

Approach to Inclusive Advocacy

*Developed by the Inclusivity
Community of Practice*

Advocacy

Advocacy is a process of building support for a specific issue or cause and influencing others to take action in order to achieve a desired change, including for example, the ability to influence relevant global norms and policies. Members of the [Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers](#) have identified advocacy as one of the four approaches for effective collaboration. Network members and supporters channel their recommendations to policymakers by uplifting and/or linking local level peacemakers to these processes and by creating key collaborative advocacy material and messages.

What is Inclusive Advocacy?

Advocacy is the process of building support for a specific issue or cause and influencing others to take action in order to achieve a desired change. Advocacy can take place on many levels, including locally, nationally, regionally, and internationally. Advocacy can include mapping your key stakeholders, crafting your messaging, and defining your target audience. Advocacy is also about influencing dynamics of power. Advocacy spaces can be exclusive to some, making it difficult to have a greater impact on persons who hold power. Advocacy can further be limited by one's individual capacity, institutional policies, and cultural norms. For example, women's views and voices are often marginalized in the world's news media. Women constitute 52% of the world's population, yet they make up only 21% of the people featured in the news.¹ Power dynamics that amplify and value certain voices over others limit the impacts of one's advocacy messaging and overall goals and objectives.

Why is Inclusive Advocacy Important?

Inclusive advocacy is mindful of the impact of its goals and objectives on all members of society and ensures that those directly impacted are adequately represented. Strong and inclusive advocacy campaigns build commitment and a cohesive vision among those involved and speak with a strong and united voice. Effective inclusive advocacy requires taking the time and investing resources into how you will reach, collaborate, and influence each of your audiences. Inclusive advocacy is critical in building relationships and credibility in order to have buy-in of the communities affected for long-term sustainability.

Additional Resources

ICMA. "How to Facilitate Inclusive Community Outreach and Engagement." <https://icma.org/articles/pm-magazine/how-facilitate-inclusive-community-outreach-and-engagement>.

Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. "E-Advocacy Training for Women and Youth: A Guide to Communicate with Impact." <https://www.peacemakersnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/youth-e-advocacy-training-workbook.pdf>.

UN Gender-Inclusive Language. "Toolbox for using gender-inclusive language in English." <https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/toolbox.shtml>.

Womankind and IWDA. "Plan Your Power: A Toolkit for Women's Rights Advocacy Planning." https://www.womankind.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/IWDA_WW_Plan-Your-Power-Toolkit_final.pdf.

¹ WACC. "Mission Possible: A Gender and Media Advocacy Toolkit." https://library.uniteddiversity.coop/Media_and_Free_Culture/Mission_Possible-A_Gender_and_Media_Advocacy_Toolkit.pdf

Checklist To Do's – Recommendations For Practicing Inclusive Advocacy



- Participatory research is mandatory.** Build an evidence base for your advocacy issue area and make sure that you are talking to those directly impacted and raising their voices and concerns.
- Inclusive outreach is important. Engage all sectors of society,** including civil society, community-based groups, faith-based groups, private sector and corporations, media, academia, etc. **Use diverse and accessible outreach methods** to reach marginalized and disadvantaged members of society; consider potential limitations in the methods you are utilizing, such as the lack of access to social media platforms.
- Inclusive advocacy language is essential.** Recognize the diversity of individuals. **Use gender-neutral language,** which means not using binary terms such as “men and women”, boys and girls, etc. to ensure you are including other forms of gender identity. Use “their” when you don’t want to be gender-specific or are unsure about the gender. Promote the use of pronouns to avoid misgendering people. Request other identity markers in all of your work to ensure you are capturing disaggregated data effectively.
- Fair coverage is imperative. Give fair, equal space, and time to the voices of those impacted by the advocacy issue.** This includes equal coverage between all genders, ages, and faith communities. Ask yourself - are you reaching marginalized and harder-to-reach populations, such as religious or ethnic minorities?
- Visual representation matters.** Images can be powerful tools if used correctly and with consent. **Use photos where the subject matter is active, and not passive.** Ask yourself, is this photo empowering to the individual? Images used online should also be embedded with a descriptive caption or language for people with disabilities.
- Consent is critical.** Consent is someone’s agreement for another person to do something that would violate their integrity if it were done without their approval. **Use consent or release forms to get the individual’s approval and consent for their image, description, story or data to be used and shared (whether publicly or privately).** It is important that you gain the consent of an adult or guardian.
- Diversity matters and is meaningful.** Within all your advocacy efforts, **think about who is telling the story.** Stories should always be told by the person to whom it belongs. Do not tokenize someone’s story or experience to fill a ‘diversity checkbox.’
- Challenge stereotypes. For example, avoid labeling women as mothers and victims and men as providers and survivors.** Always ask yourself, are there opportunities to challenge or counter stereotypes within your advocacy to help break barriers for others?
- Give credit!** Always check with the owner or source if they consent for you to use and always recognize and offer them credit.

