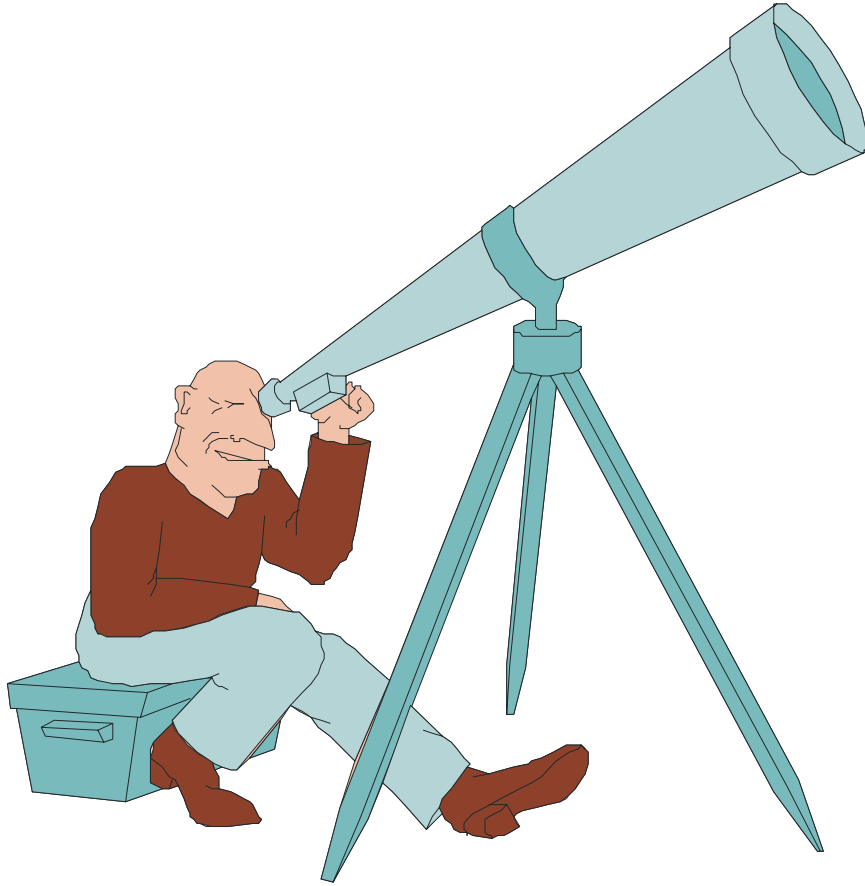


Advocacy Manual



Prepared by SAMPARK

Supported by PACS

Sampark -Advocacy & Communication Consultants
50/51, Second floor, Gilder lane B.M.C. School, Opp. Mumbai Central Rly. Station, Mumbai Central, Mumbai-8.
Ph. 2300 0031 Email - mitra@bom3.vsnl.net.in

Advocacy Manual

Advocacy can be called as the act of inducing and persuading the democratic agencies to resolve various social issues. Advocacy is a Latin term. The word 'Ad' means 'in favour of' and 'Voca' is to speak.... hence, the meaning of the word 'advocacy' is to speak in favour of someone. The lawyers are also called advocates, as they stand in favour of a side or a party. In other words, advocacy is to speak for, or support someone.



Advocacy is essential for helping the insignificant social elements, institutions, communities and neglected public in acquiring their rights and in making the concerned authorities aware of their issues. E.g. inadequate ration supply, diseases, especially contagious diseases etc. Advocacy informs the common people in such situations about the concerned authorities and where and how to approach them. Such an organized and collective effort is advocacy.

Every nation has always tried to constitute the government policies in favour of the poor and neglected ones. But it was America that created the science of advocacy systematically. There are numerous organizations in Washington DC, US capital influencing American government policies, with the help of advocacy. They bring the public issues to the attention of the policymakers in innovative manners.

There are also some groups, which influence the policies of various international organizations such as UNO, World Bank, International Monetary Fund.

Democracy stands on four pillars – legislature, judiciary, administration and media. An NGO like Sampark, specialized in advocacy, liaises with these four institutions and influences the policies with their aid. So, in a sense, NGO like Sampark is the fifth and significant pillar of democracy.

