communication

- words of mouth,
- reading, hearing,
- watching,
- taking part,
- talking to people,
- through posters, leaflets, newspapers,
- reports, brief papers,
- radios, TV, Videos,
- talks, workshops,
- Publicity events,
- opening days,
- demonstrations etc.

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Constituency education

- Helps you and your organization to carry out successful campaigns - an organized series of events and publicity designed to achieve a certain aim.
- Helps you to build coalition with the grass root organizations.
- Is one way through which you do your public relations.

What you can do

- The general public can build trust if they know your program very well.
- If you educate your constituency, the general public recognizes about your program and acknowledges your contribution.
- Create a favorable impression of your purpose in the minds of the public.
- Have effective communications, sense of associations, and even participation.
- Depending on the aim, the campaign can be short, for example, a week of publicity to draw attention to a particular issue, or a much longer-term effort to make more radical change.

The purpose of a campaign can be to:

- Educate a broad audience.
- Change people's view.
- Neutralize opposing views.
- Win over an undecided public.
- Help change laws and practices.
- Press for a particular service or change in policy.

In organizing a campaign:

- ***Choose the issue and the aim***

  Identify a particular issue and decide the aims of the campaign. What is it that the campaign will try to do?

- ***Identify who is your campaign aiming at***

  what do you want to influence? Who is most likely to support your ideas and who has the power it makes the changes? Answers to these questions determine your target group, and most campaigns have more than one audience.

- ***Identify what resources you have***

  You may require funds for publicity, you may think of organizing fund-raising events that can mark the launch of a campaign. You may also contact people who have enough tie and commitment to organize a successful campaign.

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- ***Build a coalition of support***

Campaigns are successful when they can show that they have widespread support. Here you may need to identify all the people who would be likely to agree with your view as well as those who may not be with you.
Try to influence the opinion of those who may not support your way of thinking. Think of your audience and led support to your campaign. Think about whom is likely to be affected by your proposal and how your campaign might bring them to board.

Electronic Networking

- Helps build-up coalition and networking among various members.
- It is one of the strongest tools to capture the attention of international and local potential resources that are instrumental in influencing policy makers.

Tools that NGOs can use to network electronically
Internet
E-mail

Strategies to be used in this connection could be

- to create a sort of positive pressure on the policy makers on issues and policies that are likely to affect the marginalized people in a negative manner.
- to be instrumental in supporting the government in brining to their attention various issues that policy makers may not give attention to.

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The Active Learning Center of the Glasgow Caledonia University, London is acknowledged for some of the information in this Lecture note.

Questions for Discussion, Activities, and Exercise

1. *Questions for Discussion on Policy Research*

- Considering the existing politics and democratization process, which areas do you think that NGOs can exploit in policy research? and how would they positively influence?

Activities

- Take the National HIV/AIDS policy and identify all those policies that specifically address gender issues.
- Take out all those policy implementation strategies that directly address gender as a crosscut target.
- Try to identify certain gaps in both the policies and strategies.
- Report the gaps.

2. *Questions for Discussion on Strategic Planning*

Does your organization have a strategic plan?
What aspect of the strategic plan address/not address gender issues properly?

Activities

Supposing that the political environment of the country opens favorable condition for the NGO sector to play practical role. How would you use this opportunity to empower women?

3. *Exercise for Discussion on Coalition Building*

Group one: ***Community Mobilization*** on an issue that participants agreed up on and what they think is affecting women most in our country. How do you go about it? How would you address the community?

Group Two: ***Attracting other NGOs.*** that are directly or indirectly involved with the same issue. First identify those organizations that you are planning to contract.

Group Three: ***Build Coalition.*** Assume that you have already mobilized the community and attracting other NGOs. Now your task is to work on issues that you are intending to advocate.

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4. *Questions for Discussion on NGOs Collaboration*

- What are some of the factors that you think affect you and your organization to collaborate with others?
- How would you overcome these problems?

5. *Activities on Lobbying*

Select one issue to lobby with, that you think are comfortable with having adequate information

6. *Questions for Discussion on Media Relations*

How would you attract the media?

Activities on Media Relations

Prepare a press release to create public awareness and attract the attention of Decision-makers, legislators and other officials.

7. *Questions for Discussion on Electronic Networking*

- What areas or policy environments can we at this time use electronic networking in Ethiopia?

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