

Participatory Advocacy

**A Guide for Small and Diaspora NGOs
to VSO's Participatory Advocacy Toolkit**

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INTRAC



PEER LEARNING PROGRAMME

Developing an advocacy strategy is a pressing, but often intimidating, priority for many small and diaspora organisations. The Peer Learning Programme has a series of accessible 'how to' toolkits aimed at such organisations. In order not to duplicate what is already out there, we've produced these short suggestions about how small and diaspora organisations might get the most out of VSO's excellent [Participatory Advocacy Toolkit](#).¹

Key points before getting started

1. You don't have to read the guide cover-to-cover – much of it is background information.
2. The most powerful element of the toolkit is **Part 8: Tools**. The key thing to decide is how and when you are going to **use** the toolkit. Don't wait until you have time to read all 98 pages!
3. Try not to get hung up on the language surrounding advocacy and campaigning. Many people don't like it. It often feels too confrontational or political with its talk of targets and allies. Instead, remember that **advocacy is about creating greater impact and influence, by being strategic, on the basis of improved analysis.**

How to use the toolkit

Many people - when they start planning around advocacy or campaigning – go straight to thinking about **actions** or **tactics** (e.g. letter-writing, petitions, marches, press releases, lobby meetings) but the most important part of advocacy planning is actually **analysis**: **how** change happens, **who** is involved, **what** your organisation's role is, **when** you need to act. You can spend a lot of time planning and delivering advocacy activities but if these aren't based on good analysis then your impact will be affected.

It is possible (at a push) to use several of the tools in a one-day workshop to develop a 'bare bones' advocacy strategy with a team, coalition or partners. If you can allow two days you will have much more time for both analysis and planning. However, if advocacy is new to your organisation, or it is difficult to dedicate a block of time, you might want to use different tools over a longer period e.g. one tool in each team meeting over three-months.

The key elements of strategy development are outlined in the diagram on page 4 – but remember that the relationship between the stages isn't as strictly cyclical as in this diagram. Often you may find you have to do a bit of research and then refine your objectives or your understanding of your target before moving forwards to the next stage.

How to use the tools

To use the tools you'll need flipchart paper; coloured pens; and post-it notes or pieces of card and blu-tack. Tools are best used in small groups of 3-5 people. You can have a number of groups which share their analysis at the end of each stage if you have a bigger group.

The tools are ultimately ways to structure discussions, and record analysis and learning. It's crucial to recognise that the **discussions** are what is important, not getting 'the right answer'. The tools support the development of critical thinking, which is the key to good advocacy. Discussions will potentially highlight areas where further strategic thinking is needed, but if you try to control (rather than shape) discussions, you will lose some of the value of the exercises.

If you are facilitating the discussions try to keep people focused on the task in hand. If there are key questions that arise, write these down for discussion at the end of the exercise.

¹ This can be found at <http://www.intrac.org/data/files/resources/674/Participatory-Advocacy-A-toolkit-for-VSO-staff-volunteers-and-partners.pdf> or http://www.vsointernational.org/Images/advocacy-toolkit_tcm76-25498.pdf

Sample plan for a one- or two-day advocacy planning workshop

Strategy development stage	Session	Learning outcome
Introduction to Advocacy Part 1 (p 7-11) and Part 4 (p 32-44) of toolkit	Short discussion on why advocacy is important for achieving organisational objectives and any concerns about advocacy (in pairs or plenary).	Shared understanding of advocacy. Recognition of concerns and risks in relation to advocacy.
Analysis Stage Part 3 and Part 4 of toolkit (p 20-44)	Unpacking the key problems that the organisation is trying to address (using Tool 2: the Problem Tree).	Shared understanding of what the advocacy problem is and what the causes and consequences are.
	Prioritising issues (using Tool 1: The Issue Choice Matrix)	Shared understanding of how your organisation will prioritise issues and maximise impact. This may also touch on internal and external context.
	Understanding internal and external context and trends (using Tool 6: Force Field Analysis , Tool 8: SWOT Analysis and/or Tool 7: PESTLE) ²	Shared understanding of external context and internal capacities that relate to advocacy. The forcefield tool is good for analysis long-term trends.
	Power mapping using Tool 3: Decision and Influence Mapping , Tool 4: Allies and Opponents Matrix and Tool 5: Power Mapping (Venn Diagram) ³	Shared understanding of who is involved in change, how different actors relate, and who you need to work with or be influencing. Key to analysis is understanding the change that you want each actor to make (set objectives).
Planning for delivery Part 5 and Part 6 of toolkit (p 45-74)	Once you have the analysis you need to turn it into action using Tool 9: Logframe , Tool 10: Risk Analysis and if relevant Tools 11,12, and 13	Shared understand of the action plan for advocacy and how to manage risks.
Monitoring and evaluation Part 7 of toolkit (p 75-79)	Monitoring and evaluation and learning for advocacy probably requires a separate session once the action plan and strategy have been written up.	Shared understanding of how, when and by whom progress and success are going to be measured.

² These tools are often also used in strategic planning – although important they can be time consuming. If you are short on time you might try to cover these issues in the ‘Issue Choice Matrix’ discussion.

³ Power mapping tools are interchangeable – all encourage users to think about how to influence those in power.