Advocacy requires a lot of diligence. One has to be very patient. And of course, continuous efforts are absolutely essential. Getting emotional does not prove helpful. Long speeches & slogans are not enough here. Study, analyzing and proper planning are the key elements for advocacy. Its success depends upon the strategy, tactics and capacity of the activists, study, knowledge about various laws, policies, implementation processes & proper handling of the media.

Aims of Advocacy:

- To bring the attention of the policy-makers to the issues of the oppressed ones in the society.
- To influence the making and implementation those of policies.
- To apprise the common man about the details of various policies, schemes, programmes for social welfare and the existing systems.
- To enhance the skills and outlook for proper execution of policies.
- To create a 'people-oriented' government system.
- To create more and more social advocates from the civil society.

Who can work for advocacy?

Any social activist can work for advocacy. One need not depend on big leaders for that. These activists can use advocacy to work more effectively. All that is required for this is, a little curiosity, hard work to collect the necessary information and the knack to use it.

We can say that a peasant, below poverty line, succeeded in advocacy, if he tries and successfully acquires a B. P. L. yellow ration cards. But this is something done for himself. However, if this person, himself, or by uniting other peasants like him, makes the government count number of the farmers below poverty level, who have not got the yellow ration cards and also helps the farmers to get these, by following the matter up through newspapers or the concerned government officials, that too, becomes advocacy. But this advocacy is for the benefit of the people. The purpose of this 'public interest advocacy' is to help the downtrodden ones of the society in acquiring their rights. Today it has become essential that efforts for public benefit such as conducting marches and hunger strike be backed up through advocacy. Advocacy is the democratic and effective means for achieving social changes. In fact, while marches and agitations are proving somewhat outdated, advocacy is turning out to be a powerful means for resolution of public issues and for continuance of people-centric developmental processes.



How to get prepared for advocacy?

The initial step while preparing for advocacy is finalizing an issue that needs to be solved. There are two types of these. First are those problems, which need to be seen immediately. For e.g. there was an incident in Hingangaon, Taluka Kalamb, District Osmanabad, where women from two families were terribly beaten as a result of a quarrel regarding farming. There was a delay from the police in taking action against the assassins. Marathwada Lok Vikas Manch took this matter in their hands. Meeting competent officers from local and district levels, they demanded necessary action. When no response came on this level, they arrived in Mumbai with the victims. Here, Sampark mobilized state level media on the issue and organized meeting with the Home Minister. The women stated their story in front of the Home Minister. They also informed the social activists about the severity of this incident. All this is a part of advocacy. It succeeded because the problem was taken straight to the policy-makers. The due action was taken against the culprits. The issue was taken from the local police, i.e. from the village level to the Ministry, where the office of the head of Police Dept. the Home minister, is. At the same time, the 'fourth estate' of democracy, the media was used through press conference. This helped in resolving an issue rapidly.

Second type of problems that advocacy deals with are those who need long-term efforts to be solved. When an issue requires a change in the governmental policy, it takes a long time. One needs to be strongly prepared in advocacy for such a fight, from all possible aspects. Let us take the example of the prohibition movement in Gadchiroli district. The native women of Gadchiroli had started a movement against alcohol since the year 1988-89. They tried to prohibit alcohol by using methods of smashing liquor barrels, conducting marches on pubs etc. But alcohol was not made illegal by the government. Thus, the pubs would remain shut for a short while, but then would reopen. The government was unwilling to implement prohibition of alcohol, as the revenue involved in sale of alcohol is one of the income sources of the government. It was then that Dr. Abhay Bang & Dr. Rani Bang's organization – 'Search' conducted a study, which showed that the government has to spend more amounts to conduct various measures regarding the adverse effects of alcohol, than the amount yielded by the taxes on alcohol. Through this study, it was also underlined that development needs human resources also which is destroyed by liquor sale.

This study included all the information from the loss that a family suffers when its head dies due to alcohol, to the amount government has to spend to cure the diseases caused due to it. The claim of the government that prohibition of liquor is avoided, as it is a source of income was proven false by the study.

This new development strengthened the women who had started the movement and also boosted the movement. At the same time, Medha Kulkarni brought this matter to the attention of various groups in Mumbai. Eminent authors, litterateur, journalists were invited to witness this struggle. Articles regarding this were written in newspapers. She studied all the anti prohibition policies of state & central government. The issue was highlighted based on these policies & ground realities in Gadchiroli. Sampark followed this matter up with the authorities. Meetings were arranged with contemporary minister handling Excise Department, under whose control this matter of alcohol was and Mr. Sudhakar Naik, the CM then. These two ministers were informed about this movement. The MLAs of other political parties were briefed & requested to raise this issue in the Assembly. The government was pressurized to make alcohol illegal.

Finally, on March 31, 1993, the government issued an order making Gadchiroli an alcohol-free district. Prohibition of alcohol was, and is, strictly observed in the district. The licenses of the pub-holders, and even the personal licenses were cancelled, which adds to the credit of the two NGOs, Search & Sampark. Sampark kept this matter alive even after this incident, the result of which was that the government was forced to take more and more decisions for public benefit, regarding the issue of alcohol. Sampark also ran a column in Dainik Loksatta on this issue.

Now that we have seen examples of both the cases of advocacy, let us see how to prepare for it.

1. **Framing the issue:** There are many incidences happening around. And many activists do participate in them. But they do not realize exactly on which to take an issue for it to be solved. It is very essential to know this, in advocacy. If an issue can be resolved on village or district level, it need not be taken to the state authorities. Hence it becomes necessary to comprehend the gravity of the problem and accordingly put it in front of the respective authorities.
2. **Collecting information:** The success of advocacy depends greatly upon collecting the greatest possible amount of information regarding the issue.



What type of information should be collected?

- Various laws and regulations related to the selected problem.
- The documents of the government policy concerning the issue, if there exists any.
- The names of the officials who have the authority to execute related laws and policies.
- Names of government officials, journalists and other eminent personalities who could be of some help in resolving the problem.
- Other organizations working on the same issue.

With a problem of urgency, for e.g. in an issue of atrocities, the F.I.R. reported to the police is essential in preparing for advocacy. But it does not mean that you cannot do anything if the crime has not been recorded by the police or a copy of the F.I.R. is not available. You must get detailed information about the crime from the victims and write it down. This should include the full names of the victims, the names of the attackers, names of the witnesses present at the crime scene, the name of the concerned police station, name and post of the officer investigating the case, and also sections in the law related to the crime. The activists should try to take a camera to the scene of the event and take photographs of the site and also of the victims, it proves very helpful.

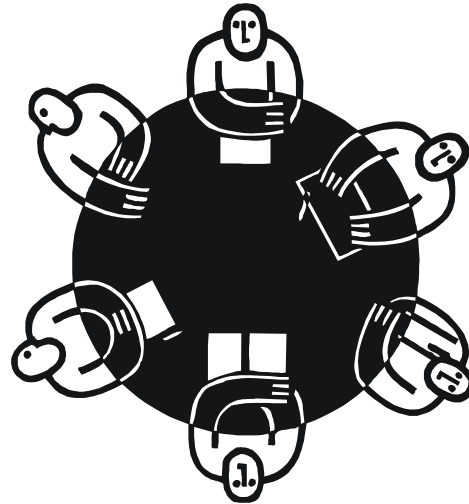
In case of long-persisting issues, various government orders and details of the concerned persons is essential along with the rest of the information.

There are cases where a long-term issue gives rise to an urgent one. For e.g. if, while the efforts for controlling the encroachment on meadows are still going on, the trespassers are attacked, it becomes an immediate necessity to take action against the attackers. The success advocacy concerning this urgent issue helps in the advocacy for the long-term problem.

Bringing together like-minded people:

It is essential for advocacy that you bring together as many people with a similar point of view as possible. These should include not only journalist and various eminent personalities, but also the members of civil society. Media can be used for advocacy, for which the participation of a large number of people is required. Hence you need to bring together people with certain skills.

Gather people who will be able to write in newspapers in readers' columns for you. If a letter appears in the readers' column of a newspaper in which your article has been printed, supporting your views, it proves effective.



Letters from prominent personalities addressed to authorities prove useful:

During the communal riots in Mumbai in 1993, some communal organizations started a 'whisper campaign' to spread rumours. The rumour that armed vehicles were wandering about, was spread both in Hindu and Muslim neighborhoods. Such rumours encouraged the riots. The rumour that the 'Hindu God, Ganesh drinks milk' was another such whisper campaign. Employing such a campaign for the benefit of public, however, is a means to pressurize the opponent. One can talk loudly about the information that is to be spread, at crowded public places, such as bus stops, markets; call newspaper offices to ask whether the rumour regarding such information is true, which helps in the spreading of that information.

Networking with like-minded organizations working on similar issues is helpful for advocacy. Networking, in spite of being a time-consuming task, is advantageous for the exchange of information, experience and experts. It proves of assistance for influencing the government, legislature, newspapers and courts. But, one has to be sure about the purpose of their work while doing this. Distribution of responsibilities should be clear. There has to be proper communication between different groups and also, a collective leadership must come forward.

Organizing the campaign:

The collected information, like-minded people and organizations are our assets while organizing the campaign. But our opponents' preparedness is as good as, rather better than us. Hence it is quite useful to acquire information about their planning, while planning our campaign. This includes newspaper interviews given by them, news related to them, articles and such information. We are now ready, after these preparations, to approach the newspapers.



Participation of newspapers in advocacy:

The participation of newspapers and media is essential for advocacy. But the activists should realize that it is not like you go to the newspaper office out of the blue, and the next day you see your article in the paper. You have to form connections with the journalists. Also, do not expect to see your article, because you know the concerned persons. Only if you follow up with the journalist to whom you have given the news, meet or call him/her frequently, the news will be printed, because, there might be more important matters at their hands than your news. There are also other pressures on them. Please do not bribe the journalists. Your opponents can give them more money than what you did. Such corruption is unhealthy for the movement. Avoid such corrupt journalists.

Form relations with newspapers:

Just as people feel the necessity to have their articles printed, acquiring news is a necessity for journalists. You must keep in touch with journalists, editors. Do not contact them just to get your news printed, but also to inform them about various incidences that you are aware of. Such trivial things are valuable while creating a relation with them. E.g. you know about an accident outside the city, and you immediately let the journalists know about it. This assures them that you have useful information for them, thus, they will contact you.

Meeting the editors once in a while, appreciating about their articles or editorials or providing them with valuable information is helpful for the future.

An activist should know what kinds of incidences are important through the point of view of newspapers. A basic knowledge of journalism is desirable for this. It should be considered as a part of your job.

Meeting government officials:

Government officials can help you with the information regarding policies and their execution. Also, an official who approves of our stand might also help us for advocacy. Such a friendly officer can help us in the execution of a policy or for advocacy to those who are the executors.



What to do when you go to officials to acquire information:

1. Collect information about the officer. Take the assistance of your friends in his/her department, journalists or the P.A. of that official. Make sure that the subject about which you need information falls under the authority of that officer. E.g. an official in revenue dept. who is mainly concerned with farmers will not have the information regarding rehabilitation.
2. State your points accurately. Inform them about your work. Some officers are used not to giving the information, and asking you to contact their seniors instead. Then do contact the seniors. Don't forget to mention to them that you were sent to meet them by the junior officer. If the senior officer tries to avoid your task as well, give him/her a letter, mentioning the information that you require. The public is able to acquire all G.R.s regarding developmental work except for extremely confidential information. You can also complaint about the officers who refuse to give such information.

While going to the government official to talk on your issue:

1. Do not get emotional while talking.
2. State your points from the legal point of view.
3. You are not against the particular officer sitting in the chair opposite you. It is the chair that you are fighting against. Keep with you a written copy of your demands and points. Do not become

dejected if an officer contradicts you or does not respond excitedly. His senior might respond in a more convincing manner.

4. Many-a-times, the officers are interested in knowing what is said about their measures and executions. You can give this information.

Assistance of local representatives, pressurizing the legislature:

Our representatives work on four levels: 'Gramapanchayat' and 'Gramasabha' on village level, 'Panchayat Samiti' on Taluka level, 'Jilha Parishad' on district level, and 'Vidhi Mandal' (legislature) on state level. It is necessary in advocacy to pressurize these representatives and if possible, to bring them on your side.

Village Level: You must start advocacy from homes, in village level. Encourage all men and women to participate in the Gramasabha, who are eligible to vote. Aid from your own home, to spread your viewpoint, must always be welcome. Considering the rights given to Gramapanchayat and Gramasabha, the motions passed here, are useful on Taluka, district and state level too. E.g. a motion passed by local Gramapanchayat and Gramasabha is useful for the further activity in advocacy.

To convince the members of Gramapanchayat, Panchayat Samiti, or Jilha Parishad, you can take the assistance of the teachers, doctors or other prominent members of the village.

Taluka Level: B.D.O. is the chief administrating officer for Panchayat Samiti, which works on taluka level. A Panchayat Samiti can hold at the most 12 assemblies a year. Chairperson of the Panchayat Samiti is the president of these assemblies. There are numerous conditions and restrictions for the members of Panchayat Samiti to call a meeting or pass a motion, but the chairperson of the Samiti can demand the file of any plan, either being executed or to be executed in the taluka. It is mandatory for the government officers to provide this file. Hence, the chairperson of the Samiti can prove to be an important person for acquiring information from governmental documents. You can ask the members of the Samiti to ask questions or make a motion regarding your issue in their assemblies, but such questions or motions need to be given to the members a month before the assembly, to its chairperson.

District level: A Jilha Parishad can have as many as 12 assemblies a year, within 1 month's gap from each other. The president of the Jilha Parishad is the president of these assemblies, and the chief executive officer is the administrative chief. Members of the Parishad can ask questions, make motions or raise discussions on various issues. Activists must request members of Jilha Parishad to raise discussions or make motions on their issues. There are many restrictions on members of Jilha Parishad. They cannot speak against the officers of Jilha Parishad. But the stand of the administration on district level can be made clear through motions and discussions. There are different standing committees in Jilha Parishad. Their assemblies are conducted in a similar pattern as the Jilha Parishad's. One can also take help of these committees.

Although there is hype about the 73rd amendment to the constitution, one should remember that the rights given to Jilha Parishad, Panchayat Samiti are limited. Hence more and more people are going to the ministry. Collectors, regional commissioners are given the authority to interfere in work of Jilha Parishad.

State Level: The MLAs can speak about absolutely anything in the world. They can talk anything they want with the permission of the president-chairperson. We can see that many MLAs are not connected to the common man. Activists should take the aid of many MLAs from various parties, rather than a single one, or from a single party. Starred questions, calling attention motions, half-an-hour's discussions, brief discussions, discussions on government demands are the various parliamentary tools available to these MLAs. But unfortunately, very few of them, of any political party, actually speak. It is to be considered that there are, in total 366 MLAs in the legislature (288 in the legislative assembly and 78 in the legislative council). You can meet these MLAs and request them to raise your questions and discussions on them. The government has to consider an issue supported by various MLAs of different parties.

There are various committees in the legislature. They include MLAs of all parties. Some important committees include MLAs from both the legislative assembly and the legislative council. The 'Panchayat Raj Samiti' of the legislature supervises the work of Jilha Parishads. The job of the committees for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes is to see whether or not the reservations for the respective castes are filled, and to survey if any of the members of these castes are facing any violence and present its report to the legislature. The committees have rights like those of the legislature. They can summon any senior officer to testify.

Keep this in mind when meeting representatives:

1. You are meeting them to be friends with them. Keep this in mind. State your points in short. Do not discuss too many topics at a time. Even if the representative is an opponent, you can benefit from the meeting, in the sense that, you can become familiar with the opposite viewpoint, and also you might be able to lessen the intensity of his/her opinions.
2. Take their obligation for your issue or meet them just to have a say to them.
3. Listen to them as long as possible. But, if he/she is not talking briskly, ask questions to make him/her talk to the point. Make sure that you talk precisely and briskly.
4. Do not argue. No one is an enemy or a friend forever. Remember this when you speak. The representative might be opposing you on a certain issue today, but he/she might support you on another topic.
5. Send a thanking letter after the meeting. Mention the assurance given by the representative, if any.

Answer the following questions:

1. What is advocacy?
2. How to get prepared for advocacy on a certain issue?
3. What are the four pillars of democracy?
4. What is to be kept in mind while talking to the representatives?
5. What is the role of media in advocacy